

History in the High Schools

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A FEW weeks ago the editor of the *COURIER* censured the history teachers of the country very severely, because he had been unable to awaken a keen interest in the constitutional aspect of the navy question, and went so far as to say that they must be "either indifferent or ignorant." His criticism is too severe. Some teachers are no doubt indifferent; a few may be ignorant; but the greater part of the blame should be placed on the conditions under which they are working. Even the enterprising and aggressive teacher can disregard the curriculum and the manifold regulations to only a limited extent.

The average High School teacher will admit at once that conditions surrounding the teaching of history in the High Schools and Collegiates of the provinces are not satisfactory. These conditions have been discussed year after year in the English and History section of the Ontario Educational Association, and at the present time a committee is working on the problem. But it is advisable that the matter should be discussed by a wider audience than can be obtained in a section of the Educational Association. What follows is spoken from the point of view of the High School, because the writer knows conditions there more fully than elsewhere. What, then, is wrong?

In the first place there is more work prescribed than can be done satisfactorily under present conditions. I wonder if the public realize that the pupil who takes the whole High School course in history, studies Canadian history up to 1885, British history from Roman times to 1885, Oriental history, Greek history to the fall of Corinth, Roman history to the death of Augustus, Mediaeval and Modern European history. A beautifully complete and useful course under proper conditions, but a very burdensome and unsatisfactory course under conditions as they are.

THE framers of this curriculum may have acted on the assumption that pupils enter the High School with a good elementary knowledge of British and Canadian history, and that the first part of the High School course is therefore only a review. Such an assumption is quite unwarranted. The average pupil entering the High School knows nothing worth while about either British or Canadian history. This is not the fault of the Public School curriculum. Very comprehensive courses in Canadian and British history are outlined. They include practically everything that is prescribed in these branches for the High School. Not only that, but the Education Department has recently issued a manual giving the Public School teachers instructions as to how the history should be taught. Besides excellent suggestions as to methods, illustrative lessons are outlined, some of which would certainly be far more suitable for the highest class of the High School than for the Public School. In short the Education Department has laid down for the Public Schools a course in British and Canadian history, excellent in itself, but far more pretentious than any teacher could possibly cover satisfactorily under present conditions, even if he tried ever so hard. But, while so much is included in the Public School course, no examination on that subject is required for entrance to the High School, and the Public School teacher is constantly tempted to neglect history for other subjects on which the pupils have to pass entrance examinations. From my experience with First Form classes in the High School, I have long believed that history was very much neglected in the Public School, but not until recently did I make a systematic investigation of how great the neglect is. By questioning the pupils in the three first forms of Humberside Collegiate Institute, I obtained the following information concerning the number of lessons per week devoted to history in the final year in the Public Schools from which these pupils came:

City pupils—20 per cent. had two or three lessons per week, 55 per cent. had one lesson per week, 25 per cent. had no lessons in history.

Country pupils—61 per cent. had two or three lessons per week, 29 per cent. had one lesson per week, 10 per cent. had no lessons in history.

These figures show that, while a most elaborate course is laid down for Public Schools, some teachers are making no serious effort to teach the subject. There is no desire on the part of the writer, or High School teachers in general, to censure unduly the Public School teacher, for the latter has a very difficult position to fill. The whole Public School course is, according to the testimony of the

Public School teachers, so overloaded that they cannot possibly do all the work prescribed, and some subject or subjects must be neglected. What more natural than to neglect those subjects on which the entrance candidate does not have to write?

The High School, then, has to do not only its own legitimate share of the history work, but that of the Public School as well. This is an exceedingly serious matter, for the High School curriculum is woefully overloaded. Not only is a large amount of work required in most of the subjects, but too many subjects are prescribed. The consequence is that even the clever pupil is overburdened, while the less gifted one is forced into slipshod methods of work. It is far more important that our pupils should think, than that they should be crammed with facts, and yet our courses are so extensive, and our examination tests are so rigorous, that the High School teachers cannot teach the work as they would wish. It is not fear of the High School Inspectors that keeps them from changing their methods, but the fact that pupils have to be prepared for certain definite examination tests, and that the pupils and the parents are trusting to the teachers to have the necessary work done.

