

is that of the equivocal character of much of the reading, and of the public amusements in which the children of the present age share with others. The daily papers lie upon the tables of every household. The angry quarrels of editors with each other, the bitterness of political controversy, and the mendacity of the press on the eve of elections, furnish a very unsuitable aliment for the young. And how many of the short, spicy paragraphs, with which the editor or contributor seeks to enliven his columns, are addressed to the sensual passions, in language and tone so lascivious that no pure minded father could read it in the presence of his family. This is the more alarming as a sign of the times, from the circumstance that not only is the supply of material such in amount as no other age ever knew, and the reading habits of the young, in consequence of our public schools, far in advance of those of adults in former times, but that those papers which are the least scrupulous in their moral tone, have often a wider circulation than others, and are even extensively patronised for the use of families. It is not necessary here to refer particularly to much of the lighter literature, of no better moral tendency, which finds its way to the homes of the young, vitiating their imaginations with pictures of scenes which no pure mind can contemplate with pleasure. Many of the popular amusements, too—once an occasional luxury, but now a necessity of the young—have the same character and tendency. They must be adapted to low and vulgar tastes, in order to attract the multitude and be made profitable. A large proportion of the support they receive comes from children, for whose injury the fond, but inconsiderate parent, pays the price more freely than he does his school tax.

In view of all these facts, it will be safe to conclude that if, notwithstanding all that is done for the education of the young, they are, as is sometimes said, no more likely to make good citizens than were the children of former generations, who enjoyed no such advantages of education, the cause may easily be found elsewhere than in the character of the public schools. That they accomplish less good than they might, if more skillfully conducted, is conceded. That they produce of themselves, by a direct and positive influence, any considerable part of the evils complained of, may, it is believed, be justly denied. In all the schools which are worthy of the name, the pupils are trained to some kind of order. All teachers give directions in regard to the deportment of their pupils, exacting industry, allotting the time and prescribing the manner of their recreations, requiring submission to authority, respect and obedience to themselves, and freedom from violence and wrong to each other. So far as this goes, it is favorable to moral training. If the discipline were carried to a greater perfection, the effect would be still better. Not to have sufficient power to prevent all the evils to which the young of this age is exposed, is quite a different thing from being the positive cause of these evils. Christianity itself does not entirely arrest the progress of evil. Is it therefore the procuring cause of evil?

#### *The spirit of the people.*

In respect to the spirit of the people, in welcoming cordially our admirable system of education, little need be said. That they must adopt it, as their own, and, by their enlightened zeal and energy, work out its beneficial results for themselves, if they would experience its advantages, must be evident to all. The State does not attempt to confer the boon of education upon the people; it only gives them the power and the requisite facilities for supporting schools. It indeed requires certain schools to be maintained; but it leaves, in great measure, to the will of the people the degree of excellence which they shall attain. While this truly philosophic and well-balanced system, devised by the wisdom of the State, receives the admiration of the world, there are, we regret to say, towns, few indeed in number, and becoming fewer every year, which complain of State interference, and wish to be left in their native independence. It is regarded as an inconvenience to be compelled to maintain public schools for a given length of time each year, and to be at the expense of paying for the services of the school committee, which might so easily be dispensed with. But these are the lowest depths that have been sounded. Never were men more mistaken in regard to their true interests. The State is a nourishing mother, as wise as she is beneficent, and happily has few ungrateful children. Who that knows the inestimable value of education, and the great amount of labor and expense necessary to produce a flourishing state of the schools, would not regard it as one of the greatest of blessings for these schools to receive the constant attention and fostering care of the State?

