FOR OR AGAINST FREE TEXT BOOKS?

Some Opinions Presented Covering the Issues in the School Election.

L. T. Thomas Believes That the Adoption of the Measure is Fraught With Mischief---The Burden of Taxation Would Be Enlarged---Extravagancy and Other Evils Would Follow Free Text Books.

John F. Dore Warmly Advocates the Adoption of the Measure---The State's Duty to the Children---Rich and Poor Should Be Treated Equally---Some Objections to the Law Answered Forcibly.

L. T. Thomas cherishes strong reasons against the adoption of the free text book law. These he states with force, reviewing the issue in the following letter:

The question of furnishing "free" school books which is to be voted upon at the coming election, is one which seems to the writer to deserve serious consideration. Some of the newspapers of this city are avowedly in favor of such a law and are doing all in their power to have a favorable vote thereon, though they have attempted no special analysis or given any special reasons why such should be the case.

To the writer hereof there appear grave reasons against voting for such a measure; it seems to be both unwise and unjust.

Those who are in favor of such a law urge it upon the one ground that the furnishing of books from year to year is often a serious tax upon the purses of poor parents and keenly felt by them. Granted that this is true, yet is that any reason why the community at large should furnish books? Why not for the same reason ask the state to furnish food and clothing for such children?

It is not only the legal, but it is the moral duty of parents to educate the child as well as feed, clothe and protect it; it is one of the burdens which the parent assumes in bringing the child into the world and for which he is supposed to be compensated by the love and obedience of the child during its infancy, and, should the parent stand in need of assistance, then by the assistance of the child when it shall have arrived of sufficient age to be of assistance.

Such being the case, what right has one parent to demand of another or of the community at large assistance toward supporting or educating the child? Our sense of right naturally revolts from such an imposition. It is true that the state, rather than suffer children of indigent parents to go without education for the lack of books, furnishes books to them, but this is done not because the state owes such to the child, but rather as an act of humanity, from pity toward the child who should not be made to suffer because of its parents' worthlessness; and it is also true, and for a like reason, that, rather than see such child suffer for food and clothes, the state will provide for it, but the writer fancies that no newspaper would advocate nor would any parent vote for a law demanding that the state furnish clothing to all children, to be passed from child to child as circumstances might require and as is now proposed to be done with text books, though the principle is exactly the same.

But, laying aside such objections and considering the question from the "savings" standpoint, and supposing the community at large furnishes the books, it would profit parents but little if any, for they would be taxed nevertheless, not only to pay for the books of their own children, but the books of the balance of the children in the community.

If a man should have a large family—say eight or ten children—all attending school at the same time, and if he would be taxed only while those children were attending school, it might prove that under the "free" system he would save some part of the cost which is now on him, because most families are much smaller than this and the parents of the small families would each have to contribute toward the expenses of this one man. But it so happens that children outgrow the school age and no longer demand books from their parents, and such parents are, under the present system, thereupon relieved from the burden. Should "free" books be furnished, however, the parent is never relieved, for though his own children no longer demand books, he is continually taxed to provide for the children of other parents, and year in and year out he has to pay until the expense exceeds many times the cost which would have been put upon him had he furnished books only for his own family; so that, in the end, even the parent of the extra large family saves nothing, while the man with the ordinary family has burden added to burden.

But suppose all families are of equal size and that the tax would end when the children left school, yet the saving would even then be very small if anything. We all know that children are only too prone to deface, destroy or lose their books and are often prevented from doing so only by fear of punishment from parents. Should the state furnish books, no parent would feel like punishing his child for carelessly or even wilfully damaging or losing books, hence the child, feeling no fear and sharing its parent's indifference, takes no care to preserve its books, for it knows the state will furnish more. Such being the case, there would be necessarily a large loss each year to be made good the next year by additional taxing, so that in the long run, the cost would nearly if not quite equal or perhaps exceed the expense under the present system.

Again, would there not be trouble growing out of the apportionment of the old books? Parents are apt to be jealous of their children's rights, and should their child receive a book in poorer condition than that given to some other child, complaints of favoritism would be sure to be made, putting teachers and school boards to endless trouble and causing all sorts of bitter feelings and dissensions.