How can conditions be improved? I should like to suggest the following changes: (1) To lessen the amount of work prescribed for the Public School, especially in such subjects as Art and Nature Study. (2) To cut in two the amount of history prescribed for the Public School, in order that what is prescribed may be done well. (3) To have a paper on history at the entrance examination. (4) To curtail the High School courses, especially with regard to the number of subjects prescribed. (5) To cut down the work in history prescribed for the High School in order that that subject may be better taught.

The state has a vital interest in the teaching of history. The point of view, the breadth of vision of the next generation of citizens will depend to a considerable extent upon the kind of instruction the boys and girls of to-day receive in this subject in the Public and High Schools. If these pupils not only learn a reasonable number of facts, but learn to think logically and dispassionately about the events and the problems of the past, we may expect confidently that they will become intelligent, well-informed, patriotic citizens.

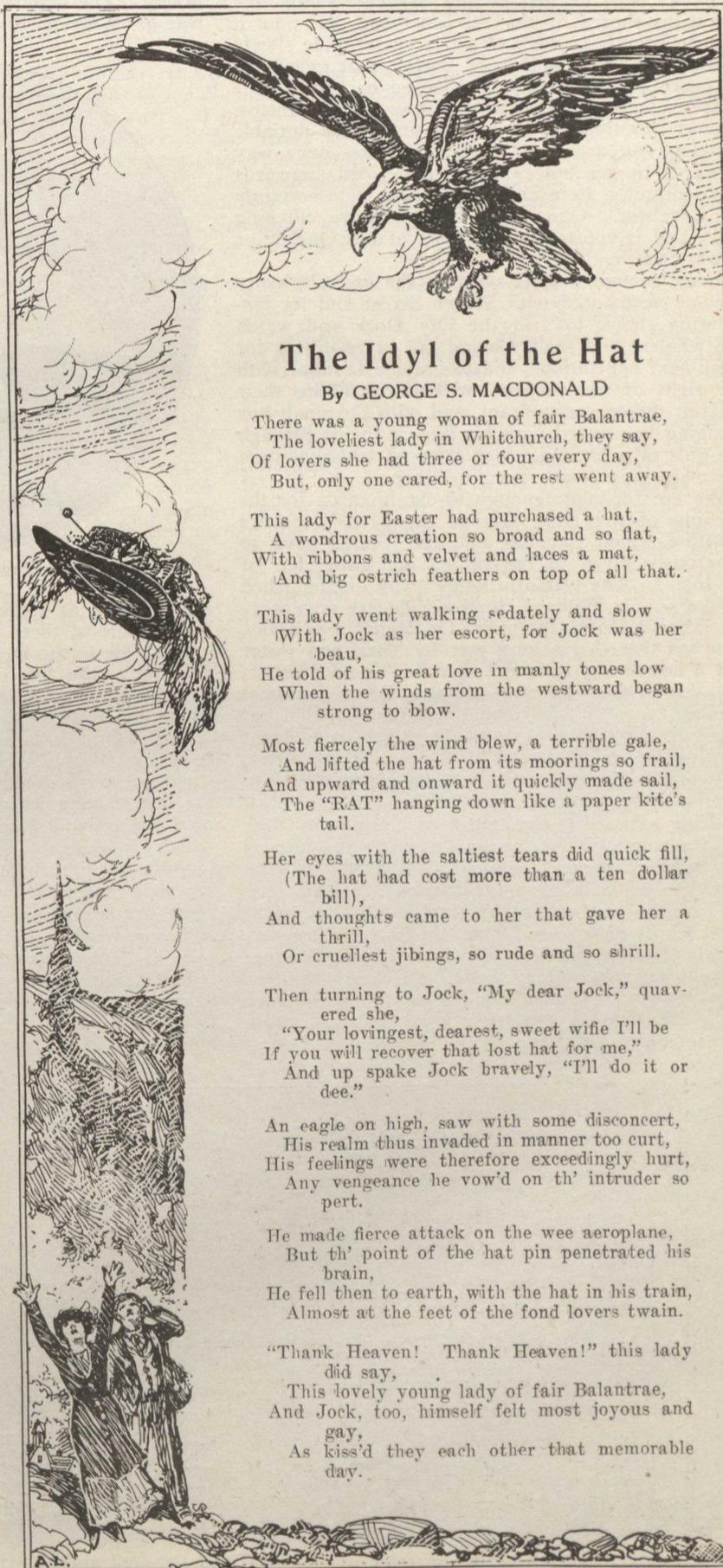
Sin and Wages

UNDER the heading, "Sin and Wages," the editor of the *Mail and Empire* gives some idea of the tendency of public opinion to favour a minimum wage law. He writes:

"The Illinois Senate has been investigating the problem of vice in the State, and has been taking evidence from many sources. The sociological expert and the woman of the street have told their stories, and a few days ago some of the largest employers of labour in Chicago were examined. That

low wages are primarily responsible for many girls going astray seems to be the opinion of the women themselves. The employers, taking a more fatalistic view, have acted on the theory that if a girl is destined for vice the difference of three or four dollars a week in her envelope will not affect her one way or the other. The investigation is of unusual interest, in view of the fact that there is a bill now pending in the Legislature establishing a minimum wage of \$12 a week for all women workers except domestic servants. The probability is the commission will find that low wages have more to do with immorality than any other cause. Poverty appears to be the root of most of the misery and immorality in the world to-day; and the supreme problem of statesmanship is the finding of some more equitable means of distributing wealth."

