

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

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DOCUMENTS

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THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1839.

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1839.

NINETEENTH LEGISLATURE.

NO. 10.

HOUSE.

MEMORIAL

OF THE

SCHOOL COMMITTEE OF PORTLAND,

ON THE SUBJECT OF A

BOARD OF EDUCATION.

[SMITH & ROBINSON,.....Printers to the State.]

STATE OF MAINE.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
January 23, 1839. }

Read, laid on the table, and 600 copies ordered to be
printed, for the use of the Legislature.

CHARLES WATERHOUSE, *Clerk.*

MEMORIAL.

To the Senate and House of Representatives of the State of Maine:—

The undersigned, having been appointed by the School Committee of the City of Portland, to petition your honorable bodies to establish by law, a Board of Education for this State, would respectfully represent: That upon no subject is there more unanimity of feeling among our citizens, than upon that of education; all parties and all classes admit its importance, and the large amount which is so cheerfully paid annually, by a direct tax upon the community, namely, about \$160,000, as appears by the School returns, is evidence of the value which our people place upon the Common School system.

Believing that you fully appreciate the importance of our system of public schools, we do not deem it necessary to enlarge further upon their value. We would, therefore, beg leave to call your attention to the improvements that have been made in other countries, as well as our own, in the whole system of education; trusting that even a brief survey of these improvements, may lead you to the conclusion that the subject of education, has been too much neglected with us, and that while in almost every other respect, we have advanced, we have remained stationary in our system of education.

An American, who has been taught to look upon a system of common school education, as the palladium of his republican institutions, is struck with the fact, that, on

looking to other countries, to learn the improvements they have made, monarchical Prussia should of all others have brought her common schools to the greatest perfection; and not only so, but should have diffused among her population, nearly equal to that of the United States, a more general education of the whole mass, than we can even boast of in New-England.

As useful hints may be drawn from the Prussian system, we beg leave to give the prominent parts of that system, which is so valued in Europe, that the French government appointed that eminent scholar and philosopher, M. Victor Cousin, an especial envoy to examine and report upon this plan of instruction, and to his report are we indebted for these facts.

At the head of the Prussian system, is the Minister of Public Instruction, who ranks with the highest officers of the State; "hence," says M. Cousin, "science assumes her proper place in the State; civilization, the intellectual and moral interests of society, have their appointed ministry."

This Minister has a numerous council, receiving salaries in proportion to their labor, who assist him in the important duties of his department. This council is divided into three branches, each branch of counsellors giving their particular attention to the subject which comes under the jurisdiction of the Minister of Public Instruction, viz. 12 counsellors to the section of public instruction, 13 to that of ecclesiastical affairs, and 8 to that of medicine;—to each of these sections is attached a corresponding secretary. These, with a Chancellor, and the Minister's private secretary, make up the central administration of education. These counsellors not only aid the Minister by their advice and council, but are also obliged to act as

special inspectors. Whenever any complaint is sent up to the Minister, they repair in person to the particular school, and after due examination, report at once to the Minister, who promptly acts upon the same.

The kingdom of Prussia is divided into ten provinces; each of these provinces is sub-divided into government or regency circles; these again are divided into smaller circles, each of which are subdivided into parishes. Every province has its governor, styled over, or head president, and each department a council with its president. Each province has its provincial consistory, divided like the central administration, into three sections; the first for ecclesiastical affairs, and called the consistory—the second for public instruction, and called the School Board—the third for affairs concerning the public health, and called the Medical Board; all of its members are nominated by the Minister of Public Instruction, and receive fixed salaries.

The Minister of Public Instruction has the direct control of all the universities—one of which is established in nearly every province. To the section of the provincial consistory, called the School Board, is committed the care of the schools in each of their provinces, which are peculiarly intended for secondary instruction, and also the seminaries for training masters, or Normal schools; and to the department and the parish, is committed the care of the primary schools.

In addition to the officers already named, each chief town of a circle has its inspector of all the schools of the circle, and each department its school counsellor for the primary schools, who oversees the school inspectors, the school committees and the masters. Thus, to quote the words of M. Cousin, "to sum up all, primary instruction is

parochial and departmental, and at the same time, subject to the Minister of Public Instruction. On the other hand, all secondary instruction is under the care of the School Board. All higher instruction, that of universities, has for its organ and its head, the royal commissary, who acts under immediate authority of the Minister. Thus nothing escapes the eye and power of the Minister, yet at the same time, each of these departments of public instruction enjoys sufficient liberty of action."

As the foundation of the whole system, the Prussian law expressly recognizes and enforces the duty of parents to send their children to school; and all parents are bound to give them a suitable education, at least from the age of 7 to 14 years—either at the public or private schools. Indigent parents are provided with the means of sending their children, with clothes, &c. at the public expense.