#### *Low estimate of the value of Education.*

Of a similar character and effect, is that low estimate of the value of education, which leads a much larger number of towns to make, in their annual appropriation, very inadequate provisions for the support of the schools. No money expended by a town is surer to yield good returns than that which is judiciously applied to educate the young. The increased intelligence of the people will, among its other results, manifest its power in the increased ability and skill with which they

engage in their various enterprises, producing within the period of a single generation an increase of wealth which will far more than compensate for all the cost of education. Any town which enjoys the reputation of having good schools, will find, in that circumstance, an element of growth. It will, on that account, draw to itself from abroad, wealth, intelligence and virtue. Both the value of real estate, and the refinement and civilization of the people will be enhanced. If we take a higher view, and inquire how the inhabitants of a town can make the most valuable contribution towards the improvement of mankind, we shall unhesitatingly reply, by sending out into the world well-educated and well-trained men and women to act their part with honor in advancing the progress of civilization, and all the interests of society. That such an end cannot be attained by us in our present social condition without the aid of a vigorous system of public schools, will be admitted by all.

#### *Irregular attendance and non-attendance of children—a remedy.*

The irregular attendance of the pupils of the public schools is a subject that deserves the attention of all who have, in any measure, power to diminish it. The loss of one-fifth of the benefit for which pecuniary provision is made by a public tax, is a just subject of complaint on the part of the tax-payer. If society has the right to levy a tax upon his property for the purpose of preventing the evils consequent on a state of popular ignorance, it would seem that he is justly entitled to expect that there shall be no culpable neglect in attempting to secure the full amount of the benefit contemplated. The parent is bound by a two-fold obligation—to his children and to the community—to see that the means of education provided at the public expense, be not neglected by his children. Each town and city is also bound to use all reasonable endeavors, through appropriate officers, to bring all the children living within its borders under the influence of the public schools. If it can be shewn that children ought to be in the schools at all, the same arguments would prove that their attendance should be such as to accomplish, in the best manner, the object for which the schools are supported. If parents have no just right to withhold their children from the schools, much less have they a right to interfere with the progress of the children of others by the irregularity of the attendance of their own. If it be admitted that a pupil may attend school at just such time as he or his parent may choose, and is entitled to receive instruction accordingly, it will follow either that his class ought to be detained till his deficiency in the class exercises shall be made up, or that special instruction ought to be provided for him out of the class. But no one will pretend to such a right as this. Various expedients have been resorted to by different towns to diminish this irregularity of attendance. In some places it has been made the subject of public discussion, and the sentiment of the community has been so improved as to act very favorably upon the minds of parents. In others, a custom prevails of publishing in the school report the names of those who have distinguished themselves for their regular attendance. In many towns, rules have been established by the school committee, excluding from the school those whose absences exceed a certain amount. A still better method is that of degrading such pupils, by putting them into a lower class. Great success has, in several instances, attended the labors of persons appointed to look after absentees, to inquire into the causes of their absence, and to use proper means to bring them back to the schools. No doubt different courses will need to be pursued in different places. Mild and persuasive measures, if successful will prove the best. In manufacturing towns and cities, something more may be required. A very important point will be gained if the public attention is so drawn to the subject as to lead to any course of action upon it.

#### CELEBRATED BARBERS.

SIR RICHARD ARKWRIGHT, the celebrated patentee of the Spinning Jenny, was originally a poor barber.

From that valuable work, "*Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties*," we gather the following condensed account of this noted character. His parents were very poor, and he was the youngest of a family of thirteen children; so that we may suppose the school education he received, if he ever was at school at all, was extremely limited. Indeed, but little learning would probably be deemed necessary for the profession to which he was bred. The business of a barber he continued to follow till he was nearly thirty years of age. About the year 1760, however, he gave up shaving, and commenced business as an itinerant dealer in hair, collecting that commodity by travelling up and down the country, and then after he had dressed it, selling it again to the wig makers, with whom he very soon acquired the character of keeping a better article than any of his rivals in the same trade. He had obtained possession, too, of a secret method of dyeing the hair, by which he doubtless contrived to augment his profits; and, perhaps, in his becoming acquainted with this little piece of chemistry, we may find the germ of that sensibility he soon began to manifest to the value of new and