

Superintendents' Reports 1

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~~Upon the subject of education, not presuming to dictate any plan or system respecting it, I can only say that I view it as the most important subject which we as a people can be engaged in. That every man may receive at least, a moderate education, and thereby be enabled to read the histories of his own and other countries, by which he may duly appreciate the value of our free institutions, appears to be an object of vital importance, even on this account alone, to say nothing of the advantages and satisfaction to be derived from being able to read the scriptures and other works, both of a religious and moral nature, for themselves. For my part, I desire to see the time when education, and by its means, morality, sobriety, enterprise, and industry, shall become much more general than at present, and should be gratified to have it in my power to contribute something to the advancement of any measure which might have a tendency to accelerate the happy period.~~

GOVERNOR ALBINO PEREZ CALLS FOR PUBLIC EDUCATION FOR NEW MEXICO (1836) From Ralph Emerson Twitchell. *The Leading Facts of New Mexican History* (Cedar Rapids, Iowa, 1912), vol. II, pp. 57-59.

Ignorance, and idleness, have always been the cause of infinite evil among men in society, and to diminish them, the only remedy and the most efficacious adopted in all countries of the world, is the education of Youth. In this valuable and interesting province securing the good of the people being the principal object, the true lovers of the public weal should attend to this, and it is also the most sacred obligation of the local authorities. This important branch is in a sad state throughout the territory, and more especially in this capital, which by its very nature and elements, does not think profoundly on the means to overcome these false difficulties, which seem by their continuation, to justify the neglect. Running the streets are children who ought to be receiving the education so necessary at the fitting and proper age; youths of evil disposition, abandoned to laziness and licentiousness, practicing vices; useless aims which only serve to corrupt, like the plague, the city that tolerates and feeds them; and above all, what are the results? Robbery, immorality, poverty, desertion, and the most humiliating shame of the city, which if it were cared for by its municipal authorities, should be the enviable example of others composing a most interesting part of the Mexican Nation.

Moved by such salutary reflections, and the love I bear to the inhabitants of this soil, and by the obligation imposed upon me by my position, I issue for the relief of the Royal Municipality the following Plan of Regulation of Public Instruction.

Art. 1. There shall be in this city two schools, particularly of primary instruction, in charge of Masters who may present themselves to conduct them, and who have the proper capacity in the judgment of a commission named by the corporation, which shall examine them in reading, writing, and counting.

2. The schools of the same nature now existing, gone through by heads of families, shall be destroyed, provided always that the Masters who conduct them

have not the capacity and they may present.

3. The Masters shall with the heads of families products of the soil, miserable, who have received

4. All Fathers or Mothers to twelve years, are of them, and the youths of different branches of

5. Those who fail through omission or neglect, according to their means, and those who are sentenced by law with the pecuniary one.

6. The Youths shall consent to learn a trade, or if they are vagrant or vicious, and governing such cases.

7. The Justices of the peace shall youths of twelve years engaged in betting games, and magistrates for the reformation of those who find behaving ill, they shall be punished with the penalty of detention,

8. Every one or two shall be known by name and

9. To facilitate the work of each block a commission shall be appointed, unanimously whose duties shall be

First. To make examinations of the trades, ages and occupations of the youths.

Second. To make arrangements for each of the two, if necessary, ought to apply them to the day laborers and to all this.

Third. To announce the names of families or guardians of the youths in articles.

Fourth. To give notice to those who, having been sentenced, are advising the judge, and themselves liable.

Fifth. To give notice to those who, having been admonished, are not observing the proper or object of the law.

Sixth. To give notice to those who are spending money on the grounds for the

From Sol Colen, *Education in the United States*
A Documentary History 1974

have not the capacity and the approval required by the preceding article, to which end they may present themselves for examination, in opposition.

3. The Masters shall enjoy such salary or recompense as may be agreed upon with the heads of families, and shall receive pay from those known to be poor, in products of the soil, teaching gratis, orphan children, or those of the absolutely miserable, who have no livelihood or power to pay.

