

THE EARLIEST INDIANA SCHOOL JOURNAL.

[We publish herein part of the second number of the first volume of *Common School Advocate*. The first number, so far as known, is lost. This number was found by Mr. Jacob P. Dunn bound in the back of an early number of the *Indiana Farmer and Gardener* in the Indianapolis Public Library. It is not only interesting for its age, but instructive as well for the information it contains on the state of education in Indiana before the formation of its public school system and on the agitation which produced the change. The reader will notice that this paper is dated October 15, 1846, nearly two months before Caleb Mills's first address to the legislature appeared in the *Indianapolis State Journal*.—*Editor.*]

COMMON SCHOOL ADVOCATE.

Devoted to Common Schools—the only guaranty of our Republic.

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H. F. WEST, Editor.

OUR SECOND APPEAL.

Public opinion, a powerful means of correcting abuses, has for a long time slept over the Common Schools of our country. It is but a few years since it was aroused upon the subject of intemperance, and its influence has, as it were, revolutionized the world. It has to individuals, to families, to society, averted calamities more to be dreaded than war, pestilence and famine. Not only this, it has raised from the lowest depths of degradation and misery the brutalized husband, the father, the brother, the son, and clothed them in their right minds, wiping the tears from a wretched mother, and spreading light, and happiness, and comfort, around the fireside of a disgraced and beggared family. And now, how are we to awaken public opinion, and bring its omnipotence to bear upon the interests of the Common Schools of our country? What can unsepulchre this sleeping dust, galvanize it into life, and make its mighty power subservient to the cause of education? We answer, THE PRESS.

The Press has within itself the power of creating public opinion. It has but to concentrate its power, turn its focal light upon the

subject, and cause it to shine steadily and faithfully upon it, and soon the people will see a light spring up in their dwellings; they will see clearer and clearer their privileges, their duties and their responsibilities. The Press has but to hold up to the public mind that ignorance is the high-road to infamy and that a government based upon the virtue and intelligence of the people is only to be perpetuated by the education of our children, and public opinion will make it as disreputable for parents who do not provide for their children the best possible instruction in their power, as it did, and now does, those who spend their lives in drunkenness and debauchery. There is no error, however great or small, that can stand before the concentrated thunder of the Press. Although iniquity may clothe itself with the habiliments of the just, and raise its brazen front to heaven, yet the Press can strip it of its covering and lay it naked before the world.

The Press of our own State has just come out of a political contest, where one portion of it has been resolutely arrayed against the other, and while the dust of the battle-field is still upon its armor, a call from the institutions of our country will be made a common cause, and, as the voice of one man, it will be unitedly responded to. And now we ask our brethren of the Press, if there is one thing within the whole range of their duties that has so strong a claim upon their labors as the Common Schools of our State. You appreciate the importance of Education, and it is in your power to call the attention of the people to this subject. And wherever there is such a controlling influence, as the Press wields over the destinies of individuals, of States, and of the nation, let it not be forgotten that there is fastened to that influence a corresponding responsibility from which there is no escape.

We ask the Press to co-operate with us in bringing public opinion to bear upon the absolute necessity of a thorough reformation in our Common Schools. We want school laws that will be efficient, and such as the people can understand. We want to know definitely the amount of the available school funds of the State, and how they are and have been expended. We want to know the amount of funds that are not available, if any; the amount of unsold lands, if any. We want to know how many school districts there are in the State, and how many of these districts there has no school been kept in for

the last two years, and how many school districts never received a dollar of the public money. We want to know how many children are enumerated for the purpose of drawing the school funds, that have never been to school a day in their lives. We want some plan devised by which the thousands of children in our State, that neither read nor write, *shall* have a Common School education. There are a great many other wants, such as comfortable schoolhouses, appropriate school books, qualified teachers, all of which the Press understands, and feels the importance of the reform we are trying to bring about. And we once more solicit the aid of the Press in the arduous undertaking we have commenced.

OUR SCHOOL SYSTEMS—SUGGESTIONS.

The following amendments of our school laws are respectfully suggested to the people for their consideration, and especially for the executive and legislative branches of our State government:

The school system of the State of Indiana is, with some exceptions, a good system. There are, however, defects, and some of them of such importance as to render the whole almost valueless. Without remodeling over the whole system, we propose some few alterations, and give our reasons for the same.

In the first place, if possible, consolidate the school fund.

2. Let the distribution be made annually, instead of semi-annually, and on the fourth Monday of February. Our reasons for these two alterations are: It will be far less complicated to have the entire school moneys paid into the State treasury and apportioned to each county in one amount, than to have it pass through so many different hands in collecting, keeping, apportioning and disbursing. By distributing the school moneys annually instead of semi-annually, to the townships, a great amount of time and expense will be saved, and it answers every purpose. The schools in the country generally close the last of February, and the money will then be ready to pay the teacher. The Commissioners' Court being held on the first Monday of March, is another reason for selecting the fourth Monday of February.

