

ASSISTING CHILDREN IN SCHOOL.

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THERE are two theories in regard to the function of government in relation to the citizen: (1) That as advocated by Mr. Herbert Spencer and others, who maintain that the individual should do the most possible for himself, and the government the least possible for him; (2) Those who advocate a strong "Uncle Government" which does all for the individual, or nearly all, and the individual does next to nothing for himself. Of course there are many intermediate opinions held between these two extremes. A middle position is undoubtedly the correct one; or at least it appears to accord more nearly with human experience.

These two extreme limits, if they stopped with the semi-futile efforts of government to make the individual strong or weak, as the case might be, are duplicated in the school room. Both extremes are dangerous. There are certain things the State cannot very well do.

For instance, the State should never go very far into the "Uncle or the Aunt Business" of rearing children. In other and stronger words, the State should never undertake to act as "nurse" in any capacity, even if "bottled goods are cheap." This duty belongs clearly to the parents, and if they be dead and there are no relatives or friends to care for the orphaned, then the State, municipality, or what-not, should provide a home as the statutes governing such cases direct. As a rebuttal to this proposition, it may be replied, and with considerable force too, that since some parents are unable to take care of their children properly, the public therefore owes it as a duty to itself to

house, clothe, feed, and educate such children.

But after making all reasonable allowance for laziness, poverty, misfortune under all its forms, the fact still remains that the public is "a poor step-mother" at best, and is only a substitute when all other agencies fail. The teacher's help is not very different from that performed by the government. If the teacher does all or nearly all for the child, the child becomes a mental weakling; and if nothing or next to nothing, then only the hardiest and most robust, mentally considered, survive the ordeal and come forth strong, vigorous, and independent. The more alert, being quick of comprehension, need direction in their studies rather than help. Just as there are different aptitudes of mind, so are there variations in the degree of assistance required by persons reared under equal or similar conditions. How much help a child actually needs depends upon circumstances. The judicious teacher must be the judge. Balky horses are made so because they are overloaded before they have acquired self-confidence. No horse will ever balk if he is not hitched to a load, while he is young, that he cannot pull. The skilful horseman first trains the young horse to the harness; next to draw light loads, increasing them in weight till the horse never refuses to pull his best and as often as he is called upon. It is a matter of judicious loading from first to last. Now, what is true of breaking a young horse to pull, is moreover true in regard to the training of children. The child that starts into school and is kept doing the best that he can do well, and never becomes enfeebled