

teachers and 878 female teachers received less than £25 per ann.; 386 male and 519 female teachers received from £25 inclusively to £50 per annum exclusively; 100 male teachers and 50 female teachers received from £50 inclusively to £100 exclusively, and 10 male teachers received over £100. The average salary given to male teachers may be taken at from £40 to £60, and to female teachers from £20 to £30. In many cases teachers receive besides their salaries, lodging and fuel free. The number of parochial libraries is 92, containing 57,493 volumes.

II. Papers on Practical Education.

1. IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE AT SCHOOL.

The evil of irregular attendance is one that has long engaged the attention of the Chicago Board of Education, and one that has hitherto baffled all the efforts that have been made for its removal. It is now universally regarded as the most dangerous evil that exists in connection with the free school system.

Near the close of 1857, the Board adopted the following rule, which took effect on the first of January, 1858:

"Any scholar who shall be absent six half days in four consecutive weeks, without an excuse from the parent or guardian, given either in person or by written note, satisfying the teacher that the absences were caused by his own sickness or by sickness in the family, shall forfeit his seat in the school; and the teacher shall forthwith notify the parent and Superintendent that the pupil is suspended. No pupil thus suspended shall be restored to school, till he has given satisfactory assurance of punctuality in the future, and obtained permission from the Superintendent to return."

The propriety or impropriety of adopting such a rule, involves grave questions, which lie at the very foundation of our system of free schools.

That education should be free and universal, is now the prevailing sentiment of this nation. The primary basis on which the doctrine of free schools rests, is the safety of the State. Uneducated men and women are regarded as a dangerous element in a free country. There are, however, many who still look with distrust upon schools entirely free, and the number would be found to be much larger than it appears, if it were not for the odium of entertaining sentiments that are unpopular with the masses. Even among the ablest and most devoted friends of popular education, there are not wanting those who regard it as unwise to make our schools entirely free to children whose parents are able to contribute to their support. They believe that opportunities which cost nothing can never be fully appreciated, and that our schools can never rise to the highest order of excellence while those who enjoy their benefits do not put forth any direct effort to aid in sustaining them. The Hon. Henry Bernard, of Connecticut, one of the ablest and most devoted friends of education in the country, has long entertained this view of the subject. During the last year, an animated discussion on this question took place on New England ground, between Mr. Bernard and the Hon. George S. Boutwell, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education.

The friends of free schools have much to fear from the arguments that are based upon the irregular attendance of scholars, and the consequent waste of so large a portion of the funds that provided for the support of schools. If this waste was as apparent as it is real, a remedy in some form would long since have been demanded.

Let us take, for illustration, our own city. The average number of absences from all the Grammar and Primary Schools during the year, was more than one-fifth of the average number belonging to the schools. But if one-fifth of the children are always absent, there is an absolute loss of one-fifth of the expense of sustaining the schools, for it is obviously much easier to instruct any number of pupils that are punctual, than the same number that are habitually irregular in their attendance. The derangement of classes, and the time required to bring up lost lessons, are always more than equivalent for the time saved by any reduction of numbers that may be occasioned by absences. Here, then, is a positive loss to the city of more than \$12,000 during the year 1857. In two years, this loss amounts to a sum sufficient to build one of our first class school-houses.

But it is not the waste of money alone, that is sapping the foundations of our free school system. One of the principal objects in making the schools free and common to all classes, is to remove the danger of having an uneducated and vicious class of persons constantly growing up, to prey upon society. This object is of course in a great degree lost, if those whom the schools are desired to raise from vagrancy and ignorance, are to regard them with indifference and neglect.

In this city, as in others, there is a class of parents who seem to regard the public schools as convenient places, where they may send their children on days when they happen to have nothing else for them to do. The consequence is, that many children have been in the habit of attending school only one or two days in the week—in

some instances not more than two or three days in a month; often enough to retard the progress of the class with which they were connected, but not often enough to derive any substantial benefit themselves.

But there is another evil connected with the irregular attendance of scholars, that is seriously affecting the interests of free schools. The absence of a portion of a class, retards the progress of all the rest. It is safe to say that in many of the classes in our schools, the advancement has not been more than two-thirds or three-fourths as great as it would have been if the pupils had been punctual in their attendance. If all the members of a class were equally irregular, each pupil would suffer his own share of this loss. But the records of the schools show that more than one-half of the absences belong to less than one fifth of the scholars. Here, then, is a most glaring injustice. Parents sometimes claim that they have a right to keep their children from school when they please, without stopping to consider that other parents, whose children are uniformly punctual, have also a right to expect that they will not be kept back in their classes by those who are habitually irregular.

Heretofore this right of the few to hinder the progress of the many, has been yielded; while the right of the many to advance without these impediments, has been disregarded. A large portion of the children that are taken from the public schools and placed under private instruction, are transferred from that cause; while many of the parents whose children still remain, have an abiding feeling that their rights are disregarded for the gratification of those who are indifferent to the education of their own children.

Every one at all conversant with our schools, is aware that most of the absences that occur, are occasioned by the carelessness and neglect of parents, and not by any real necessity.

If this evil is to continue unchecked, our schools can never reach a high standard of excellence, and many parents will contrive to send their children to private schools, rather than submit to the annoyance of having them classed with those who have no ambition to improve, and who are not willing to put forth the necessary effort to establish habits of punctuality.

On the other hand, if the *rights of all shall be equally regarded* and an ordinary degree of regularity in attendance upon the schools shall be made a condition of membership, than may we expect that our schools will continue to advance, and become more and more worthy of all classes in the community.

I have taken the liberty to present these views, because it is vain for us to close our eyes against evils that threaten the stability of our noble system of public instruction. I believe that this system is destined to triumph, and that, in the future history of the country, the common schools will be entirely free. But of nothing do I feel more fully assured than this, that if the free-school system is finally to prevail, it must be by reducing it to a rigidly economical basis, and by treating the rights of all with equal consideration.—*Extract from Report of W. H. Wells, Supt. of Schools Chicago.*

2. EMULATION IN SCHOOLS.

Ambition has been called the last infirmity of noble minds; yet how often is the first impulse to their nobility! A generous emulation acts on the mind like the fairy in the legend of romance, who guided her votary amid innumerable difficulties and dangers till she led him to happiness. To awaken the pupil's ambition should be the first object of the teacher; for until that be awakened he will teach in vane. This is the reason why so many eminent men have passed through school with so few honors, and afterward have won so many from the world. They have been the "glory of the college and its shame;" and not until their energies were aroused and their ambition stimulated by stirring strife of the world, did they exhibit those faculties which have made memorable an age or country. Had not these men genius at school? Certainly! It was only dormant, like the strength of the sleeping lion. And many boys have been thought dunces at school, because their teachers had no penetration and sagacity enough to discover and develop the latent spark of intellect within them.

Swift's college-mates and teachers thought him a dunce at the very time that he was writing his "Tale of a Tub"—the rough draft of which he then showed to his friend and room-mate. The "Tale" was not published until many years afterward. He got his degrees at college by the "special favor" of the faculty; as it stands recorded in the archives. It appears he would not read the old works on logic, but preferred laughing over Rabelais and Cervantes. His teachers did not understand his character. They should have studied it, and then they could easily have controlled him, and have prevented the lamentation on his part, in after days, that he had thrown away eight years of his life. Let those youths of talent who may have acted as Swift's did, remember what Dr. Johnson said of him, viz., that though he had thrown away eight years of his life in idleness, he was determined not to throw away