

things, as it has already done in the case of Baltimore city. Baltimore city does not come here and ask the legislature for every local matter it wants. It determines many of those questions for itself. Nearly every question that has tended to the improvement of the school system there has been brought about by the board of commissioners themselves. The legislature confers certain general powers. And even if we should fail to get from the legislature a public school system, the very same power will reside under this provision as without it; that is, the legislature can confer certain powers upon the local authorities of the counties, instead of assuming to pass every little local law, divide every little school district, build every little school-house, and thus take up the time of the legislature in those little matters. I know this is a great evil; there is no greater evil arising from any one subject in the State from partial and local legislation, than this very school system. It has become so now that in every county in the State there is a different school system, and even different systems in different districts of the same county. And no man can take the legislation of the State and come to any conclusion as to what is the school system in hardly any county in this State.

Having answered that objection, I will indorse all that the gentleman from Baltimore county (Mr. Ridgely) had said of the necessity of some general, uniform, public school system that shall apply to every county. And it is no use to tell me that you cannot have the same school system for one county that you have for another, that it cannot be uniform. How does Pennsylvania do? How do the majority of the free States of this Union do in reference to this school system? They have a uniform system of public education. And why should not we in Maryland have one? In every State where it has been tried, it is not only improving, but the people have become so wedded to it, that you cannot destroy it in any State where it exists. And there is no way so sure to get clear of this partial legislation and get a general system of public education, than to say that the legislature shall not pass every little local law that every little school district may want passed. If you continue to pass these local laws, then you will perpetuate the system of special local laws for all time. But as soon as you say to the legislature that they shall pass general public laws, where they can be passed, you have taken the first great step towards having a great general system of public education throughout the State.

Mr. KING. If we already had a general school system, then I would have no objection to this provision. But we have not got that. When you pass general laws that will do away with local laws, of course we expect that. But until we get a general law, I want to keep our local laws.

Mr. HENKLE. I am entirely in favor of a general system of education in this State, and always have been. But I do not imagine for one moment that if we reject this particular clause, we thereby preclude the possibility of establishing a system of general education in Maryland. The gentleman from Baltimore city (Mr. Daniel) has argued as though the main question under consideration was whether we should have a uniform system of education in Maryland. That does not necessarily follow. I am opposed to this clause, because it says that the legislature shall pass no local or special act for the preservation of the school fund. Now, all of us, who were members of the legislature last winter, remember that there was an earnest and continued effort made here to pass a general school bill. But there were a great many difficulties and objections urged, so conflicting, so numerous, so strong in their character, that they finally defeated the bill. And that has been the case in reference to every other general bill in the legislature.

In reference to the school funds in the State of Maryland, they differ in every county in the State. In some of the counties there is no surplus school fund at all. In other counties there is a large surplus school fund which they have invested in securities. In some of the counties this subject is under the control of school commissioners; in some of the counties it is under the control of the orphans' court. In some of the counties this fund is a large amount of money invested in different ways, and subject to the control of different parties. Now, if we enact this clause, will there not rise a difficulty? We contemplate a general system of education, but we can pass no general system in regard to the school fund that will operate equally just in all the counties. Now, it occurs to my mind that there will be a difficulty in this way. All the counties are not similarly situated in reference to a school fund. Some of them have large school funds; others have none at all. Now, we propose to deprive the legislature of the power to enact special laws for those counties that are differently situated from the other counties. Now, I am not opposed to a general system of public education. But it occurs to me that if we pass this provision we will embarrass different counties in this State.

Mr. KING. I want it expressly understood that I am not opposed to a general system of public education. But until we have a general system, I want these local laws to remain. And we have to apply here every now and then; on several occasions since I have been in the board, we have had to apply to the legislature to ratify certain deeds, and all this kind of thing which this prohibits. So that for these small matters, our fund is entirely separated from the rest of the State; we have our property to ourselves.