4. All Fathers or Guardians who have children in their care from the age of five to twelve years, are obliged to send them to one of the schools whichever best suits them, and the youths of twelve years or more [must be] in houses of artisans in the different branches of industry, that they may earn a living by honest occupation.

5. Those who fail to comply with the first part of the preceding article, by omission or neglect, shall be required by law, to pay a fine of from, one to five p. according to their means, in the first, double in the second, and triple in the third, and those who are still recalcitrant, and those who cannot pay the fine, shall be punished by law with three days arrest, doubling this punishment in the same way as the pecuniary one.

6. The Youths spoken of in the second part of the fourth article who do not consent to learn a trade, or who have no honest occupation, shall be treated as vagrant or vicious, and be tried and sentenced by the established Court and the laws governing such cases.

7. The Justices of the Wards, the wardens or deputies of the police, may arrest youths of twelve years or over, whom they find in the streets and public places engaged in betting games, at the end of eight days giving notice to one of the magistrates for the recognizance; and the children of twelve or under whom they find behaving ill, they shall take to the school that they may there suffer the same penalty of detention, advising the Master to punish them without fail.

8. Every one or two wards shall form two blocks proportionately, and designated by known names and fixed numbers.

9. To facilitate the better carrying out of this proclamation there shall be in each block a commissioner of Public Instruction, named by three justices unanimously whose duties shall be;

First. To make exact lists of the inhabitants of their blocks, with a statement of ages and occupations by which they live.

Second. To make another list of the children who shall attend the school and go to each of the two, in order to learn if they are there; an account of the youths who ought to apply themselves to a trade, in what shop and with what Masters, and of the day laborers and where, they work, so that they can certify to the correctness of all this.

Third. To announce, courteously, one, two, or three times, to the fathers of families or guardians or children, what is set forth in the clauses of the preceding articles.

Fourth. To give notice in writing, to the magistrate of the precinct of those who, having been admonished, still do not comply, so that through him or by advising the judge, the law may inflict the penalty, to which they have made themselves liable.

Fifth. To give notice, in the same manner, of all those living in idleness, who, having been admonished, do not find occupation, declaring all they can testify as to the proper or objectionable habits of the individuals.

Sixth. To give notice also, of any suspicious persons that may be in their blocks, who are spending money without knowing whether they come by it honestly, with the grounds for the suspicion.

Seventh. To visit every month, the schools to which the children go, to learn from the Masters whether they attend, and to get the information for their guidance. Similar visits shall be made to the workshops for the same purpose.

Eighth. They shall make note, in their lists, of the inhabitants who leave their blocks, to what others they go, and of those who come to live in their own.

Ninth. They shall be charged with the cleanliness of the streets and public places in their blocks, giving to the magistrate of the precinct of any neglect they notice.

Art. 10. Any person interfering with the commissioner in the discharge of his duty, shall be punished by a fine of from five to twenty-five p. without prejudice that if the fault be serious, he may be punished according to the laws relating to ordinary transgressions.

11. The duty of a commissioner of Public Instruction shall be a compulsory one, and no one can be excused from discharging it; it is obligatory for six months, without being required to continue, this term completed, until the end of the year, and the magistrates can remove him, for sufficient cause as neglect or bad management, if proven.

12. For any offense committed by the commissioner in the discharge of his duties, he shall be punished by a fine of from ten to thirty p. and deprivation of duty; and if the offence be the concealment of mischievous persons, or the toleration of them without giving notice to the Judges there shall be exacted fifty p. or two months forced labor.

13. This ordinance may be amended in whole or in part when the R. Ayuntamiento may deem proper, being convinced of its advantages or invalidity.

MICHIGAN'S SUPERINTENDENT OF SCHOOLS, JOHN PIERCE, ON THE IMPORTANCE OF COMMON SCHOOLS (1837) From Michigan Senate. "Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Michigan" *Senate Journal*, 1837, Doc. no. 7, as quoted in Floyd R. Dain, *Education in the Wilderness* (Lansing, Mich., 1968), pp. 229-32.