That low wages is the sole cause of this social evil, few will maintain. Nevertheless, there are other reasons why sentiment should be aroused in connection with this point. The mean employer should not be allowed to compete unfairly with the fair employer; nor should any young girl be allowed through ignorance to accept a wage which is unfair to her and to her fellow employees whether male or female. The starvation wage must go.



The Idyl of the Hat

By GEORGE S. MACDONALD

There was a young woman of fair Balantrae,
The loveliest lady in Whitechurch, they say,
Of lovers she had three or four every day,
But, only one cared, for the rest went away.

This lady for Easter had purchased a hat,
A wondrous creation so broad and so flat,
With ribbons and velvet and laces a mat,
And big ostrich feathers on top of all that.

This lady went walking sedately and slow
With Jock as her escort, for Jock was her beau,
He told of his great love in manly tones low
When the winds from the westward began strong to blow.

Most fiercely the wind blew, a terrible gale,
And lifted the hat from its moorings so frail,
And upward and onward it quickly made sail,
The "RAT" hanging down like a paper kite's tail.

Her eyes with the saltiest tears did quick fill,
(The hat had cost more than a ten dollar bill),
And thoughts came to her that gave her a thrill,
Or cruellest jibings, so rude and so shrill.

Then turning to Jock, "My dear Jock," quavered she,
"Your loveliest, dearest, sweet wife I'll be
If you will recover that lost hat for me,"
And up spake Jock bravely, "I'll do it or dee."

An eagle on high, saw with some disconcert,
His realm thus invaded in manner too curt,
His feelings were therefore exceedingly hurt,
Any vengeance he vow'd on th' intruder so pert.

He made fierce attack on the wee aeroplane,
But th' point of the hat pin penetrated his brain,
He fell then to earth, with the hat in his train,
Almost at the feet of the fond lovers twain.

"Thank Heaven! Thank Heaven!" this lady did say,
This lovely young lady of fair Balantrae,
And Jock, too, himself felt most joyous and gay,
As kiss'd they each other that memorable day.