

Much of the future success of the child depends upon his early habits. The most impressive years of our lives are those of early childhood. These, too, are fraught with most danger, because while most impressible, the mind and heart are least able of themselves to resist evil influences. The watchful eye, and yearning heart of the mother, the care and counsel of the father, are needful helps to a successful resistance of such temptations as are always addressed to the young. How true is this when the witching hours of night throw a mantle over the deeds to which the unsuspecting are so often invited. How much does the true parent prize the opportunity of keeping his loved ones by his side during the evening, and of enlivening the circle gathered about the fireside, with innocent amusement, and social chat. How far above all price must be that institution which will enable him to educate his children within reach of home influences. Such an institution is the public school. The physical well-being of the child, as well as his moral welfare pleads for these home schools.

Society is made up of individual homes, hence :

4. Society is improved by the public school. Statistics show that very few of the pupils who are in constant attendance upon our free schools, ever become criminals. Close the doors of all the public schools of this State to-day, and let private enterprise spring to its fullest possible stature, and a large majority of the children would be at once thrown into the street, to be trained there for the prison, or the poorhouse, or at least to be contaminated by influences clustering about the street schools.

5. By educating the labor of the country, it develops Inventive Genius, and thus increases wealth.

Labor and thought united, have cultivated broader fields, have whitened more seas, have turned more spindles, have dug deeper mines, than man's unassisted hands could have done. By aid of machinery the wealth of the country is increased. The productive industry of the United States has increased twice as rapidly as the population has increased. The Public School has had much to do with this, as is shown by the fact, that the States where the Free School interest has been most largely fostered, have been most productive in useful machines. The following statements, from the *Scientific American*, will show the wonderful stimulus given to productive industry by inventions :

"COTTON.—One man can spin more cotton yarn now than four hundred men could have done in the same time in 1760, when Arkwright, the best cotton spinner, took out his first patent.

"FLOUR.—One man can make as much flour in a day now, as a hundred and fifty could a century ago.

"LACE.—One woman can now make as much lace in a day as a hundred women could a hundred years ago.

"SUGAR.—It now requires only as many days to refine sugar as it did months thirty years ago.

"LOOKING GLASSES.—It once required six months to put quick-silver on a glass ; now it needs only forty minutes.

"ENGINES.—The Engine of a first rate iron clad frigate will perform as much work in a day, as forty-two thousand horses.

Not only have the productions of the country largely increased, but the reflex influence of increased facility in manufacturing, has afforded to laboring men leisure for improvement. That this leisure is sometimes abused in indolence, dissipation, or luxury, is no argument against the advantages it affords. By many it is improved in reading and study, to that cultivation of the mind and heart which will make the better citizen.

6. No system of schools has greater pecuniary advantages than the system of free schools.

I use this last, though to every intelligent mind, it is the least important of all the claims of the public school. What has been already said will prepare us to expect great pecuniary advantages accompanying more productive labor. Educated labor is by far the most profitable. Many large manufacturing establishments have, after diligent examination, found a difference of fifty per cent. in its favor.

The same intelligence that gives to the laborer more complete mastery over his own and other powers, and enables him to use to better advantage the material placed in his hands, also saves him from many expensive habits, and from practices that lead to crime ; so the money is saved, as well as earned.

Other schools than the public school secure the same results so far as they go, but they do not reach so many of the laboring class. Could their benefits be as general, they must be more expensive. Herein consists the direct pecuniary benefit of our free school system.

The actual expenses of the schools of Wisconsin for the past year have not exceeded three dollars per scholar. As the State increases in wealth and population, the relative expenses of her schools will be diminished. Ohio schools cost but \$2.07 per scholar ; New York schools \$3 per scholar ; Pennsylvania schools cost \$2.15 per scholar.

Before Wisconsin reaches the age of either of the States named, her schools will cost less than theirs.

The cause thus urged pleads with parents, that they furnish their children with the means of education as cheaply as possible, consistent with their highest interests, and at home, where they may care for their physical and moral training ; with citizens—that they recognize the debt they owe to society, and provide liberally for that culture which shall make their property safer and more productive ; with patriots—that they prepare well those to whose hands the institutions of our beloved country are soon to be committed ; and with you as legislators—that you recognize the sacredness of this trust committed to your care by parents, citizens and patriots—that you shield it from all harm, and foster its interests in whatever way your wisdom and intelligence may direct.—*Report of the Hon. J. L. Pickard, Supt. Public Instruction, Wisconsin.*

## 2. THE TWO PROMINENT DEFECTS IN SCHOOLS.

Allow me here to call your attention to two prominent defects which seriously affect the health and improvement of your children. The first is a want of suitable

### VENTILATION

in your school-houses. The subject is so important that it must not be passed over without comment. No fact is more evident even to common observation, than that pure air is indispensable to health ; yet there are but few school-houses in the State of Vermont, and not more than one or two in Brattleboro', in which pure air can be breathed for three hours during a winter's day.

We may give our children the hard fare at home which was the common rations of other days ; we may provide for them the hard benches and uncomfortable arrangements of old-fashioned school-houses, if we will but give them the fresh air there provided by loose windows and spacious open fire-places. But we cannot without guilt shut them up for six hours each day in a small, tight room, warmed by a box-stove. Such an atmosphere poisons the blood, drains the vitality, and lays the foundation of a hundred forms of sickness and suffering. Without pure air, the circulation of the blood, instead of a current of life, becomes a current of death, diffusing itself through a million of channels into every part of the system.

Would parents buy a solution of arsenic or corrosive sublimate at the druggists, and inject it into the veins of their children ? This would prove no more fatal than to inhale the poison of the bad air which they are compelled to breathe in most of our school-houses day after day and week after week. The only difference is, the one is a rapid and the other a slow process of poisoning.

When the school-room is first opened, the air may be comparatively pure, but in a short time the fifty pairs of lungs have consumed nearly all the oxygen, and the vicious compound that remains stupefies the intellect, and by slow degrees saps the very life blood.

This is not all theory, but the simple truth, and it is of fearful import to our children. Partial ventilation is secured in a few of our school-houses, but most of them are entirely destitute of any means for the circulation of fresh air, and hence cannot be safely occupied.

The second evil alluded to above, is the too frequent

### CHANGING OF TEACHERS.

If you have a poor teacher, change as soon as possible ; for a poor school is much worse than no school at all. But if you have been so fortunate as to secure a good teacher, retain that teacher at any reasonable expense. The habit of exchanging teachers twice or three times a year is ruinous to the welfare of our schools, and for obvious reasons.

The permanent, successful teacher, re-opens his school after a short vacation. He is cordially greeted as a friend and benefactor by loving and confiding pupils. He knows every class and every scholar. On the first day his school is in working order. All enter upon their duties with interest and zeal, and the experience of previous terms in the same position, enables the teacher to adapt his instruction to the character and standing of his pupils, and the happiest results follow. But let that same teacher enter the school for one term only ; what can he know of the character and peculiarities of his pupils ? What motive can he have to adopt and carry out a systematic course of instruction, when he knows that his successor will introduce a new and entirely different course ? What is there to awaken interest in his pupils or enthusiasm in his work, when he understands that as soon as he is fairly initiated, a stranger is to take his place, perhaps to undo all that he has done for the permanent improvement of his school ?

And can the scholars settle down to patient and earnest application, when all their time, term after term, is spent in experimenting with new teachers and new means and methods of instruction ?