

violation of the law, or the culprit may be summoned before a magistrate, who is empowered to fine him five dollars for the first offence and double that amount for each subsequent offence. In proof of the fact that we are still troubled with the evils of irregular and non-attendance, we need only refer to the last report of the Minister of Education. There we find that the registered attendance for 1884 was 466,917, and the average attendance 221,861, or not quite forty-eight per cent. of those registered. This means that not more than forty eight scholars out of every hundred attended school regularly during that year. One other fact more directly bearing upon the subject before us has yet to be stated; no less than 90,959 children between the ages of seven and thirteen years, or about twenty per cent. of those registered, were returned as not attending school for the minimum number of days required by law. Can we wonder that in a very intelligent and appreciative article upon our school system which appeared recently in the *English School-master*, our low rate of average attendance should be the subject of remark. I am quite aware that the circumstances of the country are against as regular attendance of pupils as can be secured in most European countries; but why should it be any lower than in Australia, where it ranges from seventy-three per cent. in Western Australia to fifty-seven in New South Wales? In Victoria, whose population and number of persons to the square mile corresponds most closely with our own, the percentage of average attendance is sixty-four. Evidently the law of compulsory education is not a dead letter there, as it is allowed to be with us. I have not yet heard of an instance in which any Board of Trustees has tried to enforce the law by either levying the rate they are

empowered to do upon negligent parents or guardians, or by bringing them before a magistrate. It would be interesting to know what proportion of adults among those who have received their education solely at our public schools can write a letter decently, and read a newspaper paragraph intelligently. I fear it would not be found to be a large one.

If there is irregular attendance at school, there is defective education, and defective education is sure to show itself in after life. Why then is the compulsory part of our school law not put in force? I fear that while some boards of trustees are ignorant of it, a good many more ignore it. I am quite aware that a rigid enforcement of it would work grievous wrong in a good many cases. Take for instance that of this city. For many years past the persistent efforts of our Board of Public School Trustees have not been able to meet the demands for school accommodation owing to our rapid increase of population. These efforts have been hampered, too, by that vexatious clause in our school law which gives municipal councils control over the expenditure for school buildings, etc. In view of these difficulties it would have been impossible to have carried out the compulsory law in this city, and other boards may have had similar obstacles to contend with. But I am sure with the majority of school corporations throughout the country the enforcement of school attendance would not be an impossible, and with many of them, not a hard task. If a penalty of some kind were imposed upon negligent trustees, as well as upon negligent parents, our average attendance would be improved, and two other good results would follow. In the first place children would get a better education, and thus would be better prepared for performing the duties of citizenship afterwards, and