But these matters are of slight importance when compared with the sanitary view of such practice. Who can fail to recognize not only the possibility but the probability of the new user of the old book being infected with some disease with which the old user was affected? Who can say what germs of disease may have been planted in the book by the old user, blood and skin diseases being perhaps the least harmful? Fumigation of the books might, in some degree, lessen this danger, but the very nature of books renders their complete fumigation an almost impossibility, and leaves more or less risk to be run. What respectable or self-respecting parent would permit his child to run such risk? Nine out of ten parents, be their condition never so straitened, would rather buy new books than take such chances.

Taking into consideration the things hereinbefore set forth, it seems to the writer that both economy and safety to health demand a vote against the proposed measure.

In the subjoined letter, John F. Dore answers, from his point of view, the objections that have been made to the free text book law, enunciating reasons why, in his opinion, the measure should be favorably voted on by the people:

It was a maxim of the Roman law that "the child was the present ward of the state and its future guardian." This maxim infallibly states the relation existing between the American child and the commonwealth. One of the greatest educators that this country has known, Horace Mann, said: "Education is capital to the poor man and an interest to the rich man. It is self-evident that education is the source from which good citizenship ordinarily flows, and therefore it is the duty of the state to see to it that the child is educated, that he may become a good and useful citizen. The taxpayer furnishes to the child the school and teacher, and all things necessary for its comfort while attending school, such as fire, light, blackboards, charts and the paraphernalia used by the teacher. But no school book is furnished the pupil. I contend that there is no good reason why the text book should not be furnished as well as the things referred to. The argument advanced against free text books in our public schools are substantially these: First—It would be an additional burden on the taxpayer. Second—If text books are furnished free, a demand will be made to furnish food and clothing to the child attending school, the public to pay the costs. Third—It would be a means of disseminating disease. Fourth—A wanton destruction of school books, the property of the state or city.

Concerning the first objection, the increase in taxation would be so inconsiderable a sum that it would not be felt by the property owner. The taxpayer furnishes the general public with a library where adult and child may receive books of all kinds for perusal and no one would have the audacity to declaim against the public library. The library is established as an educational institution and it would be just as logical to insist that all who desire to read books of science and fiction that are obtainable at a public library, instead of having them furnished free, should be obliged to go to the bookseller and purchase them for their own use, as to make it compulsory upon the parent to pay for the text book that his children use in the public schools. From the very moment of breath, a child becomes a citizen entitled to all the protection and education that the government can give it.

As to the second argument urged against free text books, it is not based upon reason. It is true that the law casts upon the child's parent the duty of caring for it during minority. That is, the parent is obliged to feed, clothe and house his offspring, unaided from any source. But this does not necessarily carry with it the obligation to educate his children, and whatever education the child receives is far more beneficial to the state than to the parent.

Bonaparte asked Madame de Stael in what manner he could best promote the happiness of France. Her reply is full of political wisdom. She said: "Instruct the mothers of the French people."

Beecher once said: "It was the German school house which destroyed Napoleon III." France since then is making monster cannon and drilling soldiers still, but she is building school houses. As long as war is possible anything that makes better soldiers people want.

It is evident to me that it is the state that is most benefited by the education of the masses.

There are thousands of children going without education in the United States by reason of the expense attached to the purchase of school books. But it is claimed that they can get them by simply asking for them. That is the state dispensing charity pure and simple. It is hard to require a child to make known its parents' impecuniosity, for we know only too well that if this fact is advertised it affords the parents' neighbors opportunity for idle gossip and the child's schoolmates are in a position to throw it up daily to the little charity scholar. I for one believe that the child should not be placed in such a position; I believe that it is the duty of the state to place on equal footing as far as text books are concerned the child of the poor man and the rich man, and in doing this, the child will be educated to appreciate the language of the Declaration of Independence "that all men are created equal." We should not forget what Addison said in regard to educating the poor child: "A statue lies hid in a block of marble, and the art of the statuary only clears away the superfluous matter and removes the rubbish. The figure is in the stone; the sculptor only finds it. What sculpture is to a block of marble education is to a human soul. The philosopher, the saint, or the hero—the wise, the good, or the great man—very often lies hid and concealed in a plebeian, which a proper education might have disinterred and have brought to life."

