

SIMON-PURE COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

In Enforcing the New Law Shelbyville (Ill.) Officers Send a Mother to Jail.

SHELBYVILLE, Ill., Jan. 7.—[Special.]—The Shelbyville School Board for some months has been using all ordinary means in its power to enforce the provisions of the Compulsory Education law. In cases where the parents of pupils were too poor to supply the necessary clothing, books, etc., these have been supplied, or, at least, offered without cost. In most cases this has had the desired effect and harsher means were not found necessary. However, one day last week the school board struck a snag, so to speak. Mrs. Jane Axford, a widow and the mother of one child, a boy of 12 or 13 years, had neglected or refused to send the lad to school. At first, she claimed it was because of a lack of money to buy books and supplies. These were furnished. Then it was lack of suitable clothing. This lack was supplied, and yet the boy did not make his appearance. All other means failing the board at a meeting Friday night decided to resort to severe measures. Mrs. Axford was arrested and tried for repeated violations of the law, fined \$5 and costs, and, failing to pay the fine and costs, she was sent to jail. Monday the boy was admitted to the school. The woman's last claim, and one that creates no little sympathy in her favor, is that she depends largely on the lad's earnings for a living. There is some opposition to such a rigid enforcement of the law, but the board believes that the only way to make the law of any effect is to enforce it to the letter. It has already had a good effect on other recalcitrants.

This is the first case recorded in this State of the enforcement of the imprisonment clause in the Compulsory Education act. The law was passed at the last session of the Legislature and approved May 24, 1889. It was intended chiefly to correct the abuse of child labor in factories and to impose the rudiments of an education upon the thousands of wild little Arabs roaming the streets of Chicago. Under this law truant officers were appointed and by them nearly a thousand children in this city were taken into custody and placed in the charge of teachers.

The law provides (1) that children between the ages of 7 and 14 years shall attend school at least sixteen weeks, eight of which shall be consecutive, during the school year, and that neglect by the person having such a child under his control to comply with the law shall be punishable by a fine of not more than \$20. and shall stand committed until such fine with costs of suit is paid. It is under this section that the woman at Shelbyville was imprisoned. Attendance at a private school where the curriculum is practically the same as the public school shall suffice the law, thus avoiding any conflict between the secular and the Catholic, Lutheran, and other denominational schools. (2) Provision is made for the appointment of truant officers and their duties defined. (3) False statements as to age and attendance of children is made punishable by fine. (4) The method of instituting and bringing prosecutions is set forth. (5) Police, municipal courts, Justices of the Peace, and Judges of the County Court are given jurisdiction; and (6) the act which went into force July 1, 1883, is repealed.