If we would preserve inviolate the sacred principles of liberty—of liberty, civil and religious—if we would perpetuate free institutions; if we would hand down to those who come after us a constitution, government and laws, based upon the essential and imperishable rights of man, if we would rear a superstructure of elements more durable than crowns and pyramids, we must dig deep and lay broad and permanent the foundations of knowledge and virtue. In an educated and virtuous community, there is safety; the rights of individuals are regarded, and property is respected and secure. Every man sits quietly under his own vine and fig tree, regaling himself with the fruits of his own industry and labor. Justice, truth, and equity are the glory of a nation, but these attributes of virtue are not to be found among an ignorant and vicious people. Generally speaking, the child uneducated in knowledge and virtue, is thoroughly educated in the school of depravity. And what is true of the individual, is true of communities. It may safely be assumed as a fundamental principle in our form of government, that knowledge

is an element so essential to the rational hope of its people, it cannot stand as a corner stone of the state against the encroachments of material of despotism where the mind is dominated by powers.

Nothing else can be expected; oppression; nothing else can be expected; their rights, privileges and common Creator with and the essential principles of seminaries of learning for the body of the people, but ought to be the foundation indeed the chief support of importance that this form and laws of the country

However unprepared, effective and perfect. depends upon the people more effectually than the fabric to be preserved every name and age of citizens, and learn in accomplish this objective system. . . .

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A faithful and mature judgment;

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is an element so essential to its existence and vigorous action, that we can have no rational hope of its perpetuation unless it is generally diffused. Unless, indeed, the corner stone of the social edifice is laid upon the intelligence and virtue of the people, it cannot stand. Without education, no people can secure themselves against the encroachments of power. Superstition and ignorance furnish the raw material of despotism; for there is nothing to prevent the tyranny of the sword, where the mind is degraded and the many unacquainted with their rights and powers.

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Nothing else can secure the great mass of the people against legalized oppression; nothing else can retain them in the full possession and enjoyment of all their rights, privileges and immunities, as men—as rational beings, endowed by their common Creator with the high attributes of moral agency and freedom of choice, and the essential prerogative of self-government. How valuable soever high seminaries of learning may be, we cannot rely upon them for instructing the great body of the people, because they are to be found only in the primary schools. They ought to be the foundation of our whole system of public instruction, as they are indeed the chief support of all our free institutions. . . . It is . . . of the first importance that this foundation be laid deep and firm, not only in the constitution and laws of the country, but also in the warmest affections of our people.

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However unpretending and simple in form, our government is nevertheless effective and perfect. It proceeds from the people—is supported by the people—and depends upon the people—and at the same time restrains and controls the people more effectually than the most rigid systems of despotism. But how is this political fabric to be preserved? Only by the general diffusion of knowledge. Children of every name and age must be taught the qualifications and duties of American citizens, and learn in early life the art of self-control—they must be educated. And to accomplish this object, our chief dependence must necessarily be the free school system. . . .

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Let free schools be established and maintained in perpetuity, and there can be no such thing as a permanent aristocracy in our land; for the monopoly of wealth is powerless, when mind is allowed freely to come in contact with mind. It is only by erecting a barrier between the rich and the poor, which can be done only by allowing the rich a monopoly of learning as well as of wealth, that such an aristocracy can be established. But the operation of the free school system has a powerful tendency to prevent the erection of this barrier.

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A faithful and honorable discharge of these duties requires a well informed mature judgment; and other qualifications of a high character, which can be

obtained only by a good education. Our citizens are all electors—a high and responsible franchise—nearly all of them are liable to serve as jurors; many are necessarily incumbents of the various offices of the township, county, and state, and of the United States. . . . Since, then, by the wise provisions of our system, political power is distributed to such an extent that nearly every citizen may be called upon to share in its exercise, while he submits to its just authority; how essential that all should acquire that knowledge and those qualifications, which are requisite to the right performance of civil, judicial, and military duties. Not mere intelligence, but actual knowledge, which education alone can furnish, is required in every department of the government, in legislation, in jurisprudence, and in the daily execution of the laws.

