

DEMOCRACY IN EDUCATION.

The irrepressible conflict between democratic and despotic tendencies, which has become plainly observable in the political adjustments even of our own democratic republic, has not passed our public school system by. It would be strange had it done so. For this tendency is inevitable in political relationships; and educational systems, like everything else, come into the political sphere upon becoming public institutions.

But that conflict has not yet got to be generally obvious in our public school system. While we are all conscious of the obtrusion of partisan and spoils politics, and everybody except corrupt politicians and their equally corrupt beneficiaries in business life is anxious to rid the system of that parasitical growth, we have not yet awakened to the more profound and more dangerous aggressions of the despotic idea. It needs no special acuteness, however, to detect these aggressions in the public school system of the United States, nor more than ordinary historical knowledge and political intelligence to recognize signs of warfare in that system between the despotic idea and the democratic.

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In its distinctly national aspects, the manifestations of this irrepressible conflict may be observed in the operations of the National Educational Association.

A comprehensive association of educators, that organization draws by far its largest membership from the public school teachers; and these contribute in high degree the largest proportion of its funds. Yet by subtle methods, the government of this great body of teachers and their powers over their own funds have been diverted from themselves to persons who are in no real sense their representatives.

There have been established in the Association, bodies within bodies, caucuses within caucuses, powers within powers. And above them all there is a nondescript and practically self-perpetuating oligarchy known as the National Council of Education, which seems to be of the Association but not in it, and to have more power over it than the Association itself could command without a persistent campaign for independence extending over a period of several years. Under these influences, which have been accumulating for a quarter of a century, an effort is now making in Congress to secure for the Association a charter that shall extend, and fix in legislation amendable only by Congress, this despotic power of the few over

the many who chiefly constitute the body of the Association and create the bulk of its fund.

It has been charged that railroad interests and school book trusts animate this tendency to centralization in the Educational Association. There may be truth in the charge. Certain it is that the agents of school book trusts are ranged on the side of the despotic tendency. Certain it is, also, that this tendency became most pronounced immediately after the successful contest of the Chicago teachers against the tax-dodging corporations of Chicago, and apparently in direct response to an attempt of teachers in the Association to appropriate for an investigation of tax-dodging by railroad and other corporations to the prejudice of public school funds throughout the United States, some of its sacred funds. These and related facts do give color of probability to accusations of an ulterior purpose back of the centralizing movement in the National Educational Association. But the probability of the truth of those accusations is not pertinent to our purpose.

Corruption of that kind, like political corruption in the public school system, is in its nature superficial and ephemeral. Much more important, therefore, even than positive proof of corrupt motives could be, would be the fact that this tendency to concentration is what we believe it to be, only an honest and well-intentioned expression of the paternally despotic spirit.

The despotic spirit distrusts the masses of the people. When it does not fear their motives, it doubts their intelligence. There is nothing superficial nor ephemeral about this distrust. It is at the center of the despotic mind; it always has been, and probably always will be. There is no necessity, then, for assigning low motives for centralizing tendencies in the National Educational Association, even if they exist. These tendencies may be considered merely as manifestations in that particular group, of a warfare that extends throughout the public school system—a phase, that is, of the irrepressible conflict between the despotic and the democratic mind.

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The same warfare is observable in varying degree and through various modes of manifestation, in almost every center of public school activity.

Though in each of these centers the superficial and ephemeral phenomena, such as political spoils, school-book corruption, school-land grafting, business favoritism and corporation tax-dodging, with their "pulls," "pushes" and percentages, may be noticed, the real cause lies deeper. It is every-

where the same cause that has precipitated all the contests over the notion of "divine right," little and big, local and general, from which Abraham Lincoln drew his inspiration of government of the people, that it should be not by "superiors" either in virtue or intellect, but by the people themselves. These public school controversies are but local manifestations of a national conflict in the public-school system; and at bottom this conflict everywhere is between despotic and democratic tendencies as old as human association.

Just now Chicago happens to offer the best illustration, because in Chicago the despotic tendency in the schools has been more obviously aggressive, and the democratic tendency more militant. The essential character of the conflict has therefore taken visible form and may be seen for what it really is.

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The first clear manifestation of this tendency in Chicago came out in a litigation with tax-dodging corporations. The public-school teachers had been subjected to a process of salary-compression which led them to organize the Chicago Teachers' Federation. They were not long in discovering that the apparent necessity for the cutting off of salaries had been caused by the street-car companies and other public-service corporations, whose franchises were listed for millions on the stock market and for nothing on the tax duplicate. Upon the discovery of this the Federation sued the companies for dodged taxes. After a long fight the suit was won, but in the face of fierce opposition from the companies, from the business interests of the city, from the taxing authorities, from the city government, and from the school board itself. When victory came at last, Judge Grosscup of the Federal Court stepped in with an injunction under which he acted as a local board of review and arbitrarily cut down the money value of the victory about 60 per cent. To cap this climax, the school board, having received its share of the money, refused to pay the teachers their withheld salaries; and when the courts decided in favor of the teachers, the board tied up the fund they had fought for and won, by appealing. A board less despotic in its personnel has now by a slight majority remedied that wrong by withdrawing the appeal.

