

STATE SCHOOLS HARMFUL.

A LETTER FROM THE REV. JOHN MILLER. A PARENT'S DUTY ASSUMED—PAUPER TENDENCIES STRENGTHENED—LOSS OF REFINEMENT BY CHILDREN—LESS EDUCATION AND MORE MORALITY—A PRECEDENT FRAUGHT WITH DANGER—THE VOLUNTARY SYSTEM THE ONLY SAFE ONE.

To the Editor of The Tribune. SIR: If the Democratic party would leave the "rag baby" and return to some of their older and wider principles, it would be better for them and for the country. It was one of their anti-Clay beliefs that Government had nothing to do with internal improvements, and so formidable are creeds when they strike their roots down into the truth that the country has never shaken off that doctrine. It may have quarreled with it, but it has never quite disowned it. On the contrary, it has pretended it, and, in a certain form of speech, obeyed it. So that even when it violated its spirit, it would cast its laws into forms that would uphold its teaching. A canal, if Government had to touch it, must have some pretension of being for national defense. If a harbor had to be deepened, it must be as naval roads. Mails must protect treasure and be a military link, and if we subsidized steamships we must go still further, and not simply hire them for carrying our mails, but hold them on some species of reserve for army purposes. Like the Monroe doctrine, this party plank had been singularly well nailed down, and under force of that debate the Government knows little of itself as a close corporation, and nothing as a machine for work, but will take hold of a job only when the rail or the wire, or whatever is proposed, can pretend to a necessity in some warlike view. Schools, therefore, have been no exception. If they educated a neighborhood, and that went nakedly as their plea, men would start back. You must wrap the baby, like Gov. Allen's, in some Government need, and this whole hugeness of expense has been justified under Paul's idea that the magistrate is a sword-bearer, and that, as a strict system of police, the school, like a penitentiary discipline, is a protective agency. I take ancient Democracy, therefore, not to fight for it as against Old Line Whigs, but to assume it where it is conceded, or, still more innocently than that, to employ it to systematize our thinking. I hold that Government has nothing to do with education. I shall there be burrowing down to the very philosophies of the State. Of course I must be dissatisfied with my first letter if he who reads it takes it as being as broad as the case. On the contrary, it was altogether narrow. What the Church thinks is but a part of the difficulty. What Mr. Blaine starts at is just now one greatly awakened fear. The school, beyond that, is a disorder in itself. What part it will arouse depends upon the humor of the nation. If the Church feels the malady, it is to its honor as being sensitively awake. But society in all its depths, that is to say, government and all its fights for and keeps in order, by which shall be meant the world with its long heredity, and in this we must include art and manners, and law and government, security, family virtue, the ballot-box and our liberties, which these schools were to protect, nay the very learning that they were to keep aloof, and the very children that they are framed to teach, are all concerned to explode and break up the system. It may be a wholesome hardship that these letters have to be very brief; for though one may smile at the sweep of the charges just enumerated, and wonder how in the space allotted they are to be made good, yet there is one advantage in the position taken, and that is that it is so simple. We are not to remedy anything, or propose any administrative changes. We are not to modify the school system, or to vote it into a general hospital for the relief of its defects. Our task is shorter than that. We wish to send it among the incurables. And as its lingering there would be distressing to the State, we would like to pinch its thread, and save the mischief of a misleading helplessness. To be brief in this is best; for, as we have but one belief and one list of reasons, the quicker we give them the better, and the more we give them in brief the closer they will stand, and the firmer they will be knit in mutual support and confirmation.

COSTLINESS OF THE SYSTEM.

I. Now, in the first place, the school system is expensive. Well, so is everything of any value—wretchedly expensive; unless, indeed, like air and water, it comes to everybody as a sort of groundwork of life. Religion is expensive. This, therefore, is one of my grosser reasons. I fix it only as a background to my thought. I simply say the school system is expensive; and when we come to find it diseased and weak, it is the expense of the patient that will come in to hasten its dissolution.

