

National Aid to Education.

THE vast amount of illiteracy in the country has attracted much attention of late, and has led to the proposal that national aid shall be given to the public schools of the States. The census of 1880 shows that there were in the country at that time nearly five million persons over ten years of age who were unable to read, and six and a quarter millions unable to write. The chief centers of illiteracy are in the Southern States, in some of which the proportion of illiterate persons is over forty per cent, and among the Irish, the French-Canadians, and some other foreign-born inhabitants of the North.

The existence, among us of such a mass of ignorance is a very unpleasant fact, and the illiterate vote is justly regarded as dangerous to the political well-being of the country. The ease with which ignorant voters can be corrupted and led astray has often been illustrated in our political history, and is sure to receive further illustration hereafter, unless effective means are taken to prevent it; and no means will be effective except the public education of the whole people. As the maintenance of schools, however, requires large sums of money, and as many of the States are slack in appropriating it, it is proposed that the national government shall assist in the work; and a bill for this purpose was introduced into Congress last winter. By this bill it was provided that the national government should give to the States several million dollars a year for a series of years, for the support of public schools, distributing it among the several States in proportion to the numbers of their illiterate population, the expenditure and application of the money being left to the States themselves. The bill was not acted upon last winter; but as it will probably be brought forward again, it ought to receive at once such consideration as the importance of the subject demands.

That something ought to be done to remove the ignorance of the people and its attendant dangers is certain; but there is grave reason to doubt whether the proposed scheme for national aid to the public schools is either a lawful or a wise measure for attaining this end. An obvious objection to the bill, and one that has already been urged, is its doubtful constitutionality; and unless this point can be settled in favor of the bill, the question of its expediency and adaptability to its purpose is of little importance. The Constitution nowhere authorizes the national government to make provision for education; and unless the power to do so can be inferred from some authority that is given, it does not exist at all. The government of the United States is not a government of naturally unlimited powers restricted by constitutional provisions; it has no powers at all except such as the Constitution expressly gives it; for the Constitution itself declares that "the powers not delegated to the United States by the Constitution, nor prohibited by it to the States, are reserved to the States respectively or to the people." Unless, therefore, authority to use the national money for educational purposes is implicitly contained in some express grant of power to Congress, no such authority exists, and national aid to education cannot be lawfully given.

Now, I believe the only provision of the Constitu-

tion on which the advocates of the measure rely is that about promoting the general welfare, which, it is contended, will justify Congress in granting the aid proposed; and we must therefore examine the provision in question to see if this interpretation is correct. The expression about the general welfare occurs in the Constitution twice. The first occurrence is in the preamble, which declares that one of the objects for which the Constitution is established is to "promote the general welfare." The preamble, however, would not be cited by any one as containing a grant of power, it being, in fact, a mere rhetorical introduction to the Constitution, and of no binding force whatever. But a similar expression occurs in section eight of the first article, which contains an express grant of power to Congress; and it is this clause that is relied upon by the advocates of national aid to education as a justification of the measure. The clause in question reads as follows: "Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, duties, imposts, and excises, to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States." The first part of this clause empowers Congress to lay and collect taxes, while the second part specifies the purposes for which the money so obtained may be used. Now, it is contended that Congress is here authorized to appropriate money to promote the general welfare of the people, and that in virtue of this authority it may make an appropriation in aid of public schools; and on the correctness of this interpretation the constitutionality of the proposed measure must rest.

In considering this question, I remark in the first place that, if the clause here cited really means what it is said to mean, it is of the utmost importance that we should know it; for such an interpretation leads to some rather startling conclusions, and, if generally adopted, may lead to startling political action. If Congress has unlimited power to spend money in providing for the welfare of the people, we may expect to see before long the reign of paternal government fully inaugurated. Public schools are not the only means of promoting the general welfare, and if one such means may be lawfully used without express authority to do so, it is hard to see how the use of others can be objected to as unconstitutional. If Congress may appropriate money for public schools in the States, why not for public libraries also? nay, why may it not give every citizen a private library of his own, which would be even more conducive to the general welfare than public ones would be? Then the national treasury might be drawn upon for the support of paupers in the States, and in times of commercial distress national workshops might be established, like those that were opened in France after the revolution of 1848. It is obvious, also, what demands might be made for national aid to commercial and manufacturing enterprises; and it is hard to see what objection could be made on constitutional grounds to any of these projects, if the bill for national aid to education is constitutional. Indeed, if Congress has unlimited power to spend money in promoting the general welfare of the people, there is not one of the many schemes now in the air for making everybody rich at the public expense that it may not be asked to adopt.

