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## THE ADVANTAGES OF A SYSTEM OF COMMON SCHOOLS.

Suppose the State undertake to provide for this responsibility, in what way shall this be done?

1. Leaving those who are able to educate their own children to their own voluntary action, the State may simply provide the means of paying for the education of the poor in such schools as may be furnished by private individuals. In this case there is no certainty—and there is no provision made—that there *shall* be schools at all. If individuals establish schools for their own benefit, the State may ask the privilege of using them, such as they are, for her poor. If individuals neglect the education of their own children, and so decline to sustain any schools at all, why the State's poor must be uneducated, too. Practically, such a system is worth very little; and yet this is the present system of education in Georgia. What provision she makes for even this pretence will hereafter appear.

2. Or, the State may, at its own expense, establish and sustain schools exclusively for the poor, leaving the rest, as before, to their own voluntary action. This system, unless the poor could be congregated at specified points, would involve an enormous expense for the education of comparatively few, while no assistance or encouragement would be extended to the cause of general education. In addition to this and other difficulties that have always rendered such an attempt entirely abortive, it raises, at once, an invidious distinction between the rich and the poor, which, in this country, would totally defeat the

design. Ragged schools, as they are significantly called, may be sustained in the crowded cities where abject poverty does its perfect work; but in our country, generally, they are utterly hopeless.

3. Or, the State may provide by law for the organization of schools sufficient for the wants of the whole population, to be supported at the public expense, and open alike to all the children of the State. This is the common, or Public School system. And if the theory can be embodied in practice, it evidently provides the certain means of an universal education.

The only preliminary question as to the system seems to be, whether this is a subject matter over which the State ought to assume jurisdiction? And the answer to this question must depend upon another—whether general education be a matter of such paramount interest to the whole population, that its absence or neglect will involve a serious damage to the commonwealth? And it seems to me there can be but one answer to this question.

The orderly administration of the government, in its three distinct departments, is of vital importance to the people, and therefore the State assumes jurisdiction over the subject in all its details. Passable roads and bridges are indispensable to the public convenience and safety, and hence the State assumes jurisdiction over that entire subject. General health and morality are matters of public interest, and therefore the State assumes jurisdiction over them. So of various other matters. Now, surely general education is not inferior to these in importance, in whatever aspect it may be viewed. In fact, our constitution distinctly recognises this truth, and provides for it accordingly. All that is required, therefore, is, that the Legislature carry out the injunctions of the constitution. And if it be a public blessing vouchsafed in that fundamental charter of our political organization, the public voice should imperatively demand its entire fulfilment.

I presume it was never thought of, that the State should assume *entire* control over the *matter* of education, to the exclusion of parental wishes or convenience. This course is indeed pursued in despotic governments, but it is never contemplated in ours. Nor is it supposed that the State will prevent the establishment of other institutions of learning than those under its own control. Its duty stops with providing the means of proper education for all, so far at least as is necessary to qualify them for their duties and responsibilities as men and as citizens, and with laying before them suitable inducements to avail themselves of this privilege. Ample room would still be left for all that individual taste or preference could desire. Let me now advert to a few of the arguments by which such a system of public instruction is recommended:

1. It destroys the invidious distinction between the rich and the poor, which is perpetuated by the Poor School system; and which, in this country, has always rendered that system odious, and therefore useless. Whether right or wrong, this feeling exists. Even a child revolts at the thought of being singled out as an inferior, and especi-