

The enactment of a law requiring children between the ages of 8 and 12, or 10 and 14 years to attend school six months each year, is claimed to be a benevolent duty to the child as well as to society. Children too young to judge for themselves ought not to be the victims of parental cupidity or carelessness, and thus entail upon the State the curse of their ignorance and vice. If the State provides public education on the principle that ignorance is a public evil; if children have the same right to moral and mental food that they have to bodily sustenance, then should the rights of the young and the good order of society be secured by some equitable legislation.

It is argued that a law compelling attendance at school would interfere with parental prerogative; but no parent has a right, in law or nature, to injure a child physically, morally or mentally. If the law intervenes to prevent infanticide, it certainly can intervene to prevent the destroying or dwarfing of the intellectual existence: it ought to guard those little ones who are in a condition more pitiable than that of orphans.

The law of necessity also has been urged, based upon the axiom that intelligence, and consequently education, co-extensive with the franchise, is a public necessity.

While acknowledging the force of these and similar arguments, I cannot advocate a compulsory law. I prefer to depend upon those influences which can be brought to bear upon the minds and hearts of parents to convince them that in no way can they benefit their children more than by sending them to school. I would make the school house attractive; place in it the accomplished and good-hearted teacher, and draw the children by the compulsion of kindness, not of force. To accomplish this we have agencies not yet enlisted earnestly in the cause of popular education. The clergy of the several denominations can do much to awaken the minds of parents, and to encourage children to attend school. By visits to the schools, brief lectures to the pupils, and words of counsel to the teachers, they can aid the good cause, and sow seed which will not fail to spring up and bear fruit. The clergy exert a great and valuable influence, not only by their public teachings, but in visits from house to house. If they, from the pulpit, and in the course of pastoral duty, will impress upon parents their duty to secure for their children the benefits of education, if they will bring their admonitions to bear upon those who keep the little ones at work when they ought to be at school, no law of compulsion will be needed. A sound public opinion will be developed, and ere long parents will feel that they cannot stand before the bar of God guiltless, unless they have done what they could to educate their children and prepare them to be useful citi-