As to the argument that free text books will disseminate diseases, science has demonstrated that books can easily be fumigated and cleansed so that there is no opportunity of their carrying disease, and as far as the destruction of the school book by the pupil, there is no more likelihood of his destroying a text book than a book that he is authorized to take from a public library to read. Many of the Eastern state are furnishing today free text books to the pupils of their public schools with gratifying results. There is no reason why we in the far Northwest should not avail ourselves of the experience of the older states that have adopted the system of free text books for the pupil attending the public school. I am certainly favorable to giving the child of the poor man the same opportunities for education that the son of the wealthy merchant has, provided his poor parent is in a position to support him during the years that he is seeking his education.

In the language of Webster: "On the diffusion of education among the people rests the preservation and perpetuation of our free institutions."

THE HEAVENS IN NOVEMBER.

VENUS.

November 1	4 h 28 m M	3 h 52 m A
November 11	4 h 56 m M	3 h 38 m A
November 21	5 h 24 m M	3 h 38 m A
November 30	5 h 50 m M	3 h 18 m A

MARS.

November 1	7 h 23 m M	4 h 51 m A
November 11	7 h 21 m M	4 h 29 m A
November 21	5 h 24 m M	3 h 26 m A
November 30	7 h 18 m M	3 h 54 m A

JUPITER.

November 1	3 h 15 m M	3 h 19 m A
November 11	2 h 45 m M	2 h 45 m A
November 21	2 h 14 m M	2 h 10 m A
November 30	1 h 46 m M	1 h 37 m A

SATURN.

November 1	8 h 35 m M	5 h 42 m A
November 11	8 h 2 m M	5 h 8 m A
November 21	7 h 29 m M	4 h 31 m A
November 30	6 h 55 m M	3 h 56 m A

Venus is in Virgo, but enters Libra about the 20th. She rises little south of east, on the 1st of the month, but will increase her southerly direction of rising during the month.

Mars is in Libra, and enters Scorpius about the 20th. He is in conjunction with Mercury on the 12th, with Uranus and the Sun on the 21st, and with Saturn on the 27th.

Jupiter is in Virgo and crosses the celestial equator on the 10th, moving south. He is an illustrious companion of Venus in the morning sky.

Saturn is in Scorpius, moving south. He is in conjunction with the Sun on the 24th.

Uranus is in conjunction with the Sun on the 21st.

This month is noted for planetary conjunctions. Mars, Saturn and Uranus become morning stars after their conjunctions with the Sun.

With Mercury, Venus, Mars, Jupiter, Saturn and Uranus in the morning sky, an unusual display of planetary splendor will greet the early riser.

On the 15th Fomalhaut is on the meridian at 7:11 p. m., Aldebaran rises at 5:34 p. m., Procyon rises at 9:27 p. m., Sirius rises at 10:15 p. m., Regulus rises at 11:25 p. m., Spica rises at 4:27 a. m., Antares sets at 8:51 p. m., Altair sets at 10:43 p. m.

ORRIN E. HARMON.

HIGH SCHOOL NOTES.

Ned Leslie, who graduated last June, has returned for a post graduate course.

Rick Burrows and Sam Humes, two well known football players, have entered the high school and will play on the football team this season.

Several of the young ladies of the high school held a candy sale Friday noon for the benefit of the Cadet company. They realized quite a sum.

The Seattle High School Athletic Association was organized last Monday afternoon. On the membership roll appears the name of nearly every young man in the school. The officers elected were as follows: President, J. E. Carroll; vice president, Alton Remington; secretary, Carl McNaught; treasurer, John Geary; manager, Charles Sewell; assistant manager, David Livingstone; board of directors, J. E. Carroll, chairman, Will Campbell, Frank Banard, Samuel Russell, Paul Harper, Earl Mumford, Bob Fletcher, George Tennet, James Elder and two members of the faculty.

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