

THE SCHOOL CONTROVERSY IN ILLINOIS.

THE government of these United States, I conceive, is based, not on a system of paternalism, not upon the idea that government should do every thing for the individual, but rather upon an intention to further certain clearly conceived and narrowly bounded purposes believed to be the legitimate and peculiar province of government. Exactly what these ends are may indeed be a subject of discussion; but it is evident that the government is endowed not only with the means of self-perpetuation, but with the most efficient means not detrimental to other rights.

The government of the United States is one wherein all citizens who are believed to be of sufficient mental acuteness, and sufficiently well balanced, to be good advisers, are endowed with a share in the government. The immediate rulers are chosen by the votes of citizens; public measures are successful in gaining adoption or otherwise as the majority dictates; and public policies are the creatures of the individual opinion of the majority. As a consequence, public officials are good or bad, wise or stupid, upright or corrupt, as are the voters beneath them; measures adopted by the nation are just and reasonable, or unjust and foolish, as are the men who support them; and the public policy reflects the mental and moral characteristics of the average voter, as his vote represents him. In short, our government is what its citizens are, be they good or bad. Therefore if the standard of citizenship is raised, if the vast body of citizens is improved and made better for purposes of citizenship, the government itself is made better.

Clearly, then, it is competent and within its proper functions for the government to take such measures and to make such requirements as will tend to the training of efficient citizens. What determines that efficiency must be discovered from a consideration of the duties of the citizen.

The casting of a ballot is a bagatelle; for the considerations which determine the wording of a ballot or the names written thereupon are the important things. These considerations are of two sorts, moral and mental. The voter is a good one (1) as he desires to throw his influence for right and the public good, and (2) as he is able correctly

to determine the effect of his ballot. The aims of government must be, then, the development of moral consciousness and mental clearness in the citizen; and the government not only may take such moderate and reasonable measures as may tend to these ends, but has the right to insist upon their application to all the citizens of the future. In short, the government has a right to compel, within reasonable and moderate limits, such education as may secure a better and more efficient citizenship.

Nor do I forget that the casting of a ballot, though the most efficient and direct means of affecting the welfare of government, is but one of many means; for the same qualities in the individual make for evil to government, whether he be a voter or not. He is a good citizen who is, either at the polls or on the street, of upright conscience and a clear understanding; and the government must adopt toward the non-voting citizen a like course to that which it adopts toward the voter.

The question whether there can be direct and deliberate training in the direction of morality merely, remains, indeed, an open one, and is for the consideration of the schoolmaster. But the State, as it is at present constituted, evidently is concerned with the two forms of education above outlined; it has a right to enforce these, and these only, and is concerned with no other form of education. The religious education of the citizen, for instance, however desirable it may be, and however valuable, is not a fit subject of consideration for our government, not alone because it is utterly impracticable for a nation religiously conglomerate, but because our Constitution, in full agreement with the spirit of our institutions, positively forbids any union of Church and State.

To sum up, the government has a right to provide education for the intellectual and the moral training of its future citizens, and to compel their attendance upon it; but it has no right to provide any other education, much less to compel their acceptance of it. Nor is there need of argument to show the expediency of such compulsory education. A rising generation left to grow up in ignorance must in time become a ruling generation, caring little for good government, but, on the contrary, prone to those practices which make government weak and corrupt.

Now for the application of these general principles to the facts of present political conditions, recently much discussed. Public appre-

ciation of the danger to the State of youth growing up in ignorance has brought about compulsory education laws, so moderately drawn that the framers, it seems to be generally conceded, had not the faintest conception of any possible organized opposition among respectable people. But there has been much opposition, appealing, with more or less honesty, to religious prejudice; and two sects, the Roman Catholic and the Lutheran, have apparently succeeded in holding the balance of power, and in electing, in Illinois and Wisconsin, State officials pledged against the laws upon the statute-books. In estimating the significance of this result, the public mind has wholly ignored three most important considerations: first, that the political party which in a half-hearted fashion defended the law was for other reasons, whose effect can in no manner be exactly estimated, fore-ordained to defeat; second, that the voters whose votes were changed because of the school question, the tariff, and all other reasons combined, were but a small portion of the total number voting; and, third, that people in general refused to consider seriously the probability of a Democratic anti-school-law victory, either in Wisconsin or in Illinois, thus losing to the Republicans such voters as might have joined them from belief in the compulsory education laws. The "judgment by default" taken in these two States cannot reasonably be interpreted as any expression of opinion upon a fairly drawn issue, or as any permanent settlement of the question.

Whether these laws were defective in detail, and gave to petty officials the power of injustice and oppression, I do not know, nor is it material to the question of principle. The campaign of opposition has been waged on the law itself, not upon any detail. True, there has been much complaint about individual features of the law, but it has been vague, and unaccompanied by any suggestions of satisfactory amendment, short of abolishment; and during the campaign, abolishment, not modification, was demanded. If amendments are needed, let them be made.