3. Make township clerks superintendents of Common Schools for their respective townships; let them draw the public money

and distribute it to the different school districts, according to the number of children between 5 and 21 years of age. Make it their duty to obtain a correct list of all the children in their respective townships—number that have attended school within the last year—number of school districts—select or private schools—school-houses—their condition—the branches taught—number of male teachers—number of female teachers—the amount of public money expended in their townships, and the purpose for which it was expended. Make it their duty to visit each school at least once in each session, and report the whole to the county auditor between the first of September and the first of October, annually. Let the State furnish two blanks for each township, prepared for the above report, one to be filed in the office of the county auditor, and the other in the office of the township clerk. Let these officers be paid a per diem allowance for each and every day's services rendered in their official capacity, and let them give security for a faithful performance of their duty.

4. Make it the duty of the county auditors to report to the State Superintendent the whole information furnished in the township clerks' reports, on or before the first day of November, annually. By adopting this or a similar plan, information, so necessary to a thorough improvement in our schools, will be regularly diffused throughout the State. The law requires the State Superintendent to report to the legislature, and through his report and the action of that body, the people will be advised of everything in relation to the schools of our State. We shall then know the condition of our school fund, and those who are benefited by it, as well as those who are receiving no advantages from it. We shall then be able understandingly to correct abuses, and make such improvements as our present condition requires. By this simple arrangement, the intelligence we need comes up fresh from the people, and the public money returns, based upon that intelligence, through a plain, straight channel to every township whose clerk has not failed to make the required report. For it will be recollected that the apportionment must be made upon the number of children between the ages of 5 and 21. If any township neglects to furnish the county auditor with the required report by the specified time, that township will lose its proportion of the public money, as upon this plan it will

have to be apportioned among those who promptly and faithfully do their duty. The weak districts, as well as the strong, will receive their just proportion, the same as they do under the present law, and each member of every school district will understand that it is for his interest that the school laws are strictly enforced and faithfully lived up to.

5. Elevate the standard of qualification for teachers of our district schools. Let no teacher obtain a certificate from the examiner who is not qualified to teach reading, orthography, arithmetic, grammar, geography and history. These are the branches that other States require their teachers to understand, while we only require the examiner to certify what branches the teacher is qualified to teach. If a teacher can teach spelling in words of two syllables, and has a good character, a certificate can be obtained, and the public money appropriated for his services. This low standard holds out no inducements for teachers to make the least exertion to high attainments, and the effect of this is the poverty—the wretched and beggarly preparation—of a vast amount of our children, for the great purposes of life that are before them. We may rest assured, if we *do not* require a high standard of instruction, we will not call into action those high and noble faculties of the human mind, but if *we do*, we shall soon see those desirous of being teachers putting forth their energies to come up to the required standard.

Six reasons for the amendment of this school law: In the first place, it is a disgrace to the State to have so low a standard. Second, it encourages ignorance, by not giving countenance to intelligence. Third, all its tendencies are directly downward. Fourth, self-defense. Ohio, on one side, and Illinois, on the other, have raised their standards, and at this present time teachers who are not qualified to teach the children of Illinois are coming into Indiana, knowing they are abundantly qualified to teach the children of our State; and teachers residing in our State, qualified to bear an examination in Illinois, are leaving for the latter. Fifth, as is the teacher, so is the scholar. Sixth, raise the standard, and teachers will throw aside their qualified ignorance and exert themselves to honor its demands. Raise the standard, and other States will give us credit and future generations will bless our memory.

PARENTS, A WORD WITH YOU.

If we were to ask you if it were your honest and earnest intention to give your children a good Common School education, you would consider it a gross insult. If we were to ask you if you do really and candidly desire a good school in your neighborhood, you would think us insane. If we should ask you this question, Do you know what a good school is and what is necessary to establish and keep up a good school? you would certainly think we ought to have a straightjacket put upon us, and sent forthwith to the lunatic asylum. But let us investigate these matters fairly and honestly, for if any are in error, it is for their own interest to be made acquainted with it, and much more for their credit to acknowledge and abandon it.

Hundreds of parents have repeatedly said to us, "If we never give our children a dollar, we are determined they shall have a good education; they shall not be turned off upon the world, as we were, just barely able to read and write." These are good resolutions, but they would be far better if they were always lived up to. There is no use in parents boasting of their children's education, if the children have not got it. And the great things parents are *going* to do for their children may be *guessed* at by what they have already done for them. And we ask *you* parents who have been telling how much you would do for your children, ever since you have had a child old enough to go to school, How much education have your children got? We will try and assist you in ascertaining the amount, for if you have been honest and truthful in all your pretensions, the result will be most truly gratifying. Let us construct an imaginary scale, ranging from zero to 50 degrees. Let us suppose that the lower order of animals, and man uneducated, stand upon the same level, at zero. Reading shall mark the first degree upon the scale; spelling the second; writing the third; figures the fourth; geography the fifth; grammar the sixth; history the seventh, etc. Now we wish you to be the judges in this examination, and we ask you to select some easy lesson and let your children read it to you. If the reading does not come up to the standard of what you consider good reading, you will perceive they are not, by the education you have given them, raised one degree on the scale. Suppose we place spell-

ing first; take the spelling book and test their attainments. If they can not spell well, you need not expect them to read well, and you may stop there. Now, is this the good education you have talked so much about giving to your children?

