

have our Berkeley schools, no doubt, and our Harvards, Yales, Princetons and Cornells, for those who care for such things; but the great mass of the people, the Americans who control the destinies of the Commonwealth, went to the Public School, and they send their own children there. It is the normal thing in America. Such is the verdict of our genial critics, which we accept with a complacent smile, and we add to it, of our own motion, that ours are the best children in the world, because they have the best fathers and mothers.

Privately, between ourselves, meanwhile, we are willing to admit that the American Public Schools are susceptible of certain minor improvements. For one thing, there are not quite so many Public Schools as there ought to be; cases are known, especially in our large cities, where children have been crowded out for lack of seating-room; and the papers print pictures of weeping little girls and boys and tragic parents appealing to justice and heaven at this unrighteous deprivation; and indignant writers hold up to us the hideous contrast between rooms full of diligent little ones, sitting in rows, with happy faces, studying their books under the benign eyes of incarnate wisdom disguised as school-teachers, and the child abandoned to the street, with its thieves, murderers, drinking saloons, gutters, sewers and general filth, vice and diabolism. Shall it be said that such things were tolerated in free, rich and progressive America? Never! So down we go into our pockets, and build more Public Schools.

Again, it is sometimes intimated that the teachers in the Public Schools are not always quite all they might be. Some of them betray signs of incompetence; more often, duties are given to them too arduous to be fully discharged by any merely human agent; occasionally they are unjust, or lose

their tempers; now and then, they seem to neglect their little charges, but, for that matter, it is hardly to be expected that any man or woman, no matter how well equipped, should give personal attention to each one of some hundreds of children, or apportion to each just the degree and kind of instruction that each needs, or do anything except regard the individuals in the mass, and impart to them, in conventional formulas, such information and guidance as the average child is supposed to require. The "average child," like the average man or woman, may be difficult to find; but we are forced, from necessity, to assume its existence. The only alternative would be to provide so many teachers that each particular child should be known to its instructor personally, and receive personal attention. But this is a counsel of perfection with a vengeance. Even as it is, the complaint is heard that teachers are not paid salary enough for their work, while at the same time our school-tax is higher than in any other country. Well, nothing in this world, even in the American part of it, is quite perfect. We may be well content to know that we are nearer to perfection than others, and are improving daily.

Admitting, then, that our Public School system is as near to the right thing as it can be brought, let us inquire a little more closely into the condition and character of the product of it, the American Public School child, more particularly as it is found in our great cities. Of course, in the last resort, the Public School is like other things, in so far as that by its fruits we shall know it. If it be so unexceptional, then, inevitably the child must be unexceptionable also. Is it so? Let us take a day from our business, and stroll about the streets, in the vicinity of the schools, at recess time, or just after school is out for the day. At these hours the children fill the