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A CRITICAL WEEK FOR THE SCHOOLS.

New York Parents Should Watch the Board of Education.

Gilman's Refusal Must Not Excuse the Naming of an Incompetent Man.

The New Board Has an Opportunity to Correct Many Long-Standing Evils.

\$5,000,000 for New Buildings Scarcely Enough to Meet the City's Urgent Needs.

MANY CHANGES DEMANDED AT ONCE.

Basement Playgrounds, Bad Ventilation, Wicked Overcrowding and Politics All Must Go.

Every father and every mother of children of the school age in New York City ought to watch the events of the next few days with the deepest interest and the closest scrutiny.

Through a system which placed the schools of New York at the mercy of ward politicians, and through an unremovable parsimony on the part of legislators who have not hesitated to waste millions of dollars on matters far less important, New York has been burdened with what is probably the worst public school system existing in America. This disgrace has not been hidden. Constantly the attention of the public has been called to it by broad-minded citizens and the newspapers, but not until this year has anything of importance been accomplished toward correcting it.

But at last a movement, forwarded by many of the most intelligent minds in the city and State, has resulted in laws, enthusiastically indorsed by the Governor and the Mayor, abolishing the worst of the political features of the old system and appropriating \$5,000,000 for the construction of new buildings and the improvement of the old ones.

It has been suggested that President Gilman, of Johns Hopkins University, Baltimore, would be an ideal man to fill, under the new order of things, the place which Mr. Jasper filled under the old. The reluctance of Johns Hopkins to part with Dr. Gilman may prevent this admirable plan from being carried out.

SOME EVILS OF NEW YORK SCHOOLS.

They Mean Wrecked Health, Ruined Eyes and Imperfect Education for the Little Ones.

Through the operations of the Board of Ward Trustees—now of the past because of the Reform bill—New York's schools have been run on an incomplete and incoherent basis. No progressive and comprehensive plan of public education has been made or followed out.

The \$5,000,000 which have been appropriated for the construction of new buildings will be scarcely sufficient to entirely supply the growing demand for school accommodations.

grounds, ventilation and light are not less sufficient as indicating the tremendous task of reform which is before the new Board of Education under the new law.

"The new Chrystie street school has a playground in the basement. The children are sent down in small squads, and each squad has about ten minutes' total playtime. A fruit seller's stand is allowed in the basement.

"The water closets in the boys' yard of No. 42, the Allen street school, are in very bad order. The play place is, in consequence, foul-smelling and dangerous to health. The primary grade children have about ten minutes for play, the upper grade children have no playtime at all. The annex, containing many schoolrooms, has no gas. Many of the rooms are most imperfectly lighted.

"Ventilation is entirely by open windows and doors, creating, often, bad draughts, unless bad air is chosen instead. Some of the teachers' voices were affected.

"At No. 75, Norfolk street school, much the same condition of schoolrooms prevails as in No. 42, but there are some gas jets in all the rooms. No. 3, fifth grade, has but one window—dim light (on very bright day), in rear of room particularly bad. No. 4, sixth grade, is equally bad. No. 5, fourth grade, is in same condition. In another room the single window was close up to the elevated railway track. This window had to be kept partly open for ventilation; imagine the noise, etc.

"In the primary department, Grammar School No. 70, the main hall, where Principal Miss Hall sat, was divided by small screens (about four feet high) into five class spaces, about forty to fifty small girls or boys in each class. Central class had almost no light. Teaching must be very difficult with five teachers talking in the same room.

"The two basement rooms were utterly unfit for school purposes, though not as bad as some in Tenth Ward. On a bright sunny

A BIG MAN NEEDED.

Henry W. Taft Shows Why Mr. Jasper Does Not Fit the Place.

Although Dr. Gilman's determination to remain with Johns Hopkins is a disappointment to all who are interested in the welfare of the public schools of New York, the fact that he allowed his name to be presented to the Board of Education is of great value, for it not only places the office of Superintendent in its true light as a place of dignity and honor among the greatest educators in the country, but it also shows in the clearest and most convincing way the unfitness of Mr. Jasper for so great a position.

CHARLES C. BURLINGHAM.

been made, nothing can be done in the way of contemplated improvements. The new School Reform bill gives the City Superintendent of Schools almost unlimited power. It abolishes the present Trustees and calls for the appointment of a Board of Superintendents, of which the City Superintendent will be the head.

"I am not competent to say what the New York schools of the future should be," ex-Mayor Abram S. Hewitt, said yesterday, "further than that they should be the best in the land. The condition of affairs here is just the same as when Russia sent to Rome for Von Humboldt to come and reorganize its universities. He came and did so successfully. Then he was wanted to reorganize the public school system and did so. Dr. Gilman, of Johns Hopkins, is in precisely the same position. The city needs him, and I most sincerely hope that some arrangement may be made through which he may be secured."

