

## LEGAL PREVENTION OF ILLITERACY.

IF Mr. Bergh had set out to organize a Society for Compelling Kindness to Animals, his efforts would scarcely have been crowned with success. The most considerate and tender-hearted horse-owner would resent a law presuming him to treat his beast with humanity; and would most likely be a trifle discourteous to any volunteer inspector of stables who might fall in his way.

But a Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals is a very different matter. It has a specific and legitimate object—the suppression of wrong. It interferes only with the vicious and brutal. The great majority of the community, who feel no disposition to abuse their "poor relations," and whose sensibilities are shocked by every exhibition of brutality, are protected, not oppressed, by its operations and its founder, though laughed at, now and then, for some real or apparent excess of tender-heartedness, is honored throughout the land, in a practical way that must be very pleasing to him.

It is to be regretted that the originator of the phrase, "Compulsory Education," had not been blessed with Bergh's good judgment in choosing a name, or had not had a clearer understanding of the real work to be done. *Compulsory Education* is an unhappy expression. It implies something radically different from what is, or should be, aimed at; and by threatening an offensive and uncalled-for interference with private affairs, it alienates those who would naturally be the warmest friends of the object to be attained, and whose sympathy and support are most required. The great body of American parents desire the education of their children. To very many it is a duty which nothing could induce them to neglect. They are willing even to make great sacrifices for the sake of other and less fortunate children. At this juncture a well-meaning but bungling reformer comes along and says, in effect, if not in so many words: "I will have a law compelling you to educate your children." "We do that already," is the indignant reply; "so far as we are concerned, your law is an impertinence; it is worse, it is insulting. Be so kind as to mind your own affairs."

The trouble is, the would-be reformer is working the wrong lead, as the miners say. The thing to be accomplished is not the compulsory education of all the children in the community, but the securing of school privileges for those that are now deprived of them. The two things are as unlike as a law compelling kindness and a law preventing cruelty. The end to be attained may be the same in both cases, but the way to it is direct and legitimate in the one case, indirect and illegitimate in the other. Laws should be framed to repress and punish wrong-doing, not to restrict the liberty of those who do well.

But there are those who will not do their duty by their children, it is urged, or who do not admit that the education of their children is a duty. What shall be done with them? The answer is simple: Make them do their duty. A man abuses his horse, denies him proper food and care, or drives him when sick or lame—the law does not hesitate to interfere to protect the animal and punish the brute. Shall it do less for a child than for a horse? One of the inalienable rights of every child is a chance to make the best of the life thrust upon him. This right society is bound to respect, and does respect, in part, by protecting the child against physical maltreatment and cruelty. As our civilization is constituted, a certain amount of learning is as needful in the struggle for existence as a normal development of body and limbs, and the same arguments that justify intervention in the former case justify it in this—when it is necessary. Existing ignorance is mainly beyond our control. Our millions of illiterate men and women will, in all probability, continue illiterate for the rest of their lives. But they will not live forever: and we are able, and it is our duty, to prevent other millions of the same sort, by seeing that the coming generations are kept from growing up unschooled. How shall the community, or the State, or the nation—which are but the different names for the people in their collective capacity—go to work to secure this end?

Obviously the first step is to provide sufficient school accommodations for all the children needing instruction. This step has not yet been taken. The second is to offer instruction really suited to meet the necessities of those to be taught. This step will require greater effort than the first, for it demands a thorough overturning of the matter and methods of our popular teaching. The third step is to give instruction at such times, and for such periods, that the children of all classes can avail themselves of it. The prevailing opinion seems to be that the children are for the schools, not the schools for the children. When school managers realize that the reverse is the truth, and act accordingly, there will be fewer children excluded from the schools by their inability to comply with arbitrary and unwise conditions.