The second query, "whether you do really and candidly desire a good school in your neighborhood," we will take for granted an affirmative answer. We suppose it to be fair to judge of the honesty of men's professions by their actions. We read: "The tree is known by its fruit." What have you individually done to obtain a good school? Have you spent one week, or even one day, in endeavoring to improve your school? Have you given one dollar extra for the purpose of having a qualified teacher instruct your children? Have you made the schoolhouse comfortable for them? Have you furnished them with suitable books? Have you taken any interest at all in the school? Have you ever crossed the threshold of the schoolhouse within the last year for the purpose of ascertaining the condition of your school, suggesting improvements and correcting abuses? If you have done none of these things, we would advise you as a friend to say no more about your anxiety to have good schools. Say no more about "miserable teachers," "wretched schools," "poor encouragement to give your children schooling," etc. We will ask you one or two more questions on this point. How much time and money have you expended within the last year to improve your cattle, your swine, your grasses, grains, implements of husbandry, of the mechanical arts? And how much for the instruction of your children? Your honest answers to these questions will show you precisely where you stand. Do not understand us, that we do not approve of all your exertions to better your grains, to improve your stock, for we assure you we highly commend and encourage all such improvements, but at the same time we can not help thinking of the question our Savior put to the Pharisees: "How much better then is a man than a brute?"

The third and last query suggested would be deemed impertinent, if there were not such a variety of opinions as to what constitutes a "*good school*." We will not attempt in this number to go into this "legion" of opinions, but reserve them for a separate article; but will assure you, that the school is good and the instruction beneficial, that advances your children thoroughly and rapidly, and at the same

time softens their dispositions, refines their manners and gives a healthy tone to their morals. And is not that school worse than valueless, where your children go from week to week, and no visible attainments made in their studies? Where their manners are coarse and vulgar? Where you can hear nothing but the low, cant phrases of the day, such as are picked up from the clown of a circus, and retailed through the country by every low-bred specimen of depravity? Now, parents, what has been the improvement in your children for the last year? You must be the judges. If you have good schools, and you have done your duty, you can see a great difference in the morals, manners and attainments of your children.

In order to keep up a good school, you must visit it, you must watch over it, encourage it by your counsel, and co-operate with the teacher. And more than this, you must try to awaken an interest in your neighborhood, you must *know* and *feel* the responsibilities that rest upon you as parents, that you are accountable to your children, to society, to your country, and to God, for any and every neglect in the education of your children; that you have got to meet all these responsibilities face to face sooner or later, and "there is no darkness or shadow of death where you can hide from them."

MARK THE DIFFERENCE.—Some of the school district trustees are already in the market, cheapening teachers, trying to find one to take charge of the children over whom they have a temporary supervision, for about *six dollars* per month. They state, what everybody knows to be true, they are ignorant themselves, and then erroneously infer that a teacher who does not know much, is just as good for them as one who is capable of refining and improving their children, provided he will teach cheap enough. They often go to the examiner, and request him to give a teacher they have already bargained with, a certificate, so they can draw the public money, where the examiner knows the candidate has not one qualification requisite for a school teacher. But where people are enlightened, and duly appreciate the blessings of good schools, we see them pursuing a different course. Read the following from the Lebanon Star, Ohio:

"A TEACHER WANTED, to take charge of a fall and winter school in fractional school district No. 3, Turtle-creek township. Good morals, a thorough English education, energy, promptitude,

and decision in the management and government of the school, are qualifications that the applicant must be in possession of. Liberal wages will be given. Apply soon to either of the undersigned directors."

EDUCATION.

The following descending scale of education in the United States in 1840, shows the proportion of white persons in each State above the age of 21 years, who can neither read nor write, to those who can:

No.	1. Connecticut	1 in 311
	2. New Hampshire	1 in 150
	3. Massachusetts	1 in 139
	4. Maine	1 in 72
	5. Vermont	1 in 58
	6. Michigan	1 in 44
	7. New York and New Jersey	1 in 29
	8. Pennsylvania	1 in 28
	9. Ohio	1 in 27
	10. Iowa	1 in 26
	11. Louisiana	1 in 16
	12. District of Columbia	1 in 15
	13. Maryland and Wisconsin	1 in 13
	14. Indiana and Mississippi	1 in 10
	15. Florida	1 in 9
	16. Illinois and Arkansas	1 in 8
	17. Missouri	1 in 7
	18. Delaware and S. Carolina	1 in 6
	19. Virginia, Alabama, Kentucky and Georgia	1 in 5
	20. N. Carolina and Tennessee	1 in 4