

IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE OF PUPILS!—HOW CAN IT BE REMEDIED ?

It is estimated that not more than two-thirds of the children enrolled upon the register attend regularly at School. A teacher may exhibit 60 names upon the roll, while on average of 40 pupils receive daily instruction. The average absence is greater than $\frac{1}{3}$ in some districts, less in others; the regularity of attendance generally corresponding with the degree of intelligence in the community. The most ignorant, who need education most, value it the least. It is, of course, impracticable for all the children registered to attend daily; sickness or home work detains some, but, making full allowance for these, the larger portion of absentees are truants, or their parents so indifferent to the advantages of education that they permit children to follow their own will and attend or stay away from school at their own pleasure. Irregular attendance is the great vice of the daily Public School. There is no other cause that tends so much as this to neutralize the efforts of teachers and disorganize schools. The evils resulting therefrom cannot be over-estimated. Hence the duty to give this important subject most careful consideration, while our school system is in its infancy, that wise plans may be devised by which so great a vice may be remedied.

It is vain for teachers to labor for the advancement of pupils who are in school only two or three days each week, or who attend one term and stay away the next. Citizens pay the school tax to little purpose, and children reap small advantage from the provision made for their instruction unless they attend regularly at school.

To inquire into the causes of this irregularity would lead to a discussion irrelevant to the purpose of this report, but the question most properly presents itself: "Can the evil be remedied?" If it can, the remedy ought to be applied.

Some persons have suggested what is called "the compulsory system." They argue that if the safety and prosperity of the State depend upon the intelligence of the people, the law of self-preservation demands that attendance at school be enforced. Others very pertinently ask: "Shall the State, at great cost, establish a system of Free Public Schools, devoting nearly a million dollars annually to the education of youth, and then permit ignorant and avaricious parents, or idle children, to squander $\frac{1}{3}$ of this revenue by irregular attendance?"

The evil does not stop here. Not only is the State defrauded in her benevolent purpose, but the children who attend school regularly suffer. The teacher cannot discharge his duties efficiently when pupils are not regularly in their seats. The time employed in "bringing up" the absentees of yesterday is time lost to the school.