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We need wisdom, and prudence, and foresight in our councils, fixedness in purpose, integrity, and uprightness of heart in our rulers; unwavering attachment to the rights of man among all our people; but these high attributes of a noble, patriotism, these essential elements of civilization and improvement, will disappear when schools shall cease to exert an all-pervading influence through the length and breadth of our land.

* * *

Wherever the liberality and enterprise of individuals have established flourishing private institutions, they have uniformly had a pernicious influence upon the common schools. Instead of being improved and elevated by their proximity to such institutions, they have lost their character and usefulness. In those towns where private seminaries have been located and well sustained, the free schools will be found, without exception, to be in a miserable condition.

* * *

Let teachers be paid as they ought to be, let them receive such compensation as will remunerate them for their services, and sufficient numbers will be found to fit themselves for the business of teaching. And to secure their employment when fitted to teach, let the provisions of the law be such, that no township shall be entitled to any portion of the income of the public fund, which does not employ thoroughly educated teachers.

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. . . the primary schools should be on the first order, the academies of the highest grade, and the universities assume and maintain a commanding position; and each and all of them be so ably conducted as to give entire satisfaction to all reasonable, unprejudiced minds. With such schools, the rising generation would be thoroughly taught, and the wants of the state adequately supplied.

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OHIO SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENT SAMUEL LEWIS COMMENTS ON THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS (1838) From State of Ohio, *First Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools . . . 1838* (Columbus, 1838), pp. 8-10, 16-18.

As it will be impossible to give a full history of my observations, an example of the several classes must suffice. In one town a free school is taught three months in the year, by one teacher, in a district where more than one hundred children desire to attend; they rush in and crowd the school so as to destroy all hope of usefulness, the wealthy, and those in comfortable circumstances, seeing this, withdraw their children or never send them; the school thus receives the name of a school for the poor, and its usefulness is destroyed. This example is one that represents nearly all the free schools in the State, as well in the country, as in the cities and towns.

Another and much larger number of the districts, adopt a practice of which the following is an example.

The district has funds which would pay a teacher one quarter or less; but in order to keep up a school as long as possible, it is divided between two or more quarters; the teacher makes his estimate of the amount, besides public money, that must be paid by each scholar, and gets his subscription accordingly. Here none send but those who can pay the balance; of course, the children of the poor, the very intemperate and careless, with sometimes the inordinate lovers of money, are left at home. This mode, though it defeats the primary object of the law, really secures a greater aggregate amount of instruction than the other. Another class proceeds on the same plan, with the exception that the teacher is bound to take the very poor free, if they prove their total inability to pay. This is but little, if any, better than the last, since the poor woman must humble herself, and in effect take the benefit of the poor law, before she can get her children into school; and then, both she and her children must suffer, constantly, deep mortification, which frequently drives from the school some of the most promising children, who (right or wrong) are too proud to brook such humiliating conditions. It effectually banishes the children of those who love money better than learning, as well as those of the intemperate, whose sensibilities are too much vitiated to care for this subject at all. Besides, if the poor go on these terms, it invariably crowds the school to a ruinous extent; and if the teacher cannot instruct all, he will, of course, take care of his patrons first; let him be as honest as he may, he will endeavor to satisfy those that support him; and the poor, whose conscientiousness of poverty always make them jealous and watchful, detect the smallest partiality, and leave the school in disgust, or stay to scatter the seeds of discontent and insubordination. Another part of this class is, where the directors agree with the teacher at so much per month; and, after expending the school money, levy, under the statute, a tax on the scholars for the residue, sometimes admitting the poor, and sometimes rejecting all that are unable to pay the difference.

In some towns, all the teachers receive a portion of the public money at the rate of so much per scholar, which they deduct from the subscription price. In these cases, the schools are all strictly private, and no provision whatever is made for the poor. The officers in one place where this practice prevails, said that "if the schools were free, they would be so crowded as to be useless, unless they had more funds; but, by the mode they adopted, every man who sent to school, got a part of the

public money;" if he was not able to pay the balance, he was punished by losing the whole; which is certainly a bad feature in the practice, and a gross violation of law. Another custom is not to draw the school money for several years, and then say once in two or three years, they can keep a crowded free school from three to six months. In some places public schools have not been taught this two years. These examples give the practice of all the school districts in the State; the second and third named prevail the most generally; but it is not uncommon to find all the examples adopted in different districts in the same township.

