

guage which may occasion legal controversy, yet it will be to me, and all friends of popular education, a subject of heartfelt congratulation if a better plan can be devised by which greater good can be accomplished for the children who soon will be either the active citizens of the commonwealth or the mothers in our households, upon whose virtue and intelligence will depend the progress of the State and the position she will hold upon the roll of national wealth and honor.

The labor, responsibility and anxiety connected with so important and extended a work as putting into operation plans for the moral and mental training of nearly one hundred thousand children have been great, but with the blessing of uninterrupted health, the guidance of the State Board of Education and the co-operation of the able and zealous presidents of the County School Boards and the District Commissioners, the work has been done. It now presents its record of diligent effort to give our children the very best opportunities for education, at the least practicable cost to the property of the State.

If in this report there is no direct discussion of the abstract question of popular education as the grandest work of an American State—it is because that question is considered to be settled. Our policy being fixed, there need be no debate except upon modes of administration. We have endorsed the sentiment of Washington “in proportion as the structure of government gives force to public opinion, it is essential that public opinion should be enlightened.” We believe the education of the people to be the only permanent basis of national prosperity and national safety. We recognize, in its most liberal construction, the principle that every child has a right to education—that the property of the State is morally as well as legally pledged to secure that moral and mental training which will make citizens virtuous, intelligent, industrious. We advocate free education, not as a charity, but as a part of the freedom of the State, to which every child has the same claim as it has to life, and the means necessary to sustain it.

But supposing these higher principles not to be recognized, granting that no such natural right exists, antecedent to and controlling all acts of assembly, we can urge the very lowest grade of utilitarian logic, and prove that property has an interest in universal education. It will make dollars weigh heavier and shillings move more nimbly. There is no farm, no bank, no mill, no shop, unless it be a grog shop, which is not more valuable and more profitable because of the school house. Homes are more pleasant, if located among a well educated, than if surrounded by an ignorant population. Thus, weighed in the balance of selfish interest, it becomes a duty which property owes to itself to provide education for all. Adding the arguments of the utilitarian to