If, however, we read the clause under discussion with proper care, we shall see that no such interpre-

tation is admissible. It authorizes Congress to "provide for the general welfare," not of the people, but "of the United States." Now the term "United States" has a very definite meaning; it denotes a body politic, a federal union of States, and it is the welfare of this body politic, and not that of its citizens, that Congress is authorized to provide for. That this is the true meaning is evident from the context. The clause, as a whole, empowers Congress to lay and collect taxes "to pay the debts and provide for the common defense and general welfare of the United States." Here it is clear that the term "United States" qualifies all three of the preceding terms in the same member of the sentence; and, therefore, if the general welfare referred to is the welfare of the citizens, the debts referred to are the debts of the citizens, and Congress may appropriate money to pay all our private debts. But such an interpretation is absurd; equally absurd, then, is the doctrine that money may be appropriated to provide for the general welfare of the people.

The object of this constitutional provision undoubtedly is to provide for all the financial requirements of the national government, chief among which are the payment of its obligations and the necessary expenditures for the national defense; but as these two objects are not the only ones for which money is required, the others, instead of being specified, are grouped together under the provision for the general welfare of the United States. As for the welfare of the people, the national government does, of course, promote it in various ways, but only by discharging the specific functions imposed upon it by the Constitution; and it is in the discharge of these functions alone that the national money may be lawfully employed. To my mind, at least, this interpretation is the only one consistent with the rules of the English language or with the general spirit of the Constitution.

Nor will it avail to say that a grant of money in aid of education would be a grant to the States and not to individual citizens; for Congress may not lawfully give money to the States. The national government did, indeed, soon after the Constitution was adopted, assume the debts of the States, which was equivalent to giving them money; but these debts had been incurred in defense of the Union, and it was therefore eminently proper that the Government of the Union should assume and pay them. But Congress has no right whatever to give money or money's worth to the States for State purposes; and though the Constitution has in this respect been violated, that is not an excuse for violating it again. Under the administration of President Jackson, the sum of thirty-seven million dollars was distributed among the States, ostensibly as a "deposit," but really as a free gift; but by what authority this was done I am unable to see. Surely it is not lawful to use the national money except for national purposes, and Congress has no more right to give it away to New York, Virginia, and the rest, than it would have to give it to Great Britain or to France. Congress did, indeed, in 1812, give a sum of money to "promote the general welfare" of Venezuela, which country had lately suffered from an earthquake; and there is no knowing what extravagances may not be committed unless strict regard is paid to the fundamental law.

We conclude, then, that there is no constitutional authority for using the national money to assist the States in their proper business, nor to provide for the general welfare of the people, save only so far as this object is effected by the performance of the specific duties of the national government. But here, perhaps, the friends of the measure may present a new argument. Suppose it granted, they may say, that Congress may not lawfully use the national money except for national purposes, and that among these purposes the promotion of the general welfare of the citizens is not included; yet we maintain that the education of the people is a matter of national importance, and that the welfare of the United States, as a body politic, depends in no slight degree upon it. In a free country, where the people in the last resort are the rulers, the security and good conduct of the government itself are dependent on the wisdom and morality of the voters; and we, therefore, maintain that in giving money for the support of public schools, Congress is promoting the welfare of the Union itself.

To this I reply, in the first place, that the Constitution gives both the control of education and the regulation of the suffrage to the States, and by so doing deprives the national authorities of all voice in the matter. In regard to the suffrage, it provides that those persons may vote for Presidential electors and members of the House of Representatives who are permitted to vote for members of the most numerous branch of the State Legislature, thus leaving it for the States to say who shall vote in national affairs. Having thus deprived itself of all control of the suffrage, and of education too, the nation has no right to complain if the voters furnished by the State are not to its liking; and if it wishes to remove the difficulty, it must do it by amending its own Constitution, and not by appropriating money in violation of it. But, secondly, if the promotion of education is a national object, and the appropriation of money for that purpose is for the benefit of the United States, the money must be expended and applied by the President. The Constitution places the whole executive power in the hands of the President and his subordinates, and neither he himself nor Congress may delegate his authority to the officers of the States. If, therefore, the national money is to be appropriated for the support of public schools, on the ground that this is a national object, then the entire control of that money and its application to its purpose must be in the hands of the President. But this would involve the assumption by the President of the general management of the public schools all over the country, which is obviously impossible. It follows, therefore, that so long as the Constitution gives the national government no control over education, the national money may not lawfully be employed for educational purposes, and that whatever is done toward removing illiteracy must be done in other ways.