In the progress of this fight, the Chicago Teachers' Federation came to be a representative body of acknowledged force in the community; and as its intelligence regarding despotic tendencies expanded, it came more and more to be a local agency of democratic progress. What had at first

seemed to its members to be arbitrary or corrupt school management, was revealed to them as a phase of the despotic tendencies (whether corrupt or not) in all public affairs. Against these tendencies this organization has ever since set its face, and with such effect that the victories won in Chicago for municipalization of public utilities are directly traceable to its work.

But the Teachers' Federation, while it has struggled with despotic tendencies wherever in local civic affairs they have come to the surface, has consistently done so as a necessary part of the work for which it is especially organized—the protection of the body of public-school teachers, and the school system itself, from despotic policies in school management, and the professional improvement of the teachers. It is in this connection that the conflict in which it has been engaged is especially illustrative of the subject here under consideration.

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The public schools of Chicago, like those of probably all public-school centers, have drifted steadily into the current of despotic tendencies in education. In the name of "business" management, the ideals of the factory or the department store have displaced the true ideals of the school room. High salaries for management with low salaries for teaching, a small expense account and a large output,—this is the commercialistic ideal that has prevailed. And this mercenary ideal has naturally allied itself to the despotic ideal of public-school pedagogy, which, military in its antecedents and commercial as to its modern models, reverses the democratic order.

According to the despotic ideal, authority descends from the head downward or the center outward. Its conception of authoritative sequence is a council of war or a board of directors, a commanding general or a business manager, generals for each division and brigade or department managers and bureau chiefs, an appropriate assignment of minor officers or assistant chiefs, and a body of troops or workmen responsive as a vast mechanism to transmitted orders from above.

However imperative this ideal may be in the military or the commercial sphere, it has no place in the pedagogical. School children are not an enemy to be fought with military precision, nor pots and pans to be manufactured and distributed with a minimum of expense and a maximum of product. Neither military nor factory organization is adaptable to their educational processes.

In warfare or commerce the human agencies are of two kinds in point of relative importance—the

able head to command and the responsive mass to obey. While either would be ineffective without the other, yet in comparison with the individual head an individual of the mass is of little account. But that is not true of the school. In teaching it is the individual teacher that counts, and not the mass of teachers merely as a mass. True, there are indispensable organic phases in a public-school system, and in these respects the military or commercial analogy may apply. But in the teaching function, the most important factor is not the school board, nor the superintendent, nor the assistant superintendent, nor even the principal. It is the individual teacher. And each one counts.

Perhaps few would deny this. It is doubtless a pedagogical truism, too universally acknowledged to deserve mention except for the fact that the business or military method of public-school teaching is utterly out of harmony with it. If the individual teacher is the most important factor in the function of teaching, then the public-school system which makes the teacher an automaton in a mass of automatons moved by electric buttons at a central office, must be a false and demoralizing system.

But this is the despotic ideal which has prevailed in Chicago, and is challenged by the Teachers' Federation.

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The position of the Federation has been outlined by its representatives before the educational committee of the Chicago Charter Convention, and one of the reforms proposed by it is the—

abolition of secret marking of teachers' efficiency, and of promotional examination on outside studies as a basis for determining increase of salary, thus providing for tenure of teachers in office except for inefficiency proved by trial.

To this it is objected, rightly enough, that mere length of service is not a sufficient test of efficiency. It is indeed true that a teacher who does not keep abreast of the times in respect of the teachers' work may become less instead of more efficient with length of service. But neither retention nor promotion are fairly determined by secret marking. On the contrary, this plan is exceptionally open to the influences of favoritism and malice; and, while thus demoralizing to the teaching body, is in all other respects wholly indefensible except from the despotic point of view.

Another suggestion has been made—one that would require a certain round of satisfactory class work on some subjects or other, in the Normal

School or other academic institution. This is perhaps a nearer approach to a reasonable condition of promotion. Yet a lawyer or doctor of long service and good standing, of whom even this sort of test was required, might very fairly object that efficiency in his profession is not determinable by academic tests after his days of academic training are lost in the perspective of professional experience. He could fairly argue that the results of his experience are important factors in his efficiency which academic study cannot, any more than secret markings, disclose, supplement or offset. And why may not the teacher raise a like objection? Teachers in private schools doubtless would raise it. Then why not those in public schools? It may well be replied that in a public-school system some systematic method of testing pedagogical efficiency and progress must be required. But because some such test is necessary, why adopt one which, while serving but poorly as a test, has so much the appearance of an arbitrary exercise of authority by superiors over inferiors?

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The other reform pertinent to this subject which the Teachers' Federation proposed to the charter convention's committee was the organization of—

an elective council of teachers, with advisory power on questions of administration, curriculum, and the selection of text books, such advisory recommendations to be made matters of record for consideration by the school board.