2. Moreover, it tends to very unfair expense. Look at Virginia. She raised last year \$2,647,790. She spent \$2,811,894. She spent nearly a million dollars on public schools. God bless Virginia! Like Paul, even on the way to Damascus, she has a high, regal way of doing even mischief. But she defaulted \$600,000 in the interest of her debt. Now, I honor Virginia. If she learns any evil from the North it is the high and the princely evil. It is the Abaddon, not the Diablos. She verily thought she ought to do many things to educate her people. If I bought a piano for my daughters and declined a butcher's bill, men would at least be confused in thinking of it; but polite negroes are playing on State pianos at Hampton Roads, and orphans' coupons are sealed or sacrificed. My remark is literally true; Virginia is acting for the best. But here is the trait of what is fanatical. It tramples obligations. The mad horse can't see the road fences against which he dashes. This school provision is not honest. And yet Virginia, tiding much of this million out of the pockets of her people, is mounted on the high wave of what seems necessary to the State and defrauds her creditors for what comes, in her enthusiastic mood, to be regarded as vital to her being.

3. Then, again, it is personally unfair. The English of these educating codus is tax for me and schooling for four children. It is one of the grosser reasonings, but it is one that the school system must overcome. I am a bachelor. I have none of the delights of home. I have to work hard to meet my obligations. And yet my neighbor sends six daughters to school, and the tax-gatherer asks me every Autumn for the money that meets their education. Where is the justice of this? The young ladies meet and smile upon me every morning as if I was the debtor. I have tried to think every way and settle how I owed those girls a schooling, but I could never do it. My argument would topple like a cottage of cards. I have reasoned in this way. The world is fixed a little so as to favor the moneyless. I shop, and the store puts on a trifle for its uncollected debts. How could it be otherwise? Workhouses must be built by the honest. It is so in everything. If I am a brave man I fight for cowards, and if I am a true man I work for drones. And it is so in religion. I cushion the seats of misers, and pay for their defects. All that seems very plain. But then why I am to educate those six daughters I can only understand on the plea of necessity, like war or pestilence, or on my own wet wit, like charity or gifts to my religion. Therefore let us look a little further.

THE MANUFACTURE OF PAUPERS.

4. I pauperize my neighbor. Having put his daughters off on me, he learns to put off other things. Labor is a blessing. The East Indian who sets under a tree may have a climate too warm for clothes and an earth too rich to afford him any trouble. He grows too lazy to pick the bread-fruit. Poverty is a disease. If I had a pious neighbor who meant to leave a fortune that would distribute a thousand loaves at a market-place every morning, I would beg him on my knees not to do it. Labor is one of the rights of man.

Therefore, when the State educates, it cuts off one of the disciplines of man. When I feed my children it ennobles me—when I clothe them, and gifts them a house for shelter. But when I school them it lifts me still further. It is a God-appointed care that is for the blessing of the parent. And when the State steps in, it is that much like Fourierism; it obliterate the lines of tenderness. It casts off one of the privileges of elevated nurture; and, to revert to the grosser thought, it engenders pauperism, because it takes the poorest people in the State and makes them poorer; that is, it takes men already remiss and makes them easier; lifts off one of their most wholesome loads, and sinks them the nearer to the East Indian with his unclad indifference.

5. In the next place, as to the education itself, it makes men indifferent about it. What they get for nothing they count for nothing. It is the law of one of the perversities of men. They sent their boys half a year, we will say, and earned the money. And now, under the free system, they have that much more to drink, and never send their sons at all. It is not an exaggerated picture.

6. Sixthly, it makes the teachers indifferent. They are governed by politics. They are elected by boards. They are not watched by parents. Their employer is a gold-hearted, politics-driven, influence-seeking, party-governed administration of the State. If there spring up thoroughness in such a system it must be like a pearl in the mud of the East. And at the best there is a deadness in the level of learning which only those who have shared in it can describe; a lessening of zeal; a slow fading of the old voluntary lights; a sinking of tone; a rising of cunning hope, and a survival of position and even of influence under the system, when all thought of soul-sacrificing devotion and work has been chilled down and forgotten out of mind. This is not imaginary. Notice the echo already from one of our educational centers, the West Point Academy complains, through its Board of Visitors (see Report, 1875): "In the six New-England States, where educational facilities are open to all, the rejections have been 35 per cent of the number examined from that section. It is clearly evident that in the schools of the country there is need of more thorough methods of instruction in the elementary branches. At the request of a member of the Board, Prof. Church, who is one of the most experienced teachers of the country,

made the following memorandum: 'From my experience in the examination of candidates for admission to the Military Academy, I am satisfied that there is somewhere a serious defect in the system of instruction, or in its application in the schools of our country for education in the elementary branches, particularly in arithmetic, reading, and spelling. I think our candidates are not as thoroughly prepared as they were twenty years ago.' The play of "Hamlet," therefore, has the very part of Hamlet left out.

