

# Hon. Dr. Cody, Ontario's New Minister of Education, Outlines His Plans

(Exclusive Interview With Canadian Home Journal)

His First Official Statement of Program for Pushing Ontario to the Front—He Will Meet the People and Learn Their Views—Plans to Make the Public School Fit the Needs of the Masses—A Great Movement

By THOMAS BENGOUGH,  
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I had the honor of an invitation from Ontario's new Minister of Education, Hon. Dr. Cody, to talk over with him some educational subjects in which he knew I was interested, he having read some of my views as expressed through the "Canadian Home Journal." As we have been intimate for many years, the meeting was quite informal and unofficial, being held in Dr. Cody's private library at his residence on Jarvis Street, Toronto; but as all the matters we discussed were of public interest, especially to readers of this Journal—some of them having been touched upon by the Minister a few days later in his address to the Canadian Press Association—I secured his consent to the publication of the interview which follows. Dr. Cody is not responsible in any way for this Introduction, which he has not seen, but at my request he revised the Interview which follows, and which may be taken as his first official pronouncement of policy on these matters since his selection by Premier Hearst, who is to be congratulated on the choice of so able a colleague.

I wish to bear my personal testimony to the unusual equipment which Dr. Cody brings to his new and onerous task. He holds one of the most responsible offices that could be allotted to any man in Canada, for the advance steps taken by Ontario are watched and imitated by other Canadian provinces, and even by other nations. But if the work of the Ontario Education Department should influence no people outside this province, it would be supremely important, for the training of millions of our young people will be decided very largely by the new Minister of Education.

The training of Dr. Cody himself has been exceptionally good. His home-life was ideal. I had the unique privilege, when a boy, of spending some months in that home, in the village of Embro, Ontario, in which his father, an honored merchant, and his godly mother, maintained all the best traditions of fidelity to duty as sung by Robbie Burns in his "Cottar's Saturday Night":

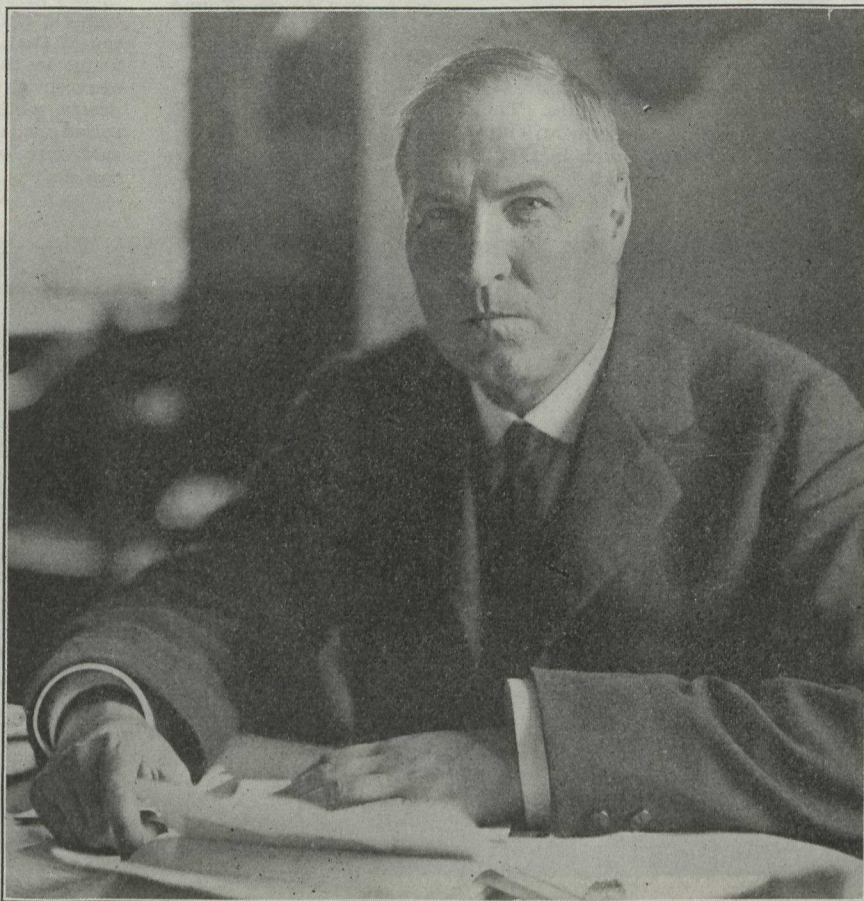
And certes, in fair virtue's heavenly road  
The cottage leaves the palace far behind.

I was deeply impressed, as a lad, when present at the simple and devout family worship, at the Cody fireside, when, after reading a chapter from "the big Ha' Bible, aince his father's pride," the homely scene so well described by Burns was re-enacted, and "the saint, the husband and the father prayed" for guidance in the bringing up of this precious boy, as well as for help in the daily affairs of the family. I well remember also attending a small meeting of men of Embro at a society which I believe they called a Young Men's Christian Association. Dr. Cody's father was the leader, and opened the discussion on "The Advantages of being a Christian," by telling, in the simplest language, how at every step in his life he asked for Divine guidance, and how he had been helped at every stage in his journey. I am glad to know that this worthy father still lives to view with proud satisfaction, and also with humble gratitude to God, the great work which his son has already done for Toronto in connection with St. Paul's Church, and which is now to be enlarged to take in the Province in its most important department of Government.