The grounds of opposition to the compulsory education law are two in number: first, and in public discussion decidedly foremost, the assertion that the public school, being non-religious, cannot properly educate the children of the Church, and that the law designs to undermine the private school; and, second, the appeal to the love of the mother-tongue, usually German, which, it is asserted, is likely to be driven out by English. The latter argument, used to inflame the prejudices of the ignorant, appears less frequently in public discussion.

The law * makes two requirements pertinent to the present discussion,—that every child within a certain age shall attend school twelve weeks in each year, and that instruction in certain elementary branches shall be given in the English language. I submit that neither of these requirements in the slightest degree justifies the opposition, but that, on the contrary, each requirement is far less than the State might justly demand.

For be it remembered, if the parochial school fulfils the statute requirement, its work is accepted upon the same terms as that of the public school. The law requires that the parochial school shall, for twelve weeks each year, teach children certain elementary branches in the English language—only this, and nothing more. In other words, the law affects those parochial schools, and those only, which refuse to teach their children for a part of the day in English, for twelve weeks only in the year. Should a school which either refuses twelve weeks' teaching per year, or refuses to give its pupils even this slender opportunity of acquiring the English tongue, be accepted as sole nurse of American children? Not if the State has a right to protect itself, as we have heretofore concluded, against incapable citizens. Perhaps the most influential newspaper in the North-west to-day, the one which has been the chief power in this fight against public schools, is one which circulates among a population one-third of whom cannot read the ballots they vote, because they are printed in English; who cannot testify in the courts without an interpreter; who cannot act as jurymen, through inability to understand the language used; and who are absolutely insulated from the influence of American institutions. There are native-born American citizens of the third generation to whom English is an absolutely unknown tongue.

Evidently he who is dependent upon another to read his ballot to him is not a safe citizen or voter; and evidently the State could not require less if it in any way endeavored to secure to its citizens knowledge of the public tongue. Therefore these States of Wisconsin and Illinois have shown moderation in their exercise of an undoubted right and duty, which grows more astonishing as it is more fully comprehended. For there is not, as charged, any crusade against German. Certainly the class to whom the present writer belongs would be the last to abolish among German-speaking people the use of their language. Rather would we have it more generally known. That the fathers should read Lessing, Schiller, Goethe, and Heine in the origi-

* Wisconsin Session Laws, 1889, chap. 519; Illinois Laws, 1883, p. 167.

nal, and their children be shut out from such enjoyment, would be a calamity; and I as deeply deplore it as any one could. I ask, not that German literature should be unknown to the "German-American," but that he may be also familiar with the masterpieces of the English tongue. I know, indeed, that there is much honest opposition to these laws; but I protest against that short-sightedness which would make the immigrant, welcomed to this freer land, a stranger in a strange land, alien in speech, in customs, in institutions. I ask, not that English may drive out German, but that the language which accident has made prevalent and official should have, not all the time, not even one-half the time, but part of the day for twelve weeks in a year of the school-hours and school-years of a child's life.

The assertion, also, that the law makes war upon the parochial schools is far from the truth. In very many localities the German parochial schools have been kept up for part of the year only, with the purpose, deliberately adopted and expressed by the church authorities, that their children might attend the public schools during the remainder of the year, and learn English. Under such a system there is absolutely no conflict between the law and the parochial schools. But, if this be not desirable, the interference with the curriculum of the parochial school is slight, consisting solely of the requirement of the use of English during only a very small part of the time. The time remaining is ample for any desired instruction in religion or in morals.

I sum up, then, as follows:—

I. The State justly claims the right to insist that those who are to grow up into her citizens shall learn to understand and freely use the language of the land.

II. To this end it may justly claim such small portion of the time of the pupil as may enable him to acquire that knowledge.

III. The amount of time actually claimed by the laws now in force is very slight, rather less, in fact, than is needed to effect the end proposed.

IV. The claim that there is any interference with the religious instruction in parochial schools is absolutely untrue; for no man proposes to use in religious instruction five-sixths of the hours of the school year; and the compulsory education laws of the two States referred to have absolutely no effect or bearing on at least five-sixths of the time.

V. Equally untrue is the supposition that the learning of German

or any other language is interfered with; since ample time remains for such purposes, untouched by any statute requirement.

VI. If the State cannot do what these laws require, it can do nothing toward compulsory education, nothing to protect itself against voters ignorant of the official language.