No correct idea can be given of the particular system of instruction adopted in the schools; it embraces almost every system; and in our public, as well as in our private schools, is found every variety from the very best, to those esteemed the most defective. But a small proportion of schools in the State have sufficient permanence to have adopted any specific plan, nor is it possible to produce or preserve any thing like system, until the schools have more permanence, and the art of teaching is recognized as something valuable.

In towns and large villages, the *common* schools are poorer than in the country. In the latter, neighborhoods depend more on them, and of course take a deeper interest in their control; while in the former, there is too frequently but little attention paid to these schools, by persons able to provide other means of instruction. Private schools are considered the best, and being patronized by the wealthy, create a distinction that is ruinous. I am unwilling to repeat the remarks in reference to this point, that I have often heard made; it may be sufficient to say, that in many instances, the whole tendency is to bring the schools into disrepute, if not positive disgrace.

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Though a great majority of our citizens are enlightened and intelligent, it must be admitted, that quite a number do not regard the education of their children with sufficient interest to induce proper individual action; and unless provision for these, other than parental, be made, they will be even worse situated, in many cases, than the orphan. It is common to say of these, "They could educate their children, if they would": but visits to the houses of many people, in different counties, of whom this was said, would satisfy any man, as it has satisfied me, that if they paid for schooling, it must be taken from the already too scanty fare of an unfortunate wife and poorly provided family. In many cases, you may as well charge fifteen dollars per quarter, as fifty cents. They cannot, if they would, and too many would not, if they could, pay, as individuals, anything.

If such fathers were the only sufferers, we might be excused from labors to avert the evil; but such parents will have left the world, long before society will feel its full extent.

The children are not to blame; nor are the children of those in other circumstances, guilty of any offence that will justify their fathers in fixing upon them a great moral contagion, destroying their best interests.

The children of those several classes (and there are not a few) are practically shut out of our common schools, in nine cases out of ten, in the State. For it makes but little difference, whether we positively prohibit their attendance, or prescribe such conditions as preclude them. Nor is it a question that can influence us, whether they are correct in their views. So long as those views operate the hindrance, it is the same thing to the public. It is not by any means certain, that we

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aided by sharper-sighted eyes; and subsequently to their having expressed a favorable opinion. From the number of copies which have been sold, and the selections made from it by the public press, it must have been deemed to contain some useful information respecting school systems and modes of instruction and discipline.

It was this Report which the Boston Masters saw fit so virulently to assail. And what were its sins, or rather,—to put the question more broadly and therefore more favorably for them,—what were the supposed errors in my philosophy of instruction and discipline? On their own showing, they were four, and these only:

1. I was supposed to lean too far to the side of oral instruction, as contradistinguished from the study of textbooks.

2. I was,—mistakenly however,—supposed to approve the intense activity and excitement of some of the Scotch schools.

3. I was charged with error in advocating the method of teaching children to read, by beginning with words, instead of letters; and

4. It was numbered among my sins that I indulged the hope of seeing corporal punishment more and more disused in all schools, as its necessity might be gradually superseded, by substituting the pleasures of knowledge and high motives of action in its stead, until, at some future period (which I never attempted to fix), it might be dispensed with, except, as it was accustomed to express it, "in most extraordinary cases."

The above were proper subjects for discussion; and, in the *Common School Journal*, I had published whatever had been offered me adverse to my own views on these points, as readily as I had published my own opinions. But, though proper subjects for discussion, they furnished no provocation for hostile attack. . . . They furnished no pretext or shadow of excuse for holding me up before the public as having been ignorant of, and indifferent to, the cause of education before my appointment as Secretary; or for attempting to array the whole State in arms against me, by the false accusation of my "great disparagement of committees, teachers, and the condition of the school system of Massachusetts"; or for assailing the Normal Schools, because I was friendly to them, or their Principals, because they were friendly to me; or for accusing me and my friends of a base collusion for most unworthy objects; or for comparing me, personally, with some of the most offensive of the English tourists who have ever visited this country; or, in fine, for the imputation of many other most dishonorable motives and actions with which the *Remarks* abound.

