

enactments. This is because custom is more powerful than laws (1)

Mr. Speaker, when Jules Ferry proposed a compulsory school attendance law, he stated that a country with an average of 10 per cent of children receiving no instruction is not a civilized country. Now, in 1889, French statistics showed that the average had increased from 10 p. c. to 11.70 p. c., a difference of 1.70 p. c. in 7 years. (See speech of Count Albert de Mun, volume 4, page 178).

But there is something still more conclusive :

" The last statistics of Primary Instruction, which are for 1902, supply very precise information with respect to the effective attendance of the children in the public schools of France on the dates of December 2nd and June 3rd, selected for a sort of roll call. The best school attendance was found in the department of Mayenne, where on the 2nd December, 1902, of 100 pupils enrolled, 16 only were absent. The proportion of absentees, much larger everywhere else, reached on the 2nd June, in certain regions, a really disheartening figure ; on that date, of

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(1) L. c. p. 545. In many countries, custom has rendered education general without the aid of the law. At Geneva, for instance, every one before 1874 knew how to read and write, although there was no compulsion. It was the same at Frankfort before its annexation to Prussia ; it is also the case of Scotland and some parts of Belgium. " In half of the province of Luxemburg, said the Governor in 1871, there is no longer a person between the ages of 15 to 22 years, who does not know how to read and write, and in the other half of the *communes* illiteracy is an insignificant exception ". (Ibid, p. 99.)