

at present there is least agreement and greatest diversity. However well this ecclesiastical ideal may work in communities wholly Puritan, like early New England, or wholly Catholic, like portions of Ireland and Canada to-day, it is utterly impracticable for the common-school system of the United States to-day. The ecclesiastical ideal, then, we may consider counted out.

Do we then support the public school for the sake of trained intelligent voters? Why, half the scholars in these public schools, unless there shall be a constitutional amendment enlarging the basis of suffrage, will never vote at all. And then do we pretend that Latin and French, and physics and chemistry, and the twenty or thirty branches taught in the high school are necessary to fit a boy to cast an intelligent vote? We have long since left this motive far behind in the liberality of our provision for public instruction. The political motive is not large enough to explain our devotion to our public school.

Do we then support the public schools in order that the children may be trained to earn their own living, and thus not become burdens upon the charity of the state? We frequently hear that motive assigned. But we all know perfectly well that not half the subjects taught in our public schools have an direct bearing on the ability of the boys and girls to earn a livelihood. We have gone far beyond the industrial ideal of public education.

Let me try once more. Do we support the public schools because we wish that these children, who are to be our neighbors and fellow-citizens, shall be intelligent, self-respecting public-spirited neighbors and citizens; that they shall be good husbands and thrifty wives; that they shall be wise fathers and mothers; that they shall be interested in what is noble and pure;

enthusiastic in support of what is generous and just; that their homes shall ring with healthful laughter and happy song; that their work shall be wrought in integrity and their recreation shall be healthful and uplifting? Is anything less than this the ideal we really cherish? Will anything lower or narrower justify the splendid efforts we are making for public education?

I am sure there are few who will express themselves contented with the ecclesiastical, the industrial, or the political ideal. Without our knowing it, the social ideal of an intelligent, full, free, happy, human life for every boy and girl born or brought into our midst has gained possession of our minds and hearts.

General Francis A. Walker, speaking of the public school, says, "Here we reach an instance of an impulse almost purely socialistic for the enlargement of the functions of the state. It is true that the plea of a service to government, in the way of reducing violence and crime through the influence of the public schools, is often urged on this behalf; but I, for one, do not believe that this was the real consideration and motive which, in any instance, ever actually led to the establishment of the system of instruction under public authority, or which, in any land, supports public instruction now. Indeed, the immediate effects of popular instruction in reducing crime are even in dispute. In all its stages this movement has been purely socialistic in character, springing out of a conviction that the state would be stronger, and the individual members of the state would be richer, and happier, and better, if power and discretion in this matter of the education of children were taken away from the family and lodged with the government. Of course, it needs not to be said that this is a socialistic movement which deserves the heartiest approval."