This proposal—and its application is general and not local to Chicago—goes to the heart of the subject. While continuing business authority where it is and where it belongs, at the business end of the system, and while also continuing there the authority to determine pedagogical as well as business problems, this reform would bring into advisory relations with the school board, on pedagogical problems, the very class whose place in the service especially qualifies them to give such advice. The advice would not be a command, but it would go upon record as the legally authorized consensus of the opinion, as to pedagogical methods, implements and administration, of the only persons who do the teaching work and come in constant contact with the individual children whose education is the object of that work. If the heads of the system went counter to that advice, they would have the power to do so, but they would have to give a reason for it that would appeal to the public intelligence and conscience.

There would be no more flirting with school-

book trusts to the prejudice of the schools, no more grafting with school-land leases or shielding of tax-dodgers to the prejudice of school funds, and no more arbitrary and irresponsible governing of schools along despotic lines. With a representative advisory council of teachers, the public-school system would cease to be a form of military organization, department store or factory, and become a democratic institution for the education of the citizens of a democratic republic.

An objection to this innovation is that it would turn the teaching body into a public-school boss. In response we quote the apt words of The Elementary School Teacher for January last, regarding a similar objection to a somewhat more elaborate plan along the same general lines proposed by Dr. Cornelia De Bey, who is a member of the Chicago school board, a trained and experienced teacher, and an eminent student of educational subjects. "The chief difficulty in the way of such a plan," said The Elementary School Teacher, "is that most people have no conception of public life except that under the administration of a boss. The press and public, generally, regard our common-school system as now administered in this country as being of necessity under the control of a boss, though whether this function resides in the superintendent or board of education is, in most places, still an unsettled question. The idea of the boss being uppermost, people jumped to the conclusion, therefore, that Dr. De Bey's plan means that the teachers shall be the boss, and that the collar now worn by themselves shall be placed upon the necks of the superintendent and board. It has not dawned upon the average mind that there yet may be a plan evolved which will eliminate the boss, and under which all will have the opportunity and the privilege of co-operating and contributing to the common good up to the limits of their power to help. That is the spirit of Dr. De Bey's plan, and that is all there is to it." It is also the spirit of the proposed advisory council of teachers, and all there is to that.

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In some such way, and only in some such way, can those despotic tendencies in education be checked, which now curse our public-school system and add to the corruption of our civic life. We are in the midst in our country of a conflict between the despotic and the democratic spirit in education, and of that general conflict the instances here described are phases.

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My papa owns a newspaper!
Dat's nuthin'; I buy and sell sixty of 'em every day.—New York Times.

EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE

NEW ZEALAND.

Auckland, N. Z., March 22.—At the coming session of Parliament it is probable that a bill largely reducing customs duties will be passed. This will doubtless interest you, especially when considered in connection with the action of the government regarding the land value tax. Land speculators are ferocious about it. The site valuation has been brought up to date, and the tax has risen accordingly. But worse than that for the land speculators, the boroughs that have adopted land value taxation for local purposes are required to levy their rates on the basis of the government's valuation. In some of the boroughs the rate is 3 3-4 pence in the pound of capital value; that is, a section valued at £100 (say \$500) pays £1 11s 3d (say \$7.50) per annum local taxes. But on land worth over £500 the general land tax of a penny in the pound is levied in addition to the local rate, thus making the total land value tax in such cases 4 3-4 pence in the pound. Adding special rates to this, generally a quarter of a penny in the pound, and we have a total of 5d in the pound. If, then, the full single tax were 4 per cent. per annum of the capital value of land irrespective of its improvements, we have got in some parts of New Zealand about half way to the single tax.

GEORGE STEVENSON.

NEWS NARRATIVE

To use the reference figures of this Department for obtaining continuous news narratives:

Observe the reference figures in any article; turn back to the page they indicate and find there the next preceding article on the same subject; observe the reference figures in that article, and turn back as before; continue until you come to the earliest article on the subject; then retrace your course through the indicated pages, reading each article in chronological order, and you will have a continuous news narrative of the subject from its historical beginnings to date.

Week ending Wednesday, May 2.

Labor Conflict in France.

The European "labor day," May 1st, was the occasion of serious military and police violence in Paris. There had been striking of an alleged violent character in the French mining regions during April; several trades were also on strike in Paris, but peaceably; and more extended striking for the eight-hour workday throughout France was set for the 1st. Meanwhile rumors became rife that the royalists were encouraging these labor demonstrations in the expectation of consequent disorders of sufficient magnitude to overthrow the republic and make a restoration of royalty possible. The fact that the parliamentary elections are to take place on the 6th, doubtless had much to do with fomenting the excitement. At any rate the government appears to have been sufficiently alarmed, apparently by fears of the royalists more than of the strikers per se, to cause it to forbid all labor demonstrations on May 1st, and troops were massed at important points. In addition to this,