

EYES of the WORLD on the SCHOOL

CONVINCED for years that education is the decisive factor in shaping our national life, I have been doubly convinced by a recent visit to Weyburn, where I had the pleasure of attending a two-day convention of the teachers of that inspectorate. What I saw and learned there was so striking and interesting from the viewpoint of education, as well as from the larger standpoint of national life, that it appears worth while to set forth my observations and conclusions for the benefit of *Courier* readers.

By way of preface a pregnant remark of Dr. Parkin, in an address to the Faculty of the University of Saskatchewan, may be noted here. Reviewing the relations existing between the United Kingdom and the United States at the present time, he observed that the Great Republic had as its mightiest task the problem of

Assimilating the heterogeneous elements that have sought its shores;

While the United Kingdom is faced with the stupendous job of

Colonizing and settling the vast, vacant spaces of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa.

For the complete solution of these problems, in each instance, the schools must be depended upon to play the leading role. And this is precisely what I discovered the schools of the Weyburn inspectorate were doing.

The *New York World* stated, a week or two since that, in New York alone, there are 500,000 persons who do not speak the English language; and that there are hundreds of thousands throughout the Republic with little or no acquaintance with American political conditions and aspirations.

"In most of the great American cities," says the *World*, "we have settlements presided over by nationalistic and racial chieftains whose interest it is to keep immigrants foreign and in bondage. Contributing to this end for purposes of gain, financial and social, are the more masterful personages who dominate the foreign language newspapers, the foreign banking and steamship agencies and the representatives of the local political organizations."

Of course, Canadians are conversant with the American situation in more or less degree, but it is startling to find a great newspaper of the insight and breadth of view of the *World* taking such a pessimistic position with respect to this great national problem. Since the outbreak of war, however, it seems to have been borne in upon Americans that it will not be easy to dethrone these foreign leaders nor to scatter their henchmen, whose chief bulwarks are a foreign language and ignorance. To Americanize America the sanest elements in the Republic know that all the people must speak a common language, and that it must be made unprofitable for political bosses to establish a footing in the very citadel of political power. To accomplish these ends, and to shatter non-American forces in the public life of the United States, main reliance must be placed upon the schools.

IT was the language question, therefore, that first got hold of me in studying this cross-section of Canadian life in the Weyburn district. In reply to inquiries, Mr. Kennedy, the inspector in charge, assured me that in this respect there was every reason for optimism. In the whole of his district there is not



A Two-room school where the manager of a bank and other public-minded people helped to work wonders—at Griffin, Sask.

YOU see, in the West, education is looked upon as a real live issue affecting the whole people. We talk a deal about democracy, better government, nationalizing foreigners, making people efficient, teaching citizenship in the town hall, and all these things. But as the West has found out, to get at the germ of the whole business—as Germany did long ago on the wrong track—you must go right in among the scholars and the children and see what's being done in the plastic stage of civilization. That's why this *Story of What He Saw at the Weyburn Convention* was written.

B Y W . W . S W A N S O N

interested in knowing just what is the type of school convention, and school work in the rural districts, in the prairie provinces. The convention at Weyburn was, I believe, typical in these respects, and may serve, therefore, as an illustration of what is being accomplished educationally in all the primary schools of Saskatchewan.

In the first place, it may be said, that both the inspectors and teachers base theory and practice upon Socrates' dictum: "Know thyself: be thyself." One thing that impressed me beyond anything else was the insistence with which the teachers in all their discussions came back to this point of view. As one speaker remarked, many men know more about their horses and cattle than of their wives and children; and still fewer know anything worth mentioning about their own powers and capacities. The first desideratum, therefore, is to understand Self. This is taking the selfish point of view, to be sure; but it is only through self-interest, self-observation and self-development that anything worth while can be accomplished in this world. It is through self that boys and girls learn to be unselfish, inasmuch as, having discovered their latent capacities, they may use them for the benefit, not only of their immediate fellows, but of the whole nation.

Miss Lynd and Miss Cockerham—to select two from a whole bevy of alert and wide-awake teachers—emphasized the importance of training a student to express himself, and himself only, in his work. Miss Lynd showed how this might be admirably done in the teaching of arithmetic, a subject which, along with grammar, proves a bugbear for most students. In her own school, a couple of years ago, she discovered that pupils in Grade V, in most subjects were likely to be, and usually were, in Grade III, in arithmetic. All this has since been practically reversed. By teaching the pupils, even the youngest beginners, to make their own problems, she has made them hammer home the right methods of doing the work, with such effect that the more difficult problems, afterwards given by herself, are easily solved. Inspector Kennedy asserted that many of the students in her school, officially in Grade V., are actually doing the work of Grade VIII, in arithmetic. Thus it appears that the pupils are not only exposed to arithmetic, but really take the disease!

Limits of space will not permit of our entering into details, but the same might be said of the teaching of geography, agriculture and other subjects. Miss Cockerham's teaching of a lesson in the geography of South America was a revelation. She made a trip up the Amazon a vivid reality. One saw the flora and fauna of the deep forests of Brazil; the

For instance the Griffin, Sask., school has a whole plant of hot beds, besides grain-plots, flower-gardens and other things to interest children in—the Land.

