

Evening Telegraph

THURSDAY, OCTOBER 27, 1870.

MASSACRE OF THE INNOCENTS.

We have received a number of communications in relation to the article we published a few days ago in reference to the public schools, which fully confirm our statement that many pupils are sadly overtasked, and that the city seems to-day with countless little victims of a false and fatal educational policy. The attempt of the Board of Control to break up the deadly system of sentencing children to long hours of wearying home study after they have been closely confined in crowded school rooms for as long a period as they should devote to any form of study, has been unsuccessful. Through the combined opposition of stupid sectional boards, lazy or incompetent teachers, and injudicious parents, the old plan of imprisoning the children during a large part of the day, and cramming them during the remaining hours, has been perpetuated in many of the schools; and thus the bad work of enfeebling young frames, of stunting young bodies, of weakening young minds, and of filling the cemeteries with little graves goes bravely on.

The President of the Philadelphia Board of Controllers, in a report made in January, 1869, called attention to the most pointed terms to the evil on which we are now commenting. He said that he could not understand why parents should aid in unwise attempts to cram the minds of their children; that fearful evils had arisen from too close study; that in the opinion of good medical authority "the hours devoted to brain-work should not exceed six hours for healthy men, and three hours for children;" and that when exhaustive study was enforced, headaches, constant weariness, and a destruction of health were inevitable.

In the face of this, and other numerous protests, the practical operation of our educational system in thousands of instances in Philadelphia to-day is portrayed in the following letter:

"PHILADELPHIA, Oct. 25, 1870.—ED. EVENING TELEGRAPH, No. 105 South Third street, Philadelphia:—SIR:—There is so much truth in your article on 'Public Schools' yesterday, that you will please excuse one who thinks as you do in this regard in his experience. The little ones are so much overtasked with long and, to them, difficult lessons, that it is scarcely possible for them to find one moment of time to rest their overtaxed brains. I have three of six, nine, and eleven of age, and to see the lessons they are compelled to learn at home is enough to make one's heart sick. We wait for them at home, and after spending all their time at home at study, even arising at 4½ and 5 o'clock in the morning, and then their books before their little eyes until 8 o'clock in the morning, and then they pick up their books at the last moment with a—'I hope I will be perfect to-day, and off they go with a heart full in doubt and half in fear. We wait for them at home till half-past 12; there they come at last, with faces elongated, and a heavy sigh, careworn and pale. Their parents look on with pity, and ask, 'Have you been kept in?' After awhile the answer will come, with tears in their eyes, 'Yes, I tried my very best, and, after all, failed in grammar, and was kept in for it.' It is a sorrowful sight, to see them try so hard to overcome an impossibility.

"Those who have spent five or twenty years to master these difficulties, and now have to try to be on hand at 9 o'clock to hear the little ones try with fear to recite what their little minds have been so much engaged with for six hours, think school-teaching a hard task, when, indeed, it is not teaching at all, but merely giving the little ones their task, or, more properly, their overtask; and if not done perfectly to punish them, then, indeed, it is not teaching as it does, to learn at home what the teacher chooses to load them down with, of what use are our schools?"

On the other hand, we have received a letter from a teacher, who evidently takes a pride in her profession, and who, in discussing this subject, says:—

"There are some children who cannot study in the school-room, at least they say so; there are some who will not, unless closely watched. Some are so slow as to be unable to master a lesson in a reasonable time; some so quick that the average time allotted to study is too much for them, and they are frequently troublesome after they get through. These are the objections of the teachers opposed to school-room study. We do not believe there is a single pupil who cannot be educated by a skillful teacher, and there ought to be no other sort of teacher in the public schools. But there is. Who is to blame?"

"I am a teacher, with a fair share of 'professional enthusiasm,' and, I think, with a very fair knowledge of what is best for school children. My experience is this: We are less than fairly explained by the teacher, and a judicious amount of time allotted for study in school, there is no necessity and no inclination for lessons at home. If children are compelled to take books home, the teachers are acting in open violation of the rules of the Board of Education. This is a matter which needs attention."