HORACE MANN ON THE DUTY OF THE OLD GENERATION TO THE NEW (1846) From Massachusetts Board of Education. *Tenth Annual Report . . . of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston, 1847), pp. 108-13, 124-25, 127.

It was then, amid all these privations and dangers, that the Pilgrim Fathers conceived the magnificent idea of a Free and Universal Education for the People; and, amid all their poverty, they stinted themselves to a still scantier pittance; amid all their toils, they imposed upon themselves still more burdensome labors; amid all

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their perils, they braved still greater dangers, that they might find the time and the means to reduce their grand conception to practice. Two divine ideas filled their great hearts,—their duty to God and to posterity. For the one, they built the church; for the other, they opened the school. Religion and Knowledge!—two attributes of the same glorious and eternal truth,—and that truth, the only one on which immortal or mortal happiness can be securely founded.

As an innovation upon all preexisting policy and usages, the establishment of Free Schools was the boldest ever promulgated, since the commencement of the Christian era. As a theory, it could have been refuted and silenced by a more formidable array of argument and experience than was ever marshalled against any other opinion of human origin. But time has ratified its soundness. Two centuries now proclaim it to be as wise as it was courageous, as beneficent as it was disinterested. It was one of those grand mental and moral experiments whose effects cannot be determined in a single generation. But now, according to the manner in which human life is computed, we are the sixth generation from its founders, and have we not reason to be grateful both to God and man for its unnumbered blessings? The sincerity of our gratitude must be tested by our efforts to perpetuate and improve what they established. The gratitude of the lips only is an unholy offering.

In surveying our vast country,—the rich savannahs of the South and the almost interminable prairies of the West,—that great valley, where, if all the nations of Europe were set down together, they could find ample subsistence,—the ejaculation involuntarily bursts forth; "WHY WERE THEY NOT COLONIZED BY MEN LIKE THE PILGRIM FATHERS!"—and as we reflect, how different would have been the fortunes of this nation, had those States,—already so numerous, and still extending, circle beyond circle,—been founded by men of high, heroic, Puritan mould;—how different in the eye of a righteous Heaven, how different in the estimation of the wise and good of all contemporary nations, how different in the fortunes of that vast procession of the generations which are yet to rise up over all those wide expanses, and to follow each other to the end of time;—as we reflect upon these things, it seems almost pious to repine at the ways of Providence; resignation becomes laborious, and we are forced to choke down our murmurings at the will of Heaven! Is it the solution of this deep mystery, that our ancestors did as much in their time, as it is ever given to one generation of men to accomplish, and have left to us and to our descendants the completion of the glorious work they began?

The alleged ground upon which the founders of our Free School system proceeded, when adopting it, did not embrace the whole argument by which it may be defended. Their insight was better than their reason. They assumed a ground, indeed, satisfactory and convincing to Protestants; but, at that time, only a small portion of Christendom was Protestant, and even now only a minority of it is so. The very ground on which our Free Schools were founded, therefore, if it were the only one, would be a reason with half of Christendom, at the present time, for their immediate abolition.

In later times, and since the achievement of American Independence, the universal and ever-repeated argument in favor of Free Schools has been, that the general intelligence which they are capable of diffusing, and which can be imparted by no other human instrumentality, is indispensable to the continuance of a republican government. This argument, it is obvious, assumes, as a postulatam, the superiority of a republican over all other forms of government; and, as a people, we religiously believe in the soundness, both of the assumption and of the argument founded upon it. But if this be all, then a sincere monarchist, a defender of arbitrary

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power, or a believer in the divine right of kings, would oppose Free Schools, for the identical reasons we offer in their behalf. A perfect demonstration of our doctrine,—that Free Schools are the only basis of republican institutions,—would be the perfection of reasoning to his mind, that they should be immediately exterminated.