After all this forming and reforming has been accomplished, there will, perhaps, be still some children deprived of schooling by the indifference or criminal selfishness of parents and guardians. For these society must interfere; the rights of the children must not be sacrificed to folly or greed. The offending parents and guardians, if there be any, must be compelled to do justice by those in their care. But this contingency is far off. Let us

see first if such compulsory measures are necessary; whether any children will be kept from learning when proper instruction is offered them in a proper way, and at a proper time.—*Christian Union*.

## "THE SCHOOLMASTER IS ABROAD."

SOME of our readers may have forgotten and others may never have heard, who was the author of this familiar saying. The words were uttered by Lord Brougham in a speech on the promotion of Wellington to the Premiership after the death of Canning. The connection in which they occur gives added force to them, and many will be glad to scan the whole paragraph in the midst of which the now familiar saying had its first setting:—"Field Marshal, the Duke of Wellington may take the army, he may take the navy, he may take the great seal, he may take the mitre. I make him a present of them all. Let him come on with his whole force, sword in hand, against the constitution, and the English people will not only beat him back, but laugh at his assaults. In other times the country may have heard with dismay that 'the soldier was abroad.' It will not be so now. Let the soldier be abroad if he will; he can do nothing in this age. There is another personage abroad, a personage less imposing; in the eyes of some, perhaps, insignificant. *The schoolmaster is abroad*: and I trust to him, armed with his primer, against the soldier in full military array."

## THE EDUCATIONAL REPORTER,

A publication devoted to popular instruction, published by Ivison, Blakeman, Taylor & Co., New York. We have received the third number of this valuable publication, and insert from it the following extracts, that must prove highly interesting to all devoted to the progress of "Popular Instruction."

## EDUCATIONAL NOTES.

PENNSYLVANIA.—The Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools, J. P. Wickersham, gives the number of schools in the State as 14,212; of teachers, 17,612; of pupils, 828,891. Average salary of male teachers per month, \$10.66; of female teachers, 32.39. Average cost of tuition of each pupil per month, 98c. Total cost of tuition for the year, \$3,745,415.81. Total cost for tuition, school buildings, &c., \$7,771,761.20. Estimated value of school property, \$15,837,183. There are five Normal Schools in operation, with 66 professors and teachers, and 2,675 students. The number of city or borough superintendents is 14,—the salaries varying from \$700 to \$2,500.

Philadelphia has 2 High Schools, 55 Grammar Schools, 108 Secondary Schools, 182 Primary Schools, and 33 unclassified schools,—all taught by 80 male and 1,435 female teachers; the male, at salaries averaging \$135.98 per month; the female, at \$43.61.

There is no law requiring the Bible to be read in public schools, but it is read in 11,396 of them. Mr. Wickersham presents an able report. He thinks Pennsylvania stands well educationally in comparison with the other States of the Union, and makes many valuable suggestions in the direction of improvement. From the reports of the county superintendent, he finds the obstacles to the success of the schools to be "short school terms, irregular attendance, poorly qualified teachers, indisposition of grade teachers' salaries according to qualifications, want of local supervision, neglect of duties on the part of directors, and want of interest in education on the part of the people." These are serious obstacles, but we hope our friend Wickersham will persevere in the good work he has so successfully undertaken.

NEW YORK.—The Seventeenth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for this State, Hon. Abram B. Weaver, is like his preceding report—an able and business-like document, giving a clear and complete statement of the present condition of education, with the progress and results of the past year.

There has been a slight decrease in the number of school districts during the past school year. Eleven Union school districts have been founded under the general school act, by the consolidation of twenty-three common school districts. The number of school-houses is 11,695. The reported value of school-houses and sites, for 1870, is \$20,426,412—an increase of nearly \$2,000,000 since 1869, and of 4,000,000 since 1868.

The number of children between five and twenty-one years of age, is 1,480,761. Of this number, 1,026,447 attended public school.

The amount expended for teachers' salaries in 1870, was \$6,496,692.39, being an average salary of \$372.58, or 10.53 per week of the average school term.