The school system as it is to-day and will continue for another week is administered under a law that was originally framed when New York was a town below Fourteenth street, and when what is now the upper part of the city was a collection of different villages. Each ward had a Board of School Trustees, which are an anomaly in the school system of the State as well as a source of constant delay, disputes and inefficiency in the educational administration. It made but little difference whether the various Boards of Trustees were good or bad officers, the system

measure adopted by the last Legislature will be defeated, and they were mainly responsible for the new law, unless a complete revolution is effected.

Nothing has been said or intimated to the slightest extent derogatory to Mr. Jasper. His ability in administering the routine details of the work of his office is recognized, but it is not thought he is the man to make the reorganization of the school system for Greater New York as perfect as would be desired. It is held that he is not a man who possesses sufficient education and ideas to qualify him to be the head of a great system destined to be one of the greatest in the world. Those who are opposed to him make the charge that the New York schools under his management have been conducted on narrow lines, and instead of being of a standard sufficiently high to serve as a model have in reality been inferior to those of many smaller towns.

CHIEF CONLIN HOME AGAIN

Back from His Vacation Full of Praise for the New York Police.

Chief of Police Peter F. Conlin, accompanied by his wife, returned to this city yesterday by the steamship La Bretagne and will resume his duties at Police Headquarters this morning. His return just now was unexpected, because he only left here on April 25, after having been granted leave of absence for fifty days, and it was his original intention to remain abroad for the full time. It is believed, however, that he came home at the special request of the Police Board, though this he would neither deny nor affirm.

GOT \$100,000 WORTH FOR THE POSTAGE.

Confederacy of Rogues Caught in a Supposed Gigantic Swindling Scheme.

Did Business in Murray Street Under the Name of 'B. Blank,' Who Has an 'A 1' Rating.

SOLD CONSIGNMENTS BELOW COST.

William Matzner and Franz and Henry Seelig Arrested Following the Receipt of Bills by the Real B. Blank of Greenwich Street.

A trio of supposed swindlers occupy separate cells in the Leonard Street Police Station. They are William Matzner, alias Blank, alias Williams, thirty-seven years of age, of No. 2041 Arthur avenue; Franz Seelig, alias Blauer, thirty-eight years of age, of No. 786 Lexington avenue, and Henry Seelig, forty-two years of age, of No. 307 Lenox avenue. According to Captain Cross they have swindled manufacturers and carriers from Maine to Florida out of more than \$100,000 worth of goods by using the name of a reputable grocer and commission agent on Greenwich street, while they did business in a couple of dingy offices at No. 29 Murray street.

Henry Seelig, who is described by the police as the author of the scheme, is said by them to have conducted a \$30,000 operation in bogus notes a year ago. He, with his brother, Franz, and Matzner, opened the offices in Murray street a few weeks ago. The name of "B. Blank" appeared on the door, and from a directory known as "The Manufacturers of the United States for Buyers and Sellers" they secured the names of all the manufacturers, canners and distillers in the country. To those who had no agents in this city circular letters asking for samples and quotations were sent. The receipt of the samples and quotations was usually followed by a large order, on sixty and ninety days' credit, and as soon as the goods arrived at the steamship piers or railroad freight yards they were taken away and disposed of at less than half the market value to small dealers.

THE REPUTABLE MR. BLANK.

The swindle was made easy through the fact that B. Blank, of Greenwich street, was rated in the books of a mercantile agency as "A 1," but his address, as is customary in these books, was omitted. Letters containing bills of lading for cases of canned goods, wines, liquors and cigars and intended for the Murray street Blank, were delivered to the reputable Mr. Blank on Greenwich street. Not having ordered the goods Mr. Blank was at a loss to account for the bills. He made inquiries and learned that manufacturers were being victimized in his name. Captain Cross was notified. About ten days ago Franz Seelig, representing himself as P. Bauer, called on Howe Brothers, commission merchants, at No. 51 Hudson street, and offered to sell them a carload of canned corn shipped to "B. Blank" by the Ossipee Valley Canning Company, of Cornish, Me., for \$400. The consignment was worth \$750, but Bauer explained the cut in the price by stating that the consignors were in need of ready money.

Mr. Howe agreed to buy the carload, and the following day Bauer brought him the bill of lading and told him that the goods were at the Metropolitan Steamship dock, Pier 1, East River. Mr. Howe had heard of the swindle, and when Bauer called for the money on Saturday he was arrested by Captain Cross, who was waiting for him. He was locked up in the Leonard Street Police Station under the name of Franz Seelig.

BETRAYED BY A TYPEWRITER.