Admitting, nay claiming for ourselves, the substantial justness and soundness of the general grounds on which our system was originally established and has since been maintained; yet it is most obvious that, unless some broader and more comprehensive principle can be found, the system of Free Schools will be repudiated by whole nations as impolitic and dangerous; and, even among ourselves, all who deny our premises will, of course, set at nought the conclusions to which they lead.

Again; the expediency of Free Schools is sometimes advocated on grounds of Political Economy. An educated people is a more industrious and productive people. Knowledge and abundance sustain to each other the relation of cause and effect. Intelligence is a primary ingredient in the Wealth of Nations. Where this does not stand at the head of the inventory, the items in a nation's valuation will be few, and the sum at the foot of the column insignificant.

The moralist, too, takes up the argument of the economist. He demonstrates that vice and crime are not only prodigals and spendthrifts of their own, but defrauders and plunderers of the means of others; that they would seize upon all the gains of honest industry, and exhaust the bounties of Heaven itself, without satiating their rapacity for new means of indulgence; and that often, in the history of the world, whole generations might have been trained to industry and virtue by the wealth which one enemy to his race has destroyed.

And yet, notwithstanding these views have been presented a thousand times, with irrefutable logic, and with a divine eloquence of truth which it would seem that nothing but combined stolidity and depravity could resist, there is not at the present time, with the exception of New England and a few small localities elsewhere, a State or a community in Christendom, which maintains a system of Free Schools for the education of its children. Even in the State of New York, with all its noble endowments, the Schools are not Free.

I believe that this amazing dereliction from duty, especially in our own country, originates more in the false notions which men entertain *respecting the nature of their right to property*, than in any thing else. In the district school meeting, in the town meeting, in legislative halls, every where, the advocates for a more generous education could carry their respective audiences with them in behalf of increased privileges for our children, were it not instinctively foreseen that increased privileges must be followed by increased taxation. Against this obstacle argument falls dead. The rich man, who has no children, declares it to be an invasion of his rights of property to exact a contribution from him to educate the children of his neighbor. The man who has reared and educated a family of children denounces it as a double tax, when he is called upon to assist in educating the children of others also; or, if he has reared his own children, without educating them, he thinks it peculiarly oppressive to be obliged to do for others, what he refrained from doing even for himself. Another, having children, but disdaining to educate them with the common mass, withdraws them from the Public School, puts them under what he calls "selecter influences," and then thinks it a grievance to be obliged to support a school which he contemns. Or if these different parties so far yield to the force of traditionary sentiment and usage, and to the public opinion around them, as to consent to do something for the cause, they soon reach the limit of expense where their admitted obligation, or their alleged charity, terminates.

It seems not relevant, therefore, in this connection, to inquire into the nature of a man's right to the property he possesses, and to satisfy ourselves respecting the question, whether any man has such an indefeasible title to his estates, or such an absolute ownership of them, as renders it unjust in the government to assess upon him his share of the expenses of educating the children of the community, up to such a point as the nature of the institutions under which he lives, and the wellbeing of society require.

I believe in the existence of a great, immutable principle of natural law, or natural ethics,—a principle antecedent to all human institutions and incapable of being abrogated by any ordinances of man,—a principle of divine origin, clearly legible in the ways of Providence as those ways are manifested in the order of nature and in the history of the race,—which proves the *absolute right* of every human being that comes into the world to an education; and which, of course, proves the correlative duty of every government to see that the means of that education are provided for all.

In regard to the application of this principle of natural law,—that is, in regard to the extent of the education to be provided for all, at the public expense,—some differences of opinion may fairly exist, under different political organizations; but under a republican government, it seems clear that the minimum of this education can never be less than such as is sufficient to qualify each citizen for the civil and social duties he will be called to discharge;—such an education as teaches the individual the great laws of bodily health; as qualifies for the fulfilment of parental duties; as is indispensable for the civil functions of a witness or a juror; as is necessary for the voter in municipal affairs; and finally, for the faithful and conscientious discharge of all those duties which devolve upon the inheritor of a portion of the sovereignty of this great republic.