As our main purpose now is to direct attention to an undoubted and dangerous evil, we have not space at this moment to publish some valuable suggestions from the same correspondent in regard to the proper method of remedying it. What is needed above all other things is that a correct public sentiment on this important subject should be created. Parents should be made to understand that in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred they are doing a great deal of harm to their children when they urge their children to study home lessons; that when they become willing participants in a system that requires steady application to books during all the hours that should be devoted to exercise or recreation, they are inflicting upon their offspring fearful physical and mental injuries; and that all the book knowledge in the world will not compensate the rising generation for impaired vitality and enfeebled constitutions.

THE CAMERON POLITICAL HARVEST.

On the 30th of April, 1862, the popular branch of Congress, then nearly two-thirds Republican, passed a resolution of censure upon Simon Cameron for his maladministration of the War Department, by the decisive vote of 79 to 45. President Lincoln, with that boundless magnanimity for which he was so distinguished, sent a special message to the House soon after, explaining that the ex-War Minister was not wholly culpable in all the matters complained of; but the justice of the censure was not questioned, and for nearly nine years the blistering record has stood unchallenged by a single representative of the people.

To remove this conspicuous monument of his public shame has been the dream of Simon Cameron. While professing indifference through the columns of such journals as how to his behests, he has left no effort untoward to attain the expurgation of the censure from the journal of the House. Just

before the close of the last session, when he could plausibly promise or threaten the entire power of the administration, he resolved to force an expunging resolution through Congress. Colonel Forney was, of course, a willing lieutenant, and he was ordered to skirish through "my two papers, both daily," and feel the popular pulse to ascertain whether any man could lead the general assault upon the settled judgment and solemn record of the nation and live; and Hon. William H. Armstrong, of the Lycoming district, was prevailed upon to allow himself to be announced in general orders as the leader of the forlorn hope. It was done as follows, in a Washington special to the Press of July 13, 1870:—

"Hon. William H. Armstrong, of the Williamsport district, has prepared a resolution which he proposes to introduce, directing the Clerk to expunge from the journal of the House the resolution of censure passed upon General Cameron while he was Secretary of War under President Lincoln. It is proper to state, in justice to Senator Cameron, that he is probably not aware of the proposed action of his friend Mr. Armstrong. He has grown wholly indifferent to the existence of the resolution in question, regarding himself as fully vindicated by the people of Pennsylvania, who, since those resolutions were passed, have honored him with the responsible position he now holds as United States Senator. Nevertheless, it would not be gratifying to the numerous friends of Mr. Cameron to have these resolutions expunged from the official records of Congress. There is little doubt but that Mr. Armstrong's resolution will pass without opposition."

The gentle feeler thrown out squelched the whole movement. There was but one response from the people, and that was in consistent accord with the teachings of Colonel Forney's better days respecting Mr. Cameron, and with the action of Congress in 1862. Whether Mr. Armstrong had, in a moment of weakness, consented to father the resolution, we are not advised, but certain it is that he did not dare either to offer it or to disavow it. He was thus publicly proclaimed to his people as the author of the effort to excuse Mr. Cameron for his appalling profligacy of the War Department. He could give no reason for it other than that the broad mantle of our national charity that can forgive open rebellion should afford a little longer lapse of time to forgive the more guilty men who preyed like insatiable vampires upon the nation's woes. With this boundless charity emblazoned on his banner he returned to his people and asked a re-election. In private life he had been blameless, and his political record was in full harmony with those who had made him their representative by an overwhelming majority. On but one question had he braved the settled convictions of his district and State, and that was in his haste to pardon the men who stand as a convict on the journal of the House. The verdict of Mr. Armstrong's people is thus recorded:—

	1868.	1870.
Armstrong, Mackay, Armstrong, Sherman	3,550	3,810
Centre	1,771	2,992
Lycoming	1,779	8,041
Potter	1,598	811
Tioga	5,370	2,088
	16,700	14,732
Armstrong's majority in 1868, 2023; Sherwood's majority in 1870, 27.		

