

THESIS.

Subject: Purpose ^{and} Value of Our Public School System.

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The history of our public education is as interesting as the history of our wars, and a close relation exists between these two. The purpose of the early colonists was freedom from the oppressions of the church and state; and they aimed directly at self-government, without the interference of sovereigns. The purpose and aim were so closely related that it soon became apparent that universal education was necessary. There was to be no classification, but the burdens and blessings of the government were to be shared alike, making it impor-

tant, if this arrangement was to be maintained, that the children should all be educated for the duties of intelligent citizenship.

So the public school was established, differing widely, however, from the school of today.

With great labor, a little log school house was built at the cross-roads, yet the work, guarded and supported by the prayers of proud fathers and fond mothers, grew and prospered.

It is not necessary to make commendation upon our public school system; suffice it to say that many

lovers of educational progress have made constant efforts to imitate it in other countries. The system was instituted with a well defined purpose and took deep root in the American soil from the very start.

The government, being "of the people and for the people", took this institution under its care and provided for it. There was danger of a great mistake here, as it would have been a very easy matter for our forefathers to have adopted a ready made system, perhaps one they were acquainted with in the old world, but how thankful we should be

that this mistake was not committed.

Our fathers in undertaking this great work had the chief purpose of the public schools in view, yet some prominent features that have since been brought out and made good use of, were then overlooked; perhaps some of these features have not yet been recognized by the educators of today. The highest value of our Public School System is certainly not realized. It benefits greatly, not only the pupils, but all the officers of the school, and many others, indirectly. The school officers of the

village or the remote country district by this means gain a full knowledge of their public duty. Among these people, antagonism is almost absent, for each one is working for the same end - the prosperity of the nation. Hon. E. O. Chapman says, "We can hardly estimate the full value of our Public School System in cementing the union of the states." There are no distinctions made among the pupils; family pride, wealth, and differences in social standing are all excluded from the school room. All are governed by the same rules. It is in the Public Schools that all the honorable

traits of manhood are developed, while all the meaner ones are repressed. The pupils are required to depend upon their own efforts, and thus the qualities of self-respect & self-reliance are created or developed. Habits of obedience, honesty, cleanliness, neatness, order, and punctuality, all result from the training received in the public schools. And are not all these valuable in forming the character of our future citizens and voters?

The atmosphere in our schoolrooms should be such as would tend to make the pupils noble and grand. Perhaps if we would go to the bottom of the

the matter we would agree with Socrates, that knowing the right and doing the right, are inseparably connected. If, therefore, the teacher knows what the atmosphere of the school room should be, it will not be far short of the ideal.

The object of the Public Schools is to train children from what they are, into what they ought to be.—physically, morally, and spiritually clean and strong. If this is neglected, then the chief end of schools is being ignored, and the only way it can be remedied is to devote as much time to the manners and souls

as to the intellects of the children.

Our educators say that the main objects of Public Schools is to assure to the largest number of children such an elementary education as will enable them to become good and intelligent citizens. There is no doubt that our Public Schools are strong in their moral influences. The lessons learned here continue to influence the pupil in after life, and when he enters the broad field of activity, his step is decidedly firm and determined.