The young student, who got such a fine start in life, went to High School in Galt, a town made famous for education through Dr. Tassie's noted work. During his university career Mr. Cody was fortunate in having as his "guide, philosopher and friend" the late John E. Bryant, M.A., a brilliant educationist, who was editor of "The Educational Weekly," and later on founded the Bryant Press in this city and the Booklovers' Library in Philadelphia.

Young Cody's motto all through his life has been "Thorough," and it is needless to say that at examinations all through his career he swept the papers and took the highest standing. As an example of his thoroughness I may mention that I reported his address before the Empire Club on "The National Anthem," which gave evidence of

the deepest research into the history of that production, and an examination of many questions relating to its disputed authorship. When a request was made by Dr. Goggin for a copy of the address to be used in the public school reading books—for it was a classic—Dr. Cody revised it so completely that not a single page of the transcript could be sent to the printer without entire re-copying. Every date had been verified, every statement reviewed, every literary period rounded



Hon. Dr. Cody, the new Minister of Education, in his study.

out, every sentence perfected. This is a typical illustration of the unstinted labor which Dr. Cody bestows on everything he undertakes.

Dr. Cody has been blessed by nature with an all-round bounty—a physical constitution that can stand any amount of work; a happy heartedness, mental alertness, buoyant joy in work, open-mindedness, sympathy, concentration, keenness, thoroughness, and absolute frankness and fairness. He has no arts or wiles, and is a decidedly new type in politics. He will "play the game" all right, but in a new, frank, broad-minded, lofty-spirited way. That he will succeed in his new sphere goes without saying, for he knows the Science and Art of Education from A to Z, and he has already put himself *en rapport* with teachers and educational officials as well as the general public by his frank desire to meet the people and get their suggestions and constructive criticisms—an attitude which at once disarms captious criticism and gives him a fair chance to "make good" on some of his strongly-held views.

Dr. Cody feels that his "call" to his present task is as clear as his original call to the ministry of the church; for he is essentially a missionary, a crusader, a knight with lance ready for the conflict with evil in any form; and I am sure he will enjoy a tilt with the Dragon of Ignorance, and that he will rouse his army of officials, inspectors, and teachers of all ranks to enthusiasm in the holy war against illiteracy, and to the task of fitting our naturally bright Canadian youth for conquest over material difficulties, and in the search for hidden riches in the wonderful natural resources of Ontario. His program for fitting the public school specially to the needs of the ninety per cent. of children who get no further education will, if carried out, result in a great uplift to this Province.

## THE INTERVIEW

(As submitted to and revised by the Minister of Education.)

The reasons which led Rev. Dr. Cody to assume the office of Minister of Education, and enter politics have naturally been much discussed. On this point Hon. Dr. Cody said:

"I feel that in these great days everyone is called on to serve his country to the best of his ability; not only to do 'his bit,'—that may seem to be the minimum amount that he can do—but more than his bit, his very utmost. Probably at no other time, under no other circumstances, would it have been possible for the Prime Minister to have invited me to undertake this work, or for me to attempt to undertake it. But I am trying to do this in all humility as a piece of public service to my native Province and this Dominion, which I so dearly love. Believe me, I am undertaking this task not from any ambitious motives, and I think I may honestly add from any selfish consideration, but solely and wholly to try to render a service in this day and generation to the cause of education in Canada."

"But your entry into public life, while still retaining your position as rector of St. Paul's church, puzzles some people."

"It is a somewhat unusual step, I know," replied Dr. Cody, "but under our political constitution membership in the Legislature is the only way through which one can exercise the executive power in connection with the Department of Education. Ample provision is being made for the carrying on of the work at St. Paul's, so that I can devote myself, as I intend, with fullest energy to the Department of Education."

"What is the chief feature of the many-sided work of your Department that has most impressed you?" I asked.

"Three things stand out in great prominence in my mind," replied the Minister of Education; "first, the great importance of keeping public opinion in our Province so strong on education that great and progressive measures may be projected and sustained, as was the case with the Fisher Bill in England; next, the great need of heartening and properly supporting teachers of all grades with public sympathy and substantial recognition in money and influence; and thirdly, the special value in Canada to-day of the growing boys, who must be trained so as to be able to discharge the double responsibility which is now upon them—that which they would have to bear under normal conditions, and also the extra burden of trying to do part of the work that would have been done by the gallant fellows who will not come back to us in Canada. Therefore all that we can do for our boys of to-day in the way of sound education is a patriotic service of the highest possible character."

I told Dr. Cody how I had been trying to do my "bit" in the way of creating public sentiment in favor of progressive measures in education through the "Canadian Home Journal," the "Home and School Council," and in public addresses, and I asked him his intentions in these directions. His reply was cheering.

"I feel," said Dr. Cody, "that I have a 'brief' for teachers, trustees, and all who wish to see educational interests pushed forward; and I intend personally to visit teachers, schools, and the general public, and not only learn what is going on, but do what I can to show my sympathy with every effort to advance and improve education in this Province. I do not propose to be merely an office man; I intend to let the officials of my Department attend to the routine matters, while I keep in touch with those who are doing the work of training, pushing their local projects for the improvement of education, and paying the taxes for schools and educational property and

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