

Convention of B. C. Municipalities.—(Continued).

scope and enriching its content. While it was exclusive, anything of a practical bearing was resolutely debarred. Latin and Greek were the main subjects taught. The youth were set down to these subjects at quite an early age, 8 to 10. One at least has told of the "dull drilled lesson, forced down word by word in my repugnant youth." Other subjects were not considered genteel, especially those of a practical bearing. The sciences were not introduced until well along into the 19th century; neither did English literature have a place on the curricula of schools until the middle of the nineteenth century.

Herbert Spencer was the great apostle of the useful in education, rather than the ornamental. "He said, men who would blush if caught saying Iphigenia, instead of Iphigenia, or would result as an insult any imputation of ignorance respecting the fabled labours of a fabled demigod, show not the slightest shame in confessing that they do not know where the Eustachian tubes are, what are the actions of the spinal cord, what is the normal rate of pulsation, or how the lungs are inflated. While anxious that their sons should be well up in the superstitions of two thousand years ago, they care not that they should be taught anything about the functions and structure of their own bodies—nay, even wish them not to be so taught. So overwhelming is the influence of established routine, so terribly in our education does the ornamental override the useful."

Spencer, needless to say, was very much in advance of his day. In fact we are only just beginning to realize the truth of his teachings, and the need of changing the curricula of our schools and colleges to suit the modern age. And yet how we cling to that which is dead. Like Margaret Roper, daughter of Sir Thomas More, who secured her father's head and kept it as a sacred relic, and clasped it to her bosom in her dying hour, so we in educational matters cling to the past, and are slow to change to suit the modern conditions.

Hand in hand with the social changes consequent on the growth of democracy has gone the development of industrialism. These two factors are revolutionizing the world. The invention of various labour saving machines during the latter half of the 18th century and throughout the whole of the nineteenth century even to the present day has completely changed methods of manufacturing and of transportation and has led to a tremendous industrial development. The machine made article has almost completely replaced the handmade one, and the passage of the Atlantic from Europe to America has been reduced from five or six miles per hour to 30 or 40 miles per hour. At the same time the whole world has been put in touch daily with the fluctuations of its markets by means of the telegraph.

The natural result has been a great increase in the world of trade along with the exploitation of new markets. Britain responded but slowly in her educational departments, and we might add in her religious life, and social customs to the new industrial order of things. To the development of democracy, she has responded more generously in legislative acts that have given a voice to her people in the affairs of state,—until today, perhaps, there is no more democratic country in the world, not excepting even the republics than Britain, and she is engaged to-day in a gigantic struggle for democratic ideals and we believe will be triumphant. The present is great with change. The old conservatism of the past that has hindered her progress is fast dying out. Britain is responding in a magnificent way to the spirit of the age. In a deluge of blood the things that are outworn, the things that are useless, the things that are undemocratic, are being washed away. Notice the steps she is taking already to organize for the future in education.

And now, how does our public school system in which our interest naturally centres minister to the needs of the people of this Province?

When I first became interested in the schools of this Province about eight years ago, I thought that our school system was the best in Canada, and to-day I have no reason to change my opinion. We, however, are not breathing the same atmosphere of eight years ago. Then and up to two or three years ago, such a wave of land speculation was passing over this Province that our attention was

directed towards the investment of money and the turning over of real estate.

The schools, except in the case of those very closely identified with them were given very little attention. It was enough to know that we had a good system. Also the population was changing so rapidly and so many people would be here to-day and some other place to-morrow that any kind of curriculum in our school system, i.e., a more practical one would have been difficult to carry on. But for three or four years things have been different.

With a more settled population engaging in various occupations to gain a living, attention was gradually turned towards our schools and school system, with the very natural result of criticism following. It was felt that our school curricula especially that of the higher grades of the public school and all the classes of the high school, were not adequately fitting the boys and girls for work later in life. The course as arranged was a stepping-stone towards the professions. It was primarily intended to prepare teachers with the necessary academic qualifications for their profession. In looking back we can readily see that this was a wise step, as teachers were scarce, and many families of children were coming into all parts of the provinces. It was necessary to encourage our own boys and girls to enter the teaching profession which many of them did.

The change in economic conditions has necessitated a change in the curricula of our schools. So manual training and domestic science are being added as well as agriculture. That is good. Hitherto our course of study has been arranged for those who intended to follow the professions, and even though the larger centres are about to have bestowed upon them the privilege of manual training, domestic science and agriculture, yet the smaller centres and the rural schools will be deprived of this benefit for some time to come, unless they can be joined to the larger centres that have this privilege, and the children be carried to and fro, as has been done in Armstrong and other districts during the past year.

In this community where the majority of the boys should be trained to carry on the work of agriculture in its various phases, and all the girls trained in the science of house-keeping, whatever else they may learn to do, practically nothing has been provided in the past beyond reading, writing and arithmetic with a mere smattering of science to fit the boys and girls to take their places on the farm and in the home. Only the few that have entered the professions have directly profited by their High School course apart from its disciplinary value. Should not our High Schools minister to the majority rather than to the minority, but the minority need not be neglected. Now what is true of the community above, has been or perhaps is true of almost every school district in Canada, but a change is coming and is already here. While manual training and domestic science as taught in British Columbia are certainly largely disciplinary, yet they are intensely practical. They are, therefore, intended for every boy and girl. No matter if the boy intends to be a lawyer, doctor or clergyman, he should have the training of hand and eye and learn the use and care of tools, as will be taught in the manual training department.

The introduction of agriculture heralds a much needed and in some case longer for change.

Domestic science including needle work, cooking, sanitary arrangements, has in mind the home. This should be noted and teachers engaged who have the capability of imparting the art of home-making. Our education for the home will be a sorry thing indeed if it concerns simply the household arts of cooking, sewing and house care, unless it teaches us the art of "family building" of home making, of living in families in such ways as to bring increasing personal satisfaction as the years go by."

The future of our province from its location, resources and physical features must be largely industrial, the land suitable for agriculture with the total area is small indeed. The mineral wealth is great and is being developed since the war as never before. Coal is abundant, many coal areas being completely undeveloped at present. Iron ore is plentiful. Excellent deepwater harbors that will admit the largest ships are found on our coast line, and back of all a tremendous water power unharnessed as yet, but capable if harnessed of generating power enough in one form or another to run innumerable factories; we have much raw material within our own borders, and are within comparatively easy reach of foreign raw material.