The will of God, as conspicuously manifested in the order of nature, and in the relations which he has established among men, places the *right* of every child that is born into the world to such a degree of education as will enable him, and, as far as possible, will predispose him, to perform all domestic, social, civil and moral duties, upon the same clear ground of natural law and equity, as it places a child's *right*, upon his first coming into the world, to distend his lungs with a portion of the common air, or to open his eyes to the common light, or to receive that shelter, protection and nourishment which are necessary to the continuance of his bodily existence. And so far is it from being a wrong or a hardship, to demand of the possessors of property their respective shares for the prosecution of this divinely-ordained work, that they themselves are guilty of the most far-reaching injustice, who seek to resist or to evade the contribution. The complainers are the wrong-doers. The cry, "Stop thief," comes from the thief himself.

To any one who looks beyond the mere surface of things, it is obvious, that the primary and natural elements or ingredients of all property consist in the riches of the soil, in the treasures of the sea, in the light and warmth of the sun, in the fertilizing clouds and streams and dews, in the winds, and in the chemical and vegetative agencies of nature. In the majority of cases, all that we call *property*, all that makes up the valuation or inventory of a nation's capital, was prepared at the creation, and was laid up of old in the capacious store-houses of nature. For every unit that a man earns by his own toil or skill, he receives hundreds and thousands, without cost and without recompense, from the All-bountiful Giver. A proud mortal, standing in the midst of his luxuriant wheat-fields or cotton-plantations, may arrogantly call them his own; yet what barren wastes would they be, did not heaven send down upon them its dews and its rains, its warmth and its light; and sustain, for

their growth and ripening, the grateful vicissitude of the seasons? It is said that from eighty to ninety per cent of the very substance of some of the great staples of agriculture are not taken from the earth but are absorbed from the air; so that these productions may more properly be called fruits of the atmosphere than of the soil. Who prepares this elemental wealth; who scatters it, like a sower, through all the regions of the atmosphere, and sends the richly-freighted winds, as His messengers, to bear to each leaf in the forest and to each blade in the cultivated field, the nourishment which their infinitely-varied needs demand? Aided by machinery, a single manufacturer performs the labor of hundreds of men. Yet what could he accomplish without the weight of the waters which God causes ceaselessly to flow; or without those gigantic forces which He has given to steam?

* * *

I bring my argument on this point, then, to a close; and I present a test of its validity, which, as it seems to me, defies denial or evasion.

In obedience to the laws of God and to the laws of all civilized communities, society is bound to protect the natural life; and the natural life cannot be protected without the appropriation and use of a portion of the property which society possesses. We prohibit infanticide under penalty of death. We practise a refinement in this particular. The life of an infant is inviolable even before he is born; and he who feloniously takes it, even before birth, is as subject to the extreme penalty of the law, as though he had struck down manhood in its vigor, or taken away a mother by violence from the sanctuary of home, where she blesses her offspring. But why preserve the natural life of a child, why preserve unborn embryos of life, if we do not intend to watch over and to protect them, and to expand their subsequent existence into usefulness and happiness? As individuals, or as an organized community, we have no natural right; we can derive no authority or countenance from reason; we can cite no attribute or purpose of the divine nature, for giving birth to any human being, and then inflicting upon that being the curse of ignorance, of poverty and of vice, with all their attendant calamities. We are brought then to this startling but inevitable alternative. The natural life of an infant should be extinguished as soon as it is born, or the means should be provided to save that life from being a curse to its possessor; and therefore every State is bound to enact a code of laws legalizing and enforcing infanticide, or a code of laws establishing Free Schools!

The three following propositions, then, describe the broad and ever-during foundation on which the Common School system of Massachusetts reposes:

The successive generations of men, taken collectively, constitute one great Commonwealth.

The property of this Commonwealth is pledged for the education of all its youth, up to such a point as will save them from poverty and vice, and prepare them for the adequate performance of their social and civil duties.

The successive holders of this property are trustees, bound to the faithful execution of their trust, by the most sacred obligations; because embezzlement and pillage from children and descendants are as criminal as the same offences when perpetrated against contemporaries.