

of the two countries, and finds the same significant difference there, and the evil conditions he calls attention to in France are singularly like some things existing here in Ontario.

Speaking of the new proposals in England, the *London Times* said last month: "Our educational system, like many other English institutions, has been constructed by a fortuitous, piecemeal and haphazard process. It has grown up, no one knows exactly how. It has not been imposed from above, as in some continental countries, by a department of State, and perhaps for that very reason its life, though not perhaps sufficiently regulated and directed, is in many respects a vigorous life." The *Times* then proceeds to point out the evil of "too rigid an application of central government to that peculiar growth of English soil, our great Public Schools. They do much to encourage that type of character that has made Englishmen more successful than any other nation as merchants, as adventurers, as colonists; that manly, outspoken type that will do its duty and fear no responsibility." The *Times* points out that under the government's proposals (which have been several years in framing) there is, however, no danger of these schools being "bound hand and foot by the inevitable red-tape of a government department," and it concludes by saying, "There is no doubt that if the liberty and independence of action, under which our great Public Schools have lived and worked, and attained their present unique position in the national life, were seriously curtailed by any reforms of organization, the result would be loss rather than gain to the cause of national education."

The point I wish to make in this connection is that, though we boast to be Anglo-Saxons and to have the Anglo-Saxon spirit, yet, from the nature of our constitution and our history, our system of education approxi-

mates very closely to the continental, not to the English. It has been imposed from above by the State, and has not grown up of itself. Therefore, there is all the more need that we work, not in the direction of greater uniformity (which may be desirable in England), but in the direction of greater freedom and individuality, a lesson that they are learning in some measure in France, where it is much needed.

What possible chance is there under our system for the growth of a strong institution, with a character of its own, leaving a deep impress of individuality on all who pass through it? Our system is too much like a gigantic machine. It is a pity and a shame that most of our teachers feel so keenly that they are parts of a machine; it is a pity and a shame that we should so often be told by those who can compare our schools with those of England and Scotland, that the great defect in the products of our system is, as we might expect, lack of individuality.

But in conclusion it may be objected that there is a fine antidote to this evil of uniformity in the erratic and frequent changes in the Departmental regulations; that the teachers certainly cannot complain of monotony. Every teacher here knows, however, that this itch for change has aggravated the trouble, not mitigated it; that if no new regulations had been issued for the past five years we should probably be better off than we are now.

The Minister doubtless thinks that all this is necessary to avoid stagnation, "lest one good custom should corrupt the world"; he forgets that progress is more than mere restlessness. One thinks of Dante's rebuke of the fickle city of Florence:

"Think in the time thou can'st recall,
Laws, coinage, customs, places all,
How thou hast rearranged,
How oft thy members changed!
Could'st thou but see thyself aright,
And turn thy vision to the light,
Thy likeness thou would'st find