

tion upon the people for all requirements of the "school fund." (See Appendix E.) Colonel Templeton, Chairman of the Public Service Board of Victoria, who gave evidence before the Victorian Education Commission, ably advocated the payment of the bulk of the educational expenses out of local rates, because "the persons who had to bear the rate would be the very persons who would have to manage the schools, and they would take very good care in their management that there should be no extravagance." Judge Rogers, Chairman of the Commission, sent in a separate minority report, in which he says that, "by the introduction of a sounder system of local control, and by throwing some part of the expense of the system upon the local rates, greater economy would be secured, and a practical interest would be awakened in the minds of parents."

All this, in the abstract, is perfectly true; but it appears to be equally certain that, unless there were some overshadowing restriction of a stringent and unmistakable kind, there would be great risk that the adoption of the principle would lead to the imposition of school-fees by the municipal or local body, as in the case of the German communes, where fees are charged, except for children whose parents are paupers, although the Prussian Constitution declares that "in the public popular school the instruction shall be given gratuitously." The same violation of the constitutional principle by the municipalities has taken place throughout the German States. That is the risk. It is easy to say that no such risk exists in this country; but let us endeavour to think of a time when in New Zealand the municipalities or Education Committees will be compelled to provide, out of rates specially imposed, a portion of the cost of education, and it will not be difficult to imagine a time when their combined political influence will wring from the Legislature a corresponding power enabling them to impose a tax in the form of school-fees. A system of national primary education ought to be a system without fees. The primary-school curriculum should be free throughout to all. This is the true statesman's view. Prince Bismarck "considers free schooling a particularly safe and useful form of public aid to the working-classes;" and when it is considered that in New Zealand the State contributes £12 per head per annum toward the education of every pupil in attendance at the High Schools, and that it pays £7 2s. per head for the education of Maori children, surely we shall not consent to run any risk of bringing about the adoption of a system which may involve a possibility, however remote, of imposing school-fees under the public-school system upon the children of the working-classes, for whose education the State pays only £3 15s. Free education and enlightenment go together, and, as we spend only £3 15s. per head upon that "safe and useful form of public aid to the working-classes," we should, while making the free-education system economic and effective, strive to strengthen and perfect it in every possible way. How was the public-school system of France strengthened, and the very objection removed which is the blot of the German municipal system? In Germany, to receive free education is to belong to the pauper class. There are two classes of children in the schools—those who pay and those who do not pay. When M. Ferry, Minister of Public Instruction in France, passed the law of the 16th June, 1881, which removed the payment of fees in the public primary schools, a great writer said,—

"If the creators of this great gratuitous system are asked what moved them to establish it, they will reply, with entire frankness, *l'idée démocratique*—the democratic idea. In a democratic society, they will say, the distinction between the school-child who can afford to pay fees for his schooling, and who pays them, and the school-child who cannot and does not, is wounding and improper."

It is because I fear the tendency and ultimate effect of a system of local taxation that I conceive it better to charge the cost of school-buildings upon the Consolidated Fund. To the Consolidated Fund every citizen contributes, and to the erection and maintenance of the school-buildings of the country, therefore, every citizen will contribute. To the municipal revenue (in New Zealand) only about one person in six contributes, the rates falling wholly on owners of property, and, as it would be manifestly unjust to throw the whole cost of erecting school-buildings upon a section of the people, the necessary alternative, if this additional burden were cast upon the municipalities, would be to adopt the American poll-tax, the "elector" tax, or the house-tax, all of which, I take leave to think, are repugnant to English feeling. The effect or defect to which I have referred (the school-fees and the taxes) is exemplified notably in the English, American, and German systems. Besides, as already remarked, New Zealand is a country geographically and topographically peculiar. Under a system of local taxation the evils of the provincial days would be revived and perpetuated. Some districts are rich; some are poor. The children of one district would be highly educated, while the children of another would be very poorly educated; and surely that is an inequality and a disadvantage to be avoided. Our aim should be, as it now is, to educate our people as a whole. I cannot help thinking, upon mature reflection, that local taxation would be a retrogressive step.

And, as with the fees, so with the standards—I. to VI. I think they should remain untouched.

But there is still another evil to be apprehended and guarded against; and I desire to conclude all I have to say by calling attention to this danger, and by citing a passage bearing upon it from the writings of that great friend of education, Matthew Arnold, who, in his report (1886) upon the Continental systems of education, says,—

"But we must remember that there are some questions which it is peculiarly undesirable to make matters of continued public discussion, questions peculiarly lending themselves to the mischievous declamation and arts of demagogues, and that this question of gratuitous popular schooling is one of them. How often, if the question becomes a political one, will declaimers be repeating that the popular school ought to be made free, because the wealthier classes have robbed the poor of endowments intended to educate them! The assertion is not true; indeed, what we call 'popular education' is a quite modern conception; what the pious founder in general designed formerly was to catch all promising subjects and to make priests of them. But how surely will popular audiences believe that the popular school has been robbed! And how bad for them to believe it! How will the confusion of our time be yet further thickened by their believing it! I am inclined to think, therefore, that, sooner than let free popular schooling become a burning political question in a country like ours, a wise statesman would do well to adopt and organize it."

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