REFINEMENT.

7. And again, refinement. Culture in the taste of families is a matter of long heredity. In England it is protected by entail. No people can be careless of it. And in this country it is liable to all the fluctuations of a change of property. The State School, as far as families will permit, is a machine for grinding all classes together. High and low, white and black, male and female, in some parts of the country contribute their accomplishments to each other; and taste is not like salt and pepper that spread in the common mass, but the higher is the weaker element. Taste succumbs to vulgarity. And many a poor child, incapable of a double tax, is coerced into a promiscuous school, and is forced by this governmental system to lose a breeding which is perhaps the sole gift she inherits from her ancestors. I am a Darwinian in this matter of schools. I believe in the survival of the fittest. I would have moral parents secure the best education. I scint the culture of rascals. And whereas under the old system the educated and the refined handed down office and honor, under the new we breed default. The wild defections of the country are, in my belief, beginning to be assisted by the contributions of this godless system.

8. Because, again, it breeds crime. "As he that bindeth a stone in a sling, so is he that giveth honor to a fool." We are too young to see ulterior results. We are too near to what is older, and too much under the shadow of the Bible. We grasp too impulsively our faith, and suppose too confidently that it will survive under the changes of our system. But as all this corrects itself we shall sink to the level of what we have framed; and that we have a taste of in the West, where the emigrant ship has phoned its freight of Sabbath-denouncing and Bible-hating diseases of the Prussian system.

9. Because, education alone is not a charm that will protect the ballot-box, in fact it may destroy it. The greatest scourge on earth is an educated scoundrel. Better have less education and more morality. The best educated creature in the universe is the devil. And therefore, some measure of voluntarism, by which the moral and devout will give most education to their households, is that which gives a start to virtue, and that which confirms a dominance to the best, which is really the plan which will be the very safest to which to intrust our liberties.

BELIGIOUS FREEDOM.

10. I must touch this matter again, though I made it the whole subject of my first letter. I have met gentlemen who say, true enough, advanced pieces of education seem to violate conscience. When boys begin to learn history, and when advanced subjects of learning take in, or do not take in, some faith, then indeed a coloring is given. But elementary instruction, and just that which the Republic needs, shapes no doctrine, and therefore a compromise should be made. This class of school advocates aver that only young children should be taught, and that reading, writing, and arithmetic are not divine and cannot easily be the Trojan horse to introduce mischief among the people. How mad that is! Notice: I may take a mature man and teach him logic or trigonometry, and that may affect his faith. But I may take a tender child, just at the age when he is receiving everything—at that hungry moment when his education and more morality. The best educated creature in the universe is the devil. And therefore, some measure of voluntarism, by which the moral and devout will give most education to their households, is that which gives a start to virtue, and that which confirms a dominance to the best, which is really the plan which will be the very safest to which to intrust our liberties.

11. Therefore, most Protestants demand the Bible. Now even here there is vast deception. What is the Bible? We struggle and scuffle and battle for its reading in the public schools, and what do we get? A cold, blighted, and unchristian appeal to experience. This old earth has had time for experience to assist her theories. Islam has that neglected children! There are systems that seem impervious to age—Judaism—this very Romanism, which finds itself violated in its very holiest impulse—have they taught nothing in respect to infancy? In the sweat and toil of their first learning of the alphabet the skilled Mussulman introduces Islam to his children; and if you invited his sons into your schools, and told him that at night and on the feast-days he could teach religion in his household, he would stand aguish. Those great cults have perfectly absorbed the child; and when every pore was open in struggling with his books, there is the time when religion seated itself, and all these overhadowing faiths have separated themselves from men by diligence in those formative periods. With a wave of the hand all these education agitators point to the churches and to the households as sufficient to teach religion, but it is not so. The school exacts the best hours, and the child, graduated to his task, has assigned to him all that he can stand, and, practically tried, these broken chances are not the ones that are inviting for the Gospel.