The police then went to the office of the bogus "B. Blank" and found the office in charge of a young woman typewriter, who said that "Mr. Blank" was not in, but that his representative Mr. Williams had just stepped out for lunch. Captain Cross introduced himself to the typewriter, and as soon as she learned who her employers were she gave the police a description of Williams, whom she said was Mr. Blank and assisted in capturing him late in the afternoon on Broadway.

After Williams, or Matzner as he called himself, had been arrested, the offices were cleaned out and all the letters and books as well as several boxes of cigars, cases of wine and canned goods were moved to the station house.

There were almost 1,000 letters and to every letter from a victim was the reply. Each letter was marked with the date of its receipt and the date the answer was mailed. The correspondence showed that Henry Seelig was thoroughly versed in the commission business, and also that the only money spent by the gang during the two months they were carrying on operations, was for office rent, postage stamps and the young woman's salary at \$8 per week.

The first ten days the typewriter was in the employ of the swindlers, she said that Henry Seelig dictated more than one hundred letters to her. After that all the letters containing requests for quotations, samples and the subsequent orders were written by Seelig, and after she had copied them on the typewriter the originals were returned to him. The letters show that large quantities of goods consigned to "B. Blank" are in the freight yards or on the way to this city.

The prisoners will be arraigned in the Centre Street Court to-day.

Congress May Adjourn June 8. Washington, May 24.—The leaders of the House expect Congress will reach final adjournment two weeks from to-morrow, June 8. That was the statement made this evening by Representative DeLoach, of Pennsylvania, a member of the Committee on Rules. The programme of business in the house in these two weeks will be a matter of arrangement from day to day.

Hotels Glare at North Beach. North Beach was visited yesterday by upward of 10,000 people. The beach has undergone a complete transformation since the passage of the Raines liquor law. Every saloon and shanty there has been converted into a hotel.



NEW YORK'S SCHOOLS MUST BE REFORMED.

Ill-ventilated school houses, dark study rooms, basement play places and many other serious evils may be corrected by the new Board of Education if a good man is chosen for its head.

together with other officers, and the office of School Trustees becomes extinct. If the public demands it this bill will absolutely divorce the schools from politics. That this should be done is necessary to a good system. Until the selection of executives has

under which they worked is antiquated and inadequate. The members of the Citizens' Committee on Public School and Reform, who have worked hard to have the school system reorganized feel that the objects of the new

"I am feeling much better now than when I went away," he said. "While abroad we visited Havre, Stockholm, Paris and London, and I must say I believe New York's police system is infinitely superior to any of those I saw. It is the finest in the world."

The Chief refused to say anything directly about the recent trouble between the Police Board and Comptroller Fitch as to the cost of collecting evidence against disorderly houses. Replying to another question, however, he said there is no difference between gathering that kind of evidence now and ten years ago, and that same money must be spent to get it.

Referring to the Raines law, Chief Conlin said he saw nothing similar to it abroad; in fact, everything in Paris is "wide open" on Sunday. He refused to say what action he would take in reference to the swarm of sandwich hotels now flourishing, but intimated that it would be radical.

Speaking generally of the department, the Chief said: "I took charge of the department at its most critical period, when four new Commissioners, each of whom had an idea that he was going to run the department, took charge. It was bad work, but it is now in good shape, and I am proud of it. There's no truth in the rumor that I am going to resign."

CRITICAL TIME FOR SCHOOLS.

Stephen H. Olin Warns the City That Events Must Be Watched Closely.

To the Editor of the Journal:

It is now in the power of Mayor Strong's Board of Education to give us the best system of public instruction which the wit of man can devise.

The Commissioners are no longer hampered by antiquated laws or by conflicting authority. The organization of the system and the choice of their head are put wholly into their hands.

It would be a public calamity if this great opportunity should be thrown away.

No one can overrate the importance to the city now and hereafter of what will take place during the next few days in the hall of the Board of Education.

All educational wisdom is not confined to Grand street, and it will help our schools amazingly to renew diplomatic relations with the public of letters.

STEPHEN H. OLIN.

POSSIBILITIES FOR REFORM.

The Schools Must Be Divorced from Politics and the \$5,000,000 Must Be Well Used.

The new bill goes into effect one week from to-day, before which time a City Superintendent of Schools has to be chosen

schools are inconvenient, so far as returning home for lunch or dinner at noon is concerned, and also parents feel their children are not stylish enough to be admitted to these schools."

morning the gas was well lighted in one room and there was but twilight in the other. Cellings low! all ventilation in this school by lowering windows.

"The scholars seat of Third avenue are crowded; seventy-five children to a teacher in primary departments and many children refused admission every month. Several new schools have been erected during recent years without relieving the pressure.

"Children from street come in and fill all places vacated. "On the other hand, schools between Sixtieth and Seventieth streets, just west of Third avenue, have room to spare and are in good condition. East Side parents refuse to send their children to these schools because cable tracks have to be crossed, the