The essay in the FORUM for March, upon this subject, by President Bascom, which embodies the usual objections, is in many respects astonishing. Its author has a most honorable record for independence, for a refusal to surrender to a vicious and popular measure. Yet his argument, succinctly stated, is this: certain bodies of people dislike our public-school system; let us therefore placate them by making schools controlled by them, and not controlled by the State, a part of that system. Let us use moneys contributed by all classes of men to further the operations of religious bodies. I state this, not by any means as explaining Dr. Bascom's views, which must be read as he has expressed them in order to be clearly understood. But I submit that there are three fallacies in his article:—

First, He does not perceive that the requirements now made are the minimum possible, that if they are not retained there can be no compulsory education whatever. And Dr. Bascom has himself most truly turned the flank of his own position in this declaration: "Carefully guarded and moderate coercion, therefore, has come to be, considering the increase of alien and irresponsible citizens, a natural, if not a necessary, step in completion of our educational system." This is, though Dr. Bascom strangely fails to see it, the "last ditch" of compulsory education. In Heaven's name, what less could be asked?

Second, The real battle is not against compulsory education, but against public schools. In this same essay he mentions, as the first symptom of discontent, the parochial schools of the Lutheran and Roman Catholic churches, and seems to think that such discontent is the result of laws peculiar to Wisconsin and Illinois. In fact, those parochial schools antedated the compulsory education laws, and are conspicuous and powerful in other States. True, there are friends of public schools in those churches; but the opponents of compulsory education are opponents likewise of public schools, whether they are so opposed for religious reasons or through desire to make German, and not English, the language of the State. Be it remembered that German Lutherans boycott as vigorously the English Lutheran churches, which differ in nothing save the use of English in their services, as they do the laws under discussion.

Third, It is objected that taxation of supporters of the parochial schools for support of public schools also is unjust. It is easy, and, I take it, conclusive, to say that the public schools are designed to secure public safety by educating those who might otherwise become dangerous to society, exactly as courts and penitentiaries have similar purpose, and that taxation for the one purpose rests on exactly the same ground as the other. In neither case need taxation be confined to those who need the service of the institution for themselves or their children. Dr. Bascom's substitute, on the other hand,—namely, the subsidizing of parochial schools with public funds, if such be his darkly expressed plan,—is objectionable not only because it is tantamount to the union of Church and State, forbidden alike by our Constitution and the spirit of our institutions, but also because it does what Dr. Bascom himself charges against the present system,—it involves a double taxation; a taxation, too, for the support of systems believed to be essentially vicious. A system which obliges a Methodist or a Baptist, honestly fearing, distrusting, and disliking Catholicism, to contribute toward a fund from which Catholic schools draw their support, or which forces a Catholic, a Jew, or an Agnostic to aid in the support of a Methodist institution, involves a tyranny fortunately impossible to this nation.

Finally, this is not a question of compromise, but of defence. There is no tyranny in compelling the education of coming citizens, or in requiring financial aid from all taxpayers; and the public school, as the State conceives it, is organized to do a different work from that of the parochial school, has no competition with it, and no opposition to it. If the parochial school will do the essential work of the public school, the latter claims no further hold upon its pupils; and when its own work is done by itself or any other agency, that public school has no objection to any further education which parents or pupils may desire, whether religious, moral, or whatever its nature be. Nor do the requirements of the public school, as expressed in the compulsory education laws, in the slightest degree impede that further education in religion or in morals.

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REAL MEANING OF THE FREE COINAGE AGITATION.

THIS question cannot be answered and no definite conclusion can be reached upon the policy of free or limited coinage, either of silver or of gold, without treating separately the two functions which national governments have assumed in the matter of controlling or directing the supply of coins which may be required to serve the purpose of instruments of exchange. There has been much confusion in dealing with this question, because of the various definitions of the word "money;" but all writers concur in one respect: coined money is an instrument by which the exchange of services or of products is facilitated. Without spending time upon an abstract definition of the word "money," it will be admitted by all that one kind of money may be good money, and another kind of money may be bad money.

Perhaps the best definition of good money is that given by Henri Cernuschi, the most distinguished among the advocates of a monetary policy which has become known as "bimetallism." I quote from memory: "That coin only is good money of which the bullion is worth as much after it is melted as it is in the form of coin."

In order to discriminate between bad money and good money, it is necessary to separate in distinct terms the function of the government in regard to coinage, and the function of the government in making provision as to what kind of money shall be a legal tender for the payment of debts. When a government attempts to make bad money a legal tender, it perpetrates the worst fraud that can be inflicted upon a trusting people. It matters not whether the money consists of discredited paper or of discredited coin. In either case it is beyond the power of a government to maintain any kind of bad money in circulation to which the people refuse to give credit, whether paper or coin. If the quality of the coined money be kept at the highest standard, its credit will be established. If the quality of the money is not maintained, the credit of the money itself cannot be main-

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