

## Educational Notes

(By Spectator.)

The report of Inspector Putman and Professor Weir, on educational conditions in British Columbia, has called forth a measure of adverse criticism from various sources. It would be strange if such were not the case. It would be stranger still if the report should prove an infallible summing up, and if no exception could be taken to any of the recommendations made. In fairness, however, we must assume that the report is an honest expression of opinion on the part of two prominent Canadian educationists, and that many highly useful suggestions for the betterment and advancement of public education in the province have been set forth. The wisest course must be for all educational officials and leaders—school trustees, inspectors and teachers—to study the report carefully and impartially; and cheerfully carry out, to the best of their ability, those policies that appeal to them as unmistakably worth while.

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In the elementary schools of the Irish Free State there is, it would seem, even at this early date, a marked decline in the enthusiasm for the teaching and study of the native tongue. With the victory in the age-long struggle for autonomy there appeared, on the part of numbers of idealistic intellectuals, a determination to return to the speech of the scholars and saints who gave Christianity and learning to the half of Europe. But though the strongest sentiment attaches to certain forms of human speech, language is at bottom a utilitarian instrument for the expression of thought. Beauty of form and sound may serve to make it doubly precious to all artistic souls; but these characteristics by themselves cannot preserve it from decay and death, when its utilitarian value comes to be a negligible quantity in comparison with that of a sister tongue.

An amusing illustration of this truth was responsible for a piquant flurry in a meeting of the Toronto Separate School Board a number of years ago. One of the members advocated the teaching of French or German to the pupils in the elementary classes of the schools under this Board, whereupon a facetious Hibernian moved that a committee be appointed to bring in a report on the desirability of making the study of French, German, Irish, Chinese and other foreign languages part of the curriculum, at the same time remarking: "English is good enough for me."

Economic causes demand the teaching of English in all the schools of the Irish Free State. In those parts of the country where Erse is still the mother tongue, there is excellent reason for giving it a place in the elementary schools. In other parts of the country it may survive in some of the secondary schools; while in the universities it would be treason unpardonable to discourage its study or use. None the less the truest Irish patriotism may find adequate expression even in the speech of the Sassenach. Grattan and Emmet, Moore and D'Arcy McGee, and hundreds of other patriots, realized this right well.

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A Vancouver journal, discussing the result of the recent Dominion election, gave utterance to this unfortunate sentiment: "If this contest has emphasized one thing more than another, it is that Ontario is at Quebec's throat." This was intended to explain the

circumstance that Ontario had returned sixty-nine Conservative members out of a total of eighty-two, while Quebec chose as its representatives fifty-nine Liberals out of a total of sixty-five.

The writer, one would judge, must be a very young man, with the slightest possible knowledge of political conditions in Canada some fifty years ago. Had he scanned the files of the Toronto "Globe" of the seventies of last century, when it was managed and edited by that stalwart protagonist of Liberalism, the Honorable George Brown, he could hardly have failed to note the oft-recurring phrase, "French domination." In those days, leaving out one brief interval, the majority of the voters in both the great provinces, Ontario and Quebec, consistently supported the policy of Sir John A. Macdonald, the great Conservative leader and Ontario statesman.

The Ontario majority of that day, Conservatives, and numerous Liberals as well, could plead "Not guilty," to the charge of being at Quebec's throat. And for many years now the cry of "French domination" has been forgotten in the neighbouring province. Instead, there has been a well conducted campaign in which leading patriots of both provinces have united to promote and cement an "entente cordiale" between the French and English-speaking people of the Dominion.

Ontario, since 1878, has been strongly Conservative and protectionist. This, and not hatred of the French Canadians, explains the overwhelming Conservative majority in that province. The swinging over of Quebec from the Conservative to the Liberal side, dates from the election of the illustrious Sir Wilfred Laurier to the leadership of the Dominion Liberal party. The fact is, that though the beloved chief has passed from this earthly scene, his spirit "goes marching on." The London "Daily Telegraph" understands the situation, when it says: "The old Laurier tradition has not been really shaken."

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Friendship between Ontario and Quebec, between English-speaking and French-speaking Canada, in spite of the feeling aroused by some unpardonable tactics during the early part of the Great War, is, with the thoughtful and responsible element in all the provinces, a growing force. The work of the schools, especially of the institutions of secondary and higher education, is contributing its aid. Teachers and professors are no longer content to impart a reading knowledge of French. The Direct Method of teaching the language prevails more and more, and students of English-speaking Canada now are graduated with some facility in speaking the mother tongue of their French Canadian brothers. This is all to the good. Nor must we forget the large number of books and magazines in English, in which the heroic exploits of the Old Regime, and the attractive character and winning disposition of the habitant of the present day, capture the love and admiration of old and young of every racial element in our country. Let us hear no more of old misunderstandings and enmities. Let us remember that whatever be our speech, our religion, our racial origins—we are first, last, and for all time, true yoke-fellows and Canadians all.