

## BOOKS AND NOTIONS

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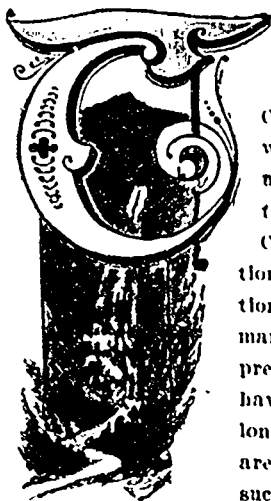
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## QUEBEC'S TEXT-BOOKS.



THE subject of education, according to the Canadian Constitution, is one which is left entirely under the control of the Provinces, and Canada has no national system of education. If there were such many defects of the present system might have been obliterated long since. But there are grave objections to such a national system

which it is not our purpose to discuss. But one of the defects of our present educational system, considered in its entirety, has been the slipshod way Quebec has managed her text-books for the use of her schools. Quebec has virtually two classes of schools, the Protestant and Roman Catholic, and this has no doubt prevented the adoption of a uniform series of text-books throughout the province. The Protestant schools have followed pretty closely the system of the other provinces and produced a sort of uniformity. But up to the present the Catholic schools have secured very little uniformity, as the larger religious establishments in the cities of Quebec and Montreal have spent a large amount of

money in printing the text-books produced by their own teachers, or the text-books which seemed most suitable to the heads of the particular institutions.

Now comes the news that most important changes are in contemplation by the members of the Roman Catholic Council of Public Instruction for the Province, and that some serious reforms asked for by the lay members of the council are soon to be an accomplished fact. The whole system, it is said, is to be revolutionized, and the old fashioned and costly manner of supplying text-books abrogated entirely. In the first place, the present contractors will be allowed three years' grace, after which the printing of all the school books in the Province of Quebec will be given out to public tender; and, secondly, a more uniform and modern series will be adopted. The Roman Catholic clergy have always taken a strong interest in education and educational methods, and nothing but their intense conservatism has delayed such a change. The delay may not have been a serious one, and when the change is now made they will no doubt adopt the most improved and advanced text-books and the best known system of publishing these.

There is always some difficulty in giving books out to public tender, because, unless the book be given in manuscript, some publisher will have advantage over his competitors in having possession of the plates. If the council should offer to accept the best text-book or series offered there would again be trouble, because the unsuccessful competitors would clamor for compensation for their outlay. But by careful management these difficulties can be obviated, and, considered as a whole, the system of giving the publishing to successful tenderers in open market is the best known method. There is some talk in Ontario of the taking over of the publishing of the Ontario Public School Readers (five in number) by the Government, and the setting up of a Government press. This would indeed be a futile thing, and is strongly condemned by the clear-headed business men of Toronto. Paternal government is expensive when it commences to manufacture, unless it uses prison labor, and prison labor would not be sufficiently skilled to be able to produce text-books equal to the text-books now in use. Outside this, a government job is generally costly. The work costs more, the materials cost more, there is much more waste, and there is an inferior product—all these are facts of experience in the history of any government's share in production. It is not a government's duty to produce, although it may sometimes be necessary or expedient. But in the matter of text-books this would not be expedient, and the Government of Quebec, from its peculiar double relation to both Catholic and Protestant schools, is

not likely to fall into this error, no matter what the Government of Ontario may do.

From the point of view of the Educationist the coming change will be warmly applauded and heartily welcomed. With such uniformity we may expect the Province of Quebec to profit by the more general and broader education which must result therefrom, and it may be the dawning of brighter days for that Province.

From the point of view of the trade, the change will be welcomed as uniformly always is. The regular publishers will be given a greater chance, and their work will be more secure and permanent. The retail trade will not be wading through treacherous bogs, but will travel a firm, smooth road.

## A CLOUD OF PRAISE.

During the past few days numerous congratulatory letters have reached this office. The May issue of this Journal contained a list of the current Canadian books, and authors, publishers and scholars have all hastened to congratulate BOOKS AND NOTIONS for its effort to arouse a greater interest in Canadian books. We cannot deny that these kind words have pleased us, and though this praise can in this case be our only reward, yet it is sufficient. What we wish authors and publishers to realize is that BOOKS AND NOTIONS exists for their benefit as well as for the benefit of the retail trade throughout the Dominion. What little we have done for Canadian literature we have done cheerfully, and we will be glad, with the co-operation of all concerned, to continue the good work.

## FAST SELLING NOVELS.

IT seems strange that one of the features of the publishing trade, as far as Canada is concerned, is the paper-bound novel which retails at 50 cents. But nevertheless it is a feature, and booksellers are beginning to recognize it very generally. Toronto seems to be leading in this class of books at present although at one time Montreal was much ahead; but times change and so do publishing houses. There are two houses in Toronto who are doing an extensive trade in issuing editions of these 50 cent paper novels, and this trade could not be increasing as it is, unless such books were finding increased favor with the booksellers and the buying public.

Looking over the list of books published by the National Publishing Co., as reviewed from time to time in this Journal, the reader will find novels by the best writers both English and American—American, by the way, must not be taken to include Canadian. Their latest works by Besant, Croker, Allen, Gunter, Henty, Barrie, Stevenson, and other popu