

school books must be revised, including those of the drawing and writing books and other "extras" on the authorised list. In this work, the Ministry must be fair to the authors and publishers, and yet see that the public gets the best value obtainable.

All this is for the benefit of the poorer classes of the community. The poorer a man is, the larger his family as a rule and the greater number of public school books he has to buy. In reducing the price of public school books, the Ontario Ministry is working to help the man with the large family. If the ministry will go so far as to supply the more generally used books at cost or free to rural and village schools, it will be carrying its reform a long distance, but no farther than it has been carried in Manitoba, in the leading Ontario cities, and in about two-thirds of the United States. Judging by the present spirit of the Ministry, it will go as far as the public will justify them—or as they think the public can be induced to justify them.

**C**ANADIAN newspapers have been censured pretty freely of late for devoting so much space to the Haywood trial and the Loving shooting case in the South. This sort of criticism of the newspapers is a matter of regular occurrence, and breaks out whenever anything unusually revolting is given to the public at more than ordinary length. What does it mean? It means, in the last analysis, that the public is condemning, with more or less sincerity, its own depraved taste for the horrible, the barbarous, the bizaree, the sensational, the scandalous, the disreputable, the immoral.

Newspapers, like all other mundane enterprises which depend for their prosperity upon public patronage, are compelled to provide what the public want or cease to exist. In doing this they but reflect the public taste; and to the extent that they do it successfully, they obtain success. There are those who contend that the function of a newspaper should be to lead, as much as possible, in elevating the public taste and not merely to mirror it. With this ethical consideration we are not concerned at the present moment.

If the average man who censures the papers for publishing this class of material is not sincere, and he would probably be the first to complain if he were deprived of his daily grist of grisly details. The fact is, improving the public taste is a matter for individual effort, and each man who criticises will find within himself his severest critic if he faithfully answers the question, "Do you read it yourself?"

The public taste cannot be elevated in communities—from the outside. Good morals or ideals cannot be greatly stimulated by legislation. No amount of preaching or moralising from press or pulpit will accomplish it—unless it causes each man to think over these things for himself. Human nature is responsible for depraved taste in every community, and human nature cannot be improved in blocks, or by concession lines. The real elevation of taste in any community or country is that which begins with the individual and works from the inside outwards.

**M**OST people, if asked what was the greatest asset of the Canadian West would unhesitatingly reply, The wheat crop. But is it? An Ontario man who has lately returned from the West says its greatest asset is that it has no history—and there is a great deal in it. Carping critics may say that a negative asset is no asset at all, but this fine point is aside from the question.

There is such a thing as having too much past. A country, like a man, may have it, and sometimes it is very troublesome. The worst feature about a past is that it is often shady, and then one has to try and live

it down, and that, no doubt, is what Serbia and some others that we could name, are trying to do at present. No past is so good but what it might have been better, therefore no past is better than a past of any kind, no matter how good. For this reason the West is better off than most other places in Canada—unless it be Labrador, Baffin's Island or the Coppermine River district—and ought to be thankful for it.

Seriously speaking, though, there is such a thing as too much tradition—of a certain kind. Tradition, for the purposes of this classification, may be said to be of two kinds—the tradition, which inspires by the record of noble accomplishments, and the tradition which weds to the form, and which is ever the enemy to progress. Forms decay, but the spirit of a noble tradition is undying. Canadians have inherited both kinds of traditions, and in the older portions of the country in particular, are too much given to reverencing and perpetuating forms, institutions, ceremonies, conventions—the shell—simply because they have been handed down to us from a misty and musty past. Let us cherish all noble traditions, but let us be sure we do not venerate any tradition whose sole commendation is its great age and antiquated form.

The West is not hampered by a past. Out there they live more in the present than the past, and if they had traditions it is possible they would have to be stood to one side or put in the attic while the people harvested the wheat crop—all of which is a good thing for the West.

**M**AYOR EUGENE E. SCHMITZ of San Francisco, convicted of extortion, was sentenced last Monday to five years in the penitentiary. The nature of public sentiment may be inferred from the fact that, on sentence being pronounced, the crowds in Judge Dunne's courtroom broke into loud cheers. The great city of the Golden Gate met with a disaster in April, 1906, such as stirred the world with compassion and elicited practical aid from all continents. But the worst foes of San Francisco were those of her own household. Earthquake and fire are visitations but the graft and plunder which show themselves in high places are a moral plague much harder to meet. The very man who, above all others, should have stood for order and justice, turned an enemy of most dangerous sort to the community and proved himself a blackmailer and extortionist of degraded type. Schmitz was given the highest office in the gift of the citizens of San Francisco but he used his eminence only for the most sordid personal advantage. Even in the last extremity he had not the grace to be ashamed but interrupted the judge repeatedly to plead that he should not be humiliated unnecessarily. Verily the skin of the grafter is tender. It is to be hoped that no petition signed by a noble army of sentimentalists will be put in circulation, asking that the term of imprisonment be shortened. San Francisco's extremity proved the mayor's opportunity and his punishment is richly deserved.

There has been a growing cynicism in the United States, especially in the West, with regard to legal offenders of high position, who have been alleged immune so far as penal consequences are concerned. But the resentment of an outraged people is almost as dangerous as the rare fury of a patient man, and Schmitz' iniquities have aroused a whole community to the danger of allowing such criminals to remain at large. The meanness of his offences has been especially revolting and the crowd would have been less or more than human had it refrained from cheering when the man who had turned public misfortunes into private gain was finally dismissed to his fitting sphere, "as a message to all the people in the City of San Francisco that law and order are supreme."

#### THE WEST'S GREATEST ASSET