A DANGEROUS PRECEDENT.

12. And yet, the precedent. We get this privilege to our faith by a direct violation of the laws of conscience. The Mayflower came across the sea under the pressure of a majority. She did not say, England is prelate, and therefore she has a right to have her way, but complained, and was driven into exile. Therefore her grand arch was liberty, and her great doctrine freedom for her faith. That was the note of our wild bird ever since his first scream was heard upon the continent. But now the history has shifted, and we say America is essentially Protestant. We bring down the mailed hand again in religious intolerance. We do not hesitate to enforce the Bible. We say, Is not this a Christian people? And Jew and Pope and Mussulman and follower of Boodh and heathen Chinese is now the Mayflower party, and we deliberately tax and sue to enforce the Bible in the tenderest and most important years. I say, it is a precedent. And when I look at the advance of Rome; when I see with immense satisfaction I find it with a balance of power; when I behold it knitting itself and preparing to be the only force that can resist this State aggression; when I see it made love to by the English Church, and think what "a golden head" that would be to the "rhinias of brass" which I witness in this Western Papacy—I say, precisely our Bible argument may be meted upon us one day by the followers of Rome. And how can we object? If in our days of power we enforced the Bible, and did it on the plea of our majority, what if by the very skepticism that our schools beget we fall into the hands of Rome, and an indifferent people submit to a hierarchic head who put by force of law the moral and the decrees of Truth precisely where we put the Bible of King James? I argue that we had better in the fullness of power give up the aggression.

13. But you say, How school the people? I answer, How church the English? Books are no more necessary than religion. If the British have argued for a thousand years that their establishment penetrates every part of the land, and sweetens the waters of political life where poverty could have no orders of the church, and if, after a thousand years the whole is found to be a mistake, and Ireland already differently administered, and the superior efficiency of voluntarism is thundering at the door of what is left, how can we, who are doing in the West—our rage and bitterness—our piling of engines acts upon our statute books—creation of expensive halls—creation of awkward properties—only to find that there is a vice in the very root, and that if the whole subject had been let alone the very voluntarism that stirred up the State would have worked its own plans, and left its own legacies for a more wholesome schooling of the people.

14. Lastly, the simplicity of this belief. (But I must stop.) It must become the final persuasion of Protestants. It may be after immense debate, and after pride of Protestant power, and perhaps the actual blood of infidels to Rome, and to have schools finally that are both Church and State, or else those two monsters will force themselves apart, and the light necessary for the world will be content to spread itself on the voluntary system. Princeton, Dec. 27, 1875. JNO. MILLER.

EDUCATIONAL NOTES.

- Philadelphia has 95,239 pupils in its public schools.
- An intercollegiate contest in oratory between the different colleges in the State of Virginia is being talked of.
- The school population of Cincinnati, between the ages of 6 and 21, numbers 88,842. About 56 per cent attend school.
- The directors of the Philadelphia School of Design have decided to issue a certain annual number of free scholarships to that institution.
- Harvard College received subscriptions and gifts amounting to \$214,901 during the year 1875. The total amount of funds Jan. 30, 1875, was \$3,139,217.
- The University of Cincinnati received during the year 1875 \$119,748 92, and expended during the same time \$108,806 84. The endowment funds of the institution amount to \$125,935 78.
- The Baptists of Tennessee propose to celebrate the Centennial year by raising \$300,000 for the Baptist University recently located at Jackson. The city has already subscribed \$150,000.
- The memorial building at Union College is approaching completion. It will be used as an art gallery and a library. An article descriptive of Union College will appear, it is said, in Scribner's Monthly for June.
- The report of the State University of Indiana shows that it has 425 students in all its departments, and it is in a highly prosperous condition. The chemical laboratory is said to be the most complete in the West.
- Kansas has 879,692 acres of school lands yet unsold, not including the land in six counties which made no return. It is valued on an average at \$3 50 per acre, and when sold will add about \$5,000,000 to the common school fund.
- An effort is to be made at the present session of the Legislature of Massachusetts to repeal that