

MUST HAVE SCHOOLS.

Immediate Duty of Chicago Board of Education.

THE NINETEENTH WARD.

A District in Great Need of More Public Schools.

plea for the Little Ones—A Macedonian Cry—"More Schools, More Schools!"

Chicago must furnish at once ample school accommodations for at least 25,000 children of school age who now are practically without any school advantages whatever. It is worse than a farce to talk of "compulsory school attendance" when thousands of children are denied wholly all schooling in the public schools, because there is no room for them; while thousands upon thousands more have to be content with only "half-day" schools, which, as a matter of fact, too often mean almost worse than no school at all.

Little use is it to organize societies for deriving delinquents from the streets. Little use is it to show the enormous amount of alleged truancy to the Board of Education—the compulsory attendance department. Little use is it to visit factories and sweating establishments and laundries and dark cellars and curtaining tenements and dinner-begging workshops, and clear out the poor things who are slaving their little lives away there. Little use for odd associations and houses for the homeless and all asylums for the unfortunate. Little use for all or any of these agencies of amelioration if there flow on painlessly the springs which feed unceasingly the streams and floods of involuntary ignorance and cultured degradation and their near relatives—crime and vice.

The Board's Duty.

This is the general situation throughout Chicago. The Board of Education must this week dispose of this most serious question. There is no avoiding it. Its committee on buildings and grounds have now this matter under consideration. Upon the conclusions reached this week by this committee will depend the future welfare of this part of the city's great work.

Is so bad in Chicago is there greater need of immediate relief in this regard than in the present Nineteenth Ward. Between Van Buren street and Twelfth street, and from Halsted street to the river, there are only two schools; namely, the Dore School and the Park Street School. In the Nineteenth Ward there is another school, the Garfield, but this is west of Halsted street and not in the district just described.

This great district, with its thousands upon thousands of children, and its scores of thousands of inhabitants and its crowded schools, public and private as well, has a population of 7,000 children of school age; and its public school accommodations are limited to 2,500, with 1,000 half-day pupils! Here is a city in a ward. There are 65,000 people, according to the school census of 1891, and its population has greatly increased since then.

The district from Halsted street to the river, and from Kinzie street to the South Branch, is fast becoming the manufacturing center of the West Side. Factories and warehouses and workshops of all kinds are and. And yet there are thousands of men, women, and children packed into the tenements and old houses and flats and garrets and basements in that district. Sweatshops abound. Child-labor prevails. It seems better to permit to have their children at work than permitting the parents, whose idleness and poverty and all kinds of abuses and day education abound. And much of this because there have not been suitable accommodations for children of school age, many hundreds and thousands of whose parents would be glad to see their little ones enjoying the advantages of public school education.

The committee on Buildings and Grounds of the Board of Education meet this afternoon. Mr. John Mahon is the chairman. He is an honest, bright, and distinguished gentleman. His committee stands up to it that these needs are fully satisfied.

What Are the Requirements?

There are no unresolvable doubts as to the necessity. A visit any day by any interested or disinterested person to the vicinity will convince the most pronounced Tugboat who ever doubted the existence of the requirements.

The public are awakened on this subject. Mrs. Florence Kelley, of Hull House, has given the subject considerable thought. So has the Woman's Alliance. The Seaside Union has taken a deep interest in the matter. The Trades Assembly has followed the Seaside Union by the sponsoring of a committee to urge upon the municipal authorities the necessity of more and improved school facilities in the more densely populated wards.

Said Mrs. Kelley, in describing the Nineteenth Ward the other day:

"The lack of school accommodations in the Nineteenth Ward—which is typical of the older wards and where the population is not of recent or sudden growth—is terrible, as well as of long standing. The population is mixed. It is just of the kind in need of all the Americanizing influences that can be brought to bear upon it. The people are made of Irish Americans, English and Irish, with a very large proportion of Germans, and Russians, and Bohemians, and Canadian French.

A Typical District Described.

"This ward with its 65,000 inhabitants, a city in itself, has only three public schools. There has been no recent move in the direction of increasing the size of the Dore or the Garfield or the Park street school. The 10,000 of children who are without any school advantages whatever are apparently no nearer enjoying school facilities than they were ten or twenty years ago.

"This urgent needed question is not confined to the Nineteenth Ward. The wards lying adjacent are quite over-crowded. There does not appear, therefore, to be any opportunity afforded to send the children to schools that are situated in them. No matter how overcrowding the one district, there is always no way out, unless the Board of Education should enlarge the schools already there, or else, change the nature of their task for school property, in such a way that the Board can get suitable places for school buildings in the present district west of Chicago street.

"Parents are severely chastised for sending their children to work, when there is no room for them in the schools, even for half a day, five days out of the seven. Child labor was severely and effectively stopped, while these conditions exist.

"Of the thirty or more new school buildings which it is proposed to erect in the city, not one is in the district indicated, nor within walking distance of it. The Board of Education can afford to remedy this. There should be efforts serious, earnest efforts, made to meet this case and these cases like it all over the city. The Garfield School, which was opened two years ago, seemed in no sense to meet the requirements. We sincerely hope the committee on buildings and grounds will on Monday provide for this great and greatly neglected district. It is a field that needs immediate attention. Let a large liberality and an enlightened sentiment furnish these school facilities."