

Educational Notes

(By Spectator)

Drs. Putnam and Weir, in submitting their "Survey of the School System of British Columbia" to the Provincial Superintendent of Education, Mr. S. J. Willis, express themselves as follows: "Education has not yet become an exact science. Indeed, the very nature of some of its problems precludes a wholly scientific treatment. Therefore a number of our conclusions are matters of opinion and proper subjects for educational discussion. We have tried to keep one aim prominently before us—the possible improvement of a provincial school system; and our hope is that out of the general interest aroused through the Survey many such improvements will be made even though they may not be along the exact lines of our recommendations."

These are words of moderation and wisdom. In the light of these words the Survey should be read, and in the light of these words the Education Department, boards of school trustees, inspectors, teachers, and citizens in general, should look to it for inspiration and guidance in a grand, harmonious, united effort to give the boys and girls of British Columbia the best possible start in life, enabling them to advance shoulder to shoulder with the flower of other lands, to fix, perchance, one more milestone in the uncharted wastes of the heritage of humanity.

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In the report of the surveyors much is made of educational tests and measurements, and very properly so. Tests and measurements in education are by no means new; there have been such as long as educational systems have been in existence. But in our day successful attempts have been made to improve on the tests and measurements of the past—to render them more exact, more effective, more nearly scientific. Of these the fullest possible use should be made. To all improvements in methods, in the mechanics of the educational process, a generous recognition will be accorded by all thoughtful, fairminded educators. But it must never be forgotten that life is more than meat; that the end is more important than the means; that the work to be done is of infinitely more value than the machinery which may even wonderfully facilitate its accomplishment.

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The biographer of the great man has an impossible task. At best he can but present to us a lifelike corpse, a marble statue of him who once trod this earth a being of flesh and blood and delicate nervous system; of strength of power, of compassion, of tenderness, of love—an expression and revelation of the divine. The great man has not died, though invisible to the myriads of the blind who all about us grope their way; though he lives not in the pages of a Boswell, or even of a Luke or John. He has lived first in the lives of those he has actually touched, his brethren according to the flesh, his brethren more truly according to the spirit. To these, too, has been accorded the high honor and precious privilege of passing on the stream of life to a new generation of spiritual sons, who in turn transmit the undying life to others. In these we read the only authentic life of the great one who has gone before.

No pen of gold can incarnate for us the great one who has passed beyond the range of mortal sight.

Similarly, though it has been given to the sage of this generation or of that to feel within himself what education is, the power has never been granted him to define it vitally, so that he who reads may run. The statue carved by Phidias is but a piece of stone to the unresponsive clod.

Is it all in vain, then, the sweat of the soul of the immortal sculptor to reveal to us the god who has come in to him, supped with him and made his abode with him? By no means. The cold, lifeless marble may be the lowly door by which the god of Phidias may enter in and make his abode with us. This is the glory of the marble; this is the glory of Phidias.

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The National Council of Education is an organization doing invaluable service to the cause of education in Canada. Through its efforts some of the finest minds of the Old World have shared their best with many thousands of thoughtful Canadians. The National Council has given us its idea of education, perhaps as simply and yet as eloquently as it is possible to express the inexpressible. The Council says: "Education is a spiritual process; education is imparted by personality." A more true, a more exact conception it would be hard to discover. In the last analysis it comes just to this: How is education to be acquired? Through the personality of the teacher breathing the breath of life upon the sensitized mind and heart of the pupil. So the living principle finds effective lodgment in the mind and breast of another being, where it may spring up to new and glorious life.

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One of the stalwart Liberals whose co-operation and service MacKenzie King has found indispensable is the Right Honorable George P. Graham. In a recent address to the Young Men's Liberal Club of Toronto Mr. Graham said: "I have been at the League of Nations Assembly, and I have taken part in considerable diplomatic conferences, and I want to say to the young men, you are not fitted for public life in Canada unless you understand the French language."

"To understand" the French language is not enough for the young man who would fit himself for public service in the great Dominion. Every ambitious young Canadian of English speech should see to it that he is at home also in the beautiful language of France, that he can read it, write it correctly, think of it, speak it with fluency and expression. Canada can not become a great nation—one and indivisible—unless the two great national elements can enter freely into each other's minds and hearts. This is impossible unless we are at home in each other's speech. Almost every French-Canadian public man can make a telling speech in English. Every Canadian public man of the English-speaking provinces should be able to return the compliment by making a telling speech in French. The late Sir John A. Macdonald confessed that he knew no Greek. Politics, he said he knew, and, let us candidly admit the fact, statesmanship he also knew. As a preparation for a marvelous career in both he made a proper beginning for a Canadian public man when as a boy in the old Kingston Grammar School he took prizes for proficiency in French.