

allude to the compulsory attendance of children at School, as required by the laws of Prussia and several other States of Europe.

The prevalent impression is, that such a law is arbitrary—despotic—inconsistent with the rights of parents and the liberties of the subject. But what is the principle on which this law is founded? The principle is this, that every child in the land has a right to such an education as will fit him to be an honest and useful member of community,—that if the parent or guardian *cannot* provide him with such an education, the *State is bound* to do so,—and that if the parent *will not* do so, the State *will* protect the child from such a parent's capidity and inhumanity, and the State will protect the community at large against any parents (if the term can be applied to such a character) sending forth into it, an uneducated savage, an idle vagabond, or an unprincipled thief.

The parent or guardian is not isolated from all around him,—without social relations or obligations. He owes duties to his child,—he owes duties to society. In neglecting to educate, he wrongs his child,—deprives him to ignorance, if not to vice,—to a condition little above that which is occupied by horses and oxen;—he also wrongs society, by robbing it of an intelligent and useful member, and by inflicting upon it an ignorant or vicious barbarian.

To commit this two-fold wrong is a crime of the blackest character, whether cognizable by human laws or not: to protect childhood and manhood and society from such wrongs, is the object of the Prussian law, which requires the attendance of every child from the age of six to fourteen years, at some School—public or private as the parent may prefer; and if the parent is not able to pay for the education of his child the State provides for it. The law therefore protects the weak and the defenceless, against the strong and the selfish; it is founded on the purest morality and the noblest patriotism; and although I do not advocate the incorporation of it into a Statute in this country, I believe it to be the duty of every parent to act in accordance with its spirit. With what a noble race would Canada be peopled forty years hence, if every child from this time henceforth should receive eight years instruction in the practical arts and duties of life on Christian principles!

But it is erroneous to suppose that the Prussian law on this subject is an appendage of despotism. It exists in the democratic Cantons of Republican Switzerland, in a more elevated degree than it does in Prussia. A. G. Escher, Esqr., manufacturer at Zurich whose testimony has been quoted in a former part of this Report, gives the following evidence on this point, before the Privy Council Committee on Education.

In answer to the question, "In the Free Cantons of Switzerland, is the education national and compulsory?" Mr. Escher says: "In the Protestant Cantons it is entirely so. No child can be employed in any *manufacture* until he has passed through the Primary Schools; and he is further under the obligation of attending the Secondary Schools until his sixteenth or seventeenth year. And under all circumstances, and for every employment, it is obligatory on parents to send their children to the Public Schools until they are absolved from the obligation by an examination as to the efficiency of the education."

In the Cantons the opinion of the people is, in the largest sense, the law of the land; yet so enlightened

and so strong is that opinion, that it enacts laws, enforced by the severest penalties, securing to every child such an education as is suitable to his intended employment in life. The same elevated public opinion exists and operates in the free States of Germany, as well as in despotic Prussia. On this point I will quote the testimony of an intelligent American—late President of the Senate of the State of Massachusetts, and at present Secretary of the Board of Education at Boston—a man who has done much to advance the interests of education in his native State, and to whom I have had frequent occasion to refer. Mr. Mann says: "A very erroneous idea prevails with us, that this enforcement of school attendance is the prerogative of despotism alone. I believe it is generally supposed here, that such compulsion is not merely incompatible with, but impossible in, a free and elective government. This is a great error. With the exception of Austria, (including Bohemia,) and Prussia, almost all the other States of Germany have now constitutional Governments. Many of them have an Upper and Lower House of Assembly, like our Senate, and House of Representatives. Who ever will attend the Parliament of Saxony, for instance, will witness as great freedom of debate as in any country in the world; and no law can be passed but by a majority of the Representatives chosen by the people themselves. In the first School I visited, in Saxony, a lesson 'On Government,' in which all the great privileges secured to the Saxon people by their Constitution were enumerated; and both Teacher and pupils contrasted their present free condition with that of some other countries, as well as with that of their own ancestors, in a spirit of congratulation and triumph. The elective franchise in this and in several of the other States of Germany, is more generally enjoyed, that is, the restrictions upon it are less than in some of the States of our own Union. And yet in Saxony, years after the existence of this Constitution, and when no law could be passed without the assent of the people's Representatives, in Parliament assembled, a general code of School laws was enacted, rigorously enforcing, by fines and penalties, the attendance of children at School."

5th. *Individual Efforts.*—There is so much in the very nature of education that is voluntary, both in its pursuit by an individual, and in its advancement as a system, that without efforts beyond those which should or could be enjoined by statutes, its interests can be advanced to but a very limited extent in any community. It is erroneous to suppose that the high state of education in Germany is entirely owing to the provisions of the laws and the exertions of the Civil Authorities. The spontaneous efforts of individuals, and associations have not, to say the least, been less efficient agents in this great work, than the interference of the State; and these private efforts have on several occasions, been the originators of the most important laws and measures of Government. It is to these efforts that Germany owes its unrivalled series of School and educational books—the existence and wide circulation of upwards of thirty periodical School publications—and the periodical conferences of School Inspectors and Teachers in all the German States. The intercourse of Teachers and Educators in all parts of Germany, is constant and intimate—to an extent that can be scarcely conceived by a stranger. Thus the improvements and views of each become the property of all—the educational instructors of the people constitute an extensive and most influential fraternity, and the whole public mind is elevated and animated to a standard of sentiment and practice conformable to a high state of national civilization.