One of the strongest Republican districts of the State is changed to the Democracy in a single year, for it gave Geary a large majority in 1869. With no organized opposition to the Republican nominee, no "bolts" or irregular tickets to confront the success of Mr. Armstrong, he has reversed his more than 2000 majority, and sent a Democrat as his successor. It is proper to state, in justice to Senator Cameron, that he was probably not aware of the proposed action of his friend's constituents in the premises, but we do not see that it softens the bottomless pit into which Mr. Armstrong has been plunged.

This is but one of the many painful lessons which mark the late political history of Pennsylvania. The names of the three men who elected Mr. Cameron to the Senate over Colonel Forney in 1857 are immortal in infamy; and four-fifths of the men who voted to nominate Mr. Cameron in the Republican caucus in 1867 have since then been festering political corpses in the path of his advancement, in accordance with the fearful doom pronounced upon them by Forney, and Stevens, and Grow, and Curtin, and Moorehead, in public meeting at the time the deed was done. Cessna, to escape the Cameron vengeance that assailed him fruitlessly in 1868, moved to make Cameron the member of the Congressional Committee for this State, by which Cameron hoped to usurp the Republican organization and prostitute its power and means to re-elect himself; but Cessna fell because he bore the load of Cameron's friendship. Gilliam permitted Cameron to dictate his district appointments, and it revolved to the tune of 2500, defeating him by over 700, where he should have had 1800 majority. Morrell was sacrificed by a deliberate effort to trade a Cameron Senator into an election, to make the State renew its blushes over the Senatorial struggle of 1873. Three Republican Senatorial candidates, each of whom should have had 1000 majority, are beaten from 600 to 1200, because they meant to betray the State into the hands of Cameron again, and disaster is visible in some of the strongest Legislative districts of the State. Must these lessons continue until the Republican party finally surrenders a supremacy it can no longer maintain in honor? Simon Cameron and his victims should answer.

THE CENSUS OF PHILADELPHIA.
The vote of Philadelphia for Governor in 1860 was 82,352, while the population, according to the census of that year, was 565,529. In 1868 the vote polled for Auditor-General was 121,441, showing an increase in the vote during eight years of nearly fifty per cent. A corresponding increase of the population have made the number of inhabitants in Philadelphia in 1868 more than 800,000. But we are told by Marshal Gregory's census that the real number now is only 657,159, or 200,000 less than it should be if the ratio of voters to population in exciting elections has not been enormously increased. It is possible that frauds have become more common than in former years, but we do not believe that any amount of repeating or false naturalization can account

for such glaring discrepancies as those reported. For instance, the Fifth and Eighth wards are alleged to have diminished their population to the extent of 16,345 during the interval from 1860 to 1870, while their vote was increased, from 1860 to 1868, from 5395 to 6697! If the old ratio between votes and population had been maintained, the number of inhabitants in the two wards should have been in 1868 more than 65,000, whereas the census return made in 1870 gives them a population of only 36,217!

We are not disposed to question Marshal Gregory's desire to give a faithful enumeration of the inhabitants of Philadelphia, but that his assistants have failed to discharge this duty thoroughly is painfully apparent; and as he is a comparative stranger in the city and State, having resided here but a short time previous to his appointment as Marshal, he has lacked the knowledge and experience requisite to comprehend or correct the errors of his subordinates. Their task, in turn, has been one of extraordinary difficulty, and in some districts they have found it next to impossible to obtain correct answers from persons who associated the inquiries of the census-takers with recollections of the draft and fears of new internal revenue exactions.

Some months ago it was proposed in City Councils that a committee should be appointed to assist the Marshal in his labors, and thus ensure the completeness and correctness of his enumeration. The return submitted is a sufficient proof that this assistance has amounted to nothing, but it furnishes a strong reason for immediate preparations for a correct census under the supervision of the municipal authorities. The returns of one or more wards might be tested, at a trifling expense, by the co-operation of the police, and if found incorrect, the census of the whole city could be retaken by the policemen or other appointees in a very short time. Other cities are adopting a course similar to that recommended, and if Philadelphia does not follow their example, it is to be feared that her census wrongs must remain wholly unredressed.

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