

attendance at some school for one hundred and ten days in each year, on the part of all children from seven to thirteen years of age, unless prevented by sickness or other reasonable cause, we are still troubled with the evils of irregular and non-attendance, and no industrial school has been established by the state to receive vagrant children and incorrigibles. Now why is this? The fault is certainly not in the law, for all the machinery needed to enforce the compulsory clause is provided. Trustees are empowered to levy a rate of one dollar per month upon the parent or guardian of each child kept from school in 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 48 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 the 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 "Schoolmaster," our low rate of average attendance should be the subject of remarks. I am quite aware that the circumstances of the country are against as good an 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 73 per cent. in Western Australia to 57 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 64. 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 shew 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 aver-

age 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 in the second, the average cost per pupil would be lessened. It is one of the anomalies of our school system that notwithstanding the lower salaries paid to teachers in our rural schools, the cost for education in those schools is higher than it is either in cities or towns. This is owing to their low rate of attendance. During some parts of the year in country schools it is almost nominal; were regular attendance insisted upon this anomaly would disappear.

Emerson has said in his epigrammatic way, that it is better to be unborn than untaught, and no state system of education can be considered complete that does not make provision for that large class of our juvenile population which comes under the head of vagrants and incorrigibles. For such as these special schools must be provided, and this is a matter which has not escaped the attention of this Association. In 1868 a motion was passed in favour of establishing industrial schools for training our vagrant juvenile population. In 1870 the motion I have already read to you, which formed part of a report of a committee, was adopted. In 1873 I had the honor of reading a paper upon the subject, the discussion upon which resulted in the appointment of a committee "to wait upon the Government, and impress upon them the necessity of establishing one or more such schools in this province."

A standing committee upon Industrial Schools was subsequently appointed, but without any effectual result. Enough has been said however, to shew the interest that has been taken in this subject in past years. The fact that the Government has paid no attention to it is a sufficient reason for us still to keep the subject before us. Professor Huxley has well said that no plan of national education is complete unless it begins in the gutter and ends in the university. Ours certainly ends in the right place, but where does it begin? Certainly not so low down as the gutter, and yet we have a large number of children in our midst who are shewn by the report of the Minister of Education to be attending no school whatever—children either without parents, or whose parents are incompetent to manage them, and who eventually grow up to be a means of supply for our criminal population. The following wise words of an eminent statesman and scholar, who showed himself to be far in advance of his time, I mean Sir Thomas More, are very well worthy of being weighed in connection with this subject. "If you allow your people to be badly taught, their morals to be corrupted from childhood, and then when they are men, punish them for the very crimes to which they have been trained in childhood, what is this but to make thieves, and then to punish them." What has our Legislature done to secure the proper training of these children? Nothing, further than passing an act to sanction the establishment of industrial schools. There, not only the Legislature but the Government seem to think that their duty ends, and yet I know of no duty that more legitimately belongs to the government of a country than the proper care of these neglected children. I have often thought that if a man like Goldsmith's Citizen of the World visited this country, he would be as much amused with the inconsistencies in the management of our public affairs as Goldsmith's character was with those of the Man in Black. He would find that while our Legislature shows its benevolent solicitude not only for the insane, but for idiots, for the deaf and dumb, and for the blind by providing asylums for them, it shows itself totally indifferent to the welfare of those neglected boys and girls who infest our streets and lanes, and whom it might save from a life of crime, and make useful members of the community, by a judicious expenditure of money which would not amount to so much as has to be spent upon them afterwards as criminals.

(To be concluded in the next issue).