If, then, the proposed measure is unconstitutional, it ought to be abandoned, and the question of its expediency becomes of little importance. To my mind, however, its expediency is only less doubtful than its constitutionality. The bill proposed last winter provided no guarantees for the faithful use of the money by the States; and though the measure may be amended in this respect, it is hard to see how any

effectual guarantees can be obtained without national supervision of the schools themselves. Moreover, if national aid is to be given, it would seem that it ought to be distributed among the States in some proportion to merit. It might be well to give some preference to those States in which illiteracy most abounds, since the removal of illiteracy is the object in view; but surely some preference should also be given to those that are most earnest in the work themselves, and prove their earnestness by the liberality of their appropriations and the efficiency of their schools. But, under the measure that has been proposed, the States that do the least for education, and have in consequence the largest illiterate population, would receive the largest share of the national bounty, and the longer they allowed their people to remain illiterate the more money they would receive. In short, the effect of the measure would be to put a premium on ignorance; and it is hard to see how the cause of popular education can be subserved by such means as that.

Meanwhile, if the nation at large wishes to do something for the removal of illiteracy, there are various legitimate ways in which it may do so. One of the best would be to amend the Constitution so as to prohibit any person from voting, either in national or in State affairs, unless he can read and write. Another and equally useful amendment would be one providing that members of the House of Representatives should be apportioned among the States, not, as at present, in proportion to their whole population, but in proportion to that part of their population that can read and write. A third measure, no less useful than either of these, and not requiring a change in the Constitution, would be a law prohibiting the naturalization of any person that cannot read and write. It may be well that our country should be a refuge for the oppressed of all lands; but there is no good reason why it should be the refuge of the ignorant and worthless of all lands, as it practically is to-day. By such measures as these the cause of popular education would be far more effectually promoted than by gifts of money from the national treasury; for they would compel both the States themselves and their illiterate population to do their best to remove the ignorance that now so widely prevails.

J. B. Peterson.

The Temperance Question.

SUGGESTIONS REGARDING TEMPERANCE WORK.

ONE of the greatest hinderances in the way of our temperance reform is the indifference of those whom we are pleased to call our "reputable citizens." This sin of indifference, for it may be characterized by such a grave term, cannot be placed at the door of saloon-keepers and politicians. They are ever watching their interests, and pushing them with all their powers. We sincerely hope that the discussion of the various phases of the temperance reform now going on throughout our country will awaken the sluggish and indifferent among our better classes to action, and create enough public sentiment to establish in all parts of the land associations with the specific object of enforcing the laws.

The liquor business, like a huge giant, comes out with his heavy coat of mail—political influence—and defies the arms of virtue and of right. Who shall dare to resist this modern Goliath? He sends out his challenge, and we must either find a David to oppose him or be overcome. Suppose we believe that we have at last found our David. The next point is, how shall David fight, and what shall constitute his armor? Some will say, "Let religion be his coat of mail"; others, "moral suasion"; and others, "prohibition." But David declines all this cumbrous armor for his first venture, strong and invincible as it may be under some circumstances. So, taking his sling, he selects five smooth stones from the brook Experience, and, thus armed, goes to meet the foe. But now for a moment he hesitates. Which stone shall he throw first? The first stroke must not fail; else the giant may cast his spear in contempt, and David and his cause be overthrown at the very outset. At length he resolves to throw first his smallest stone, *No sale of liquor to minors*. His practice with this insures his lodging it somewhere in his enemy. A fair blow with this stone will sink it so deep that the giant will lose most of his blood; and while he is falling, David will throw his second stone, *No sale of liquor to drunkards*. This will draw more life-blood. Then *No sale of adulterated liquors* will bring the haughty giant to his knees. Quickly following up these strokes with *No music in saloons* and *High license*, and Goliath is forsooth ready to die. Then will David advance, and with the sword of *Prohibition* cut off the dying monster's head.

Some will say the sword should be used first. But the reply comes: It has been tried; but the attempts only wounded instead of killing, and the giant hid away for a time in the dark, feigning to be dead, only to make his appearance again when his strength returned.

Prohibition, to be successful, must take away the demand for liquor. The Women's Christian Temperance Union, of Chicago, in a recent call, acknowledge that, after nine years of reform work, they are convinced that the only means of stopping intemperance is by educating the young; and to this end they urge the organization of Bands of Hope all over the country. Keep the growing youth out of the saloons, and the demand for liquor in a very few years must cease.

There is no community that will not support organizations that seek to enforce the law against the sale of liquor to minors and drunkards. When this is done, you have taken away from the liquor-dealers four-fifths of their customers. If you, then, enforce the law against selling adulterated liquors, you take away nearly all their profits, as well as all their liquors. Then enforce the law against music and stage performances in saloons, and you will drive away most of the remaining fifth of their patrons.

There will be a few saloon-keepers who may live off the moderate drinker's appetite; but the number will be so small that their influence in politics will count for naught, and your mayor will close them up quickly when requested by the reputable citizens, *whose favor and influence he will then court*.

One of the great mistakes of the temperance reform to-day is, that we try to accomplish too much at one time. The liquor business did not grow up in