Each parish, however small, is bound to keep an elementary school. Every town is bound to have at least one burger or middle school, or more, according to its population. Parishes too small, or absolutely unable to maintain a school, may unite, but not when the children would be compelled to go over two and a fourth English miles.

For the complete maintenance of a school, the law further requires a suitable income for the teachers, and a certain provision for them when they are past service; a building, furniture, books, &c. and also pecuniary assistance for the indigent scholars. Schools in villages are to have a garden attached for the instruction of the scholars in the elements of agriculture, horticulture, &c. In towns containing different religious denominations, and able to support two schools, they are allowed to maintain schools of each denomination; and where they are not

able to support separate schools, the head master is to be of the faith of the majority in the town, and the second master of the belief of the minority. The school committees are ordered to see that the salaries of the masters *are as high as possible*, and they are legally responsible to the masters for the salary.

The distinguishing feature of the Prussian system, however, is the rank which it gives the master, and the minute attention which it pays to his qualifications—for good schools can never be had without good masters. In order to have good masters, their law secures to them their maintenance; for, says the law, “it is our firm will that in the maintenance of every school, this be regarded as the most important object and take precedence of all others.” Having made provision for the maintenance of the master, the next important step is to obtain those well qualified, and here it is that the Prussian system surpasses our own. Like our own law, it requires the parishes to maintain their schools, but in order to furnish suitable teachers, the government has founded in each province, a Normal School for the training of masters, and these schools are mainly supported by government. “There is not,” says M. Cousin, “in the Prussian monarchy, a single province in which each department or regency has not its primary Normal school; sometimes even with one or more branch Normal schools.”

In 1831, there were 33 great primary Normal schools in the kingdom, giving instruction to about 1500 pupils; they furnish yearly about 750 candidates for the 21,885 school-masterships throughout the kingdom.

How great the contrast between the Prussian system and our own! It has been estimated that there are 80,000 common school teachers in the United States, and we have

not, properly speaking, a single Normal school to supply four times the number required in Prussia. The leading requirements of the law respecting Normal Schools are, that not more than 70 be admitted to one school—the age of admission is from 16 to 18. Pupils are expected to possess the knowledge communicated in primary schools, says the law; and their special object is to add to this information just and enlarged notions on the art of teaching, and on the education of children, considered as a whole, or the details of its different branches. Singing and gymnastic exercises are also taught; and in order to give them a practical knowledge of the art of teaching, the law requires that to the Normal schools shall be attached others in which pupils may exercise themselves by practice. Three years is the length of the course in the Normal schools, and so important is the training of a teacher considered, that they are exempt from military duties, while in these schools—the Prussian law rigidly requiring that every man from the highest to the lowest shall do military duty from 20 to 23 years of his age. Having passed the time required at the Normal schools, the pupils are rigidly examined by a special commission, and a certificate given, if found qualified; they are then placed upon the list of candidates for each department, and are to have a claim to an appointment.

All who enter upon the duties of a teacher are to be publicly and solemnly installed, and to take an oath to perform with fidelity the duties of their office. Eminent masters are permitted occasionally to travel through the kingdom, and other countries, at the public expense, in order to obtain more exact information respecting schools, and are to be promoted to places of a higher class, and also to extraordinary rewards.

Minute returns are required by law, and from the returns made in 1831, it appears that the whole number of children between the ages of 7 and 14, in the kingdom, was 2,043,030, and that 2,021,421 attended the public schools. It was found that more than 21,609—which is the difference between the two numbers—attended the private schools and the gymnasium; “hence we may be certain,” says the report before named, “that there does not exist a single human being throughout that monarchy, who does not receive an education, sufficient for the moral and intellectual wants of the laborious classes.” Can we say thus much of our own State? We feel confident we cannot, for from the returns made to the Secretary of State this year, it appears that the whole number of scholars in Maine, between the ages of 4 and 21, was 189,297. The average number of scholars who usually attend school, it appears by the same returns, allowing the same ratio of attendance for the towns not returned as for those returned in same county, is as follows: York county has 21,900 scholars—the average attendance is 14,101; Cumberland has 25,337—the average attendance is 16,348; Lincoln has 23,383—the average attendance is 16,696; Hancock, 11,750—average of attendance 8,492; Washington, 11,164—average attendance 6,647; Kennebec, 26,257—average attendance 18,979; Oxford, 15,688—average attendance 11,825; Somerset, 16,836—average attendance 12,858; Penobscot, 20,070—average attendance 14,267; Waldo, 15,812—average attendance 8,875—making the whole average attendance 129,088, or 60,209 less than the number of scholars returned. Allowing one third of these to attend private schools, which is probably more than the number who do—we have about 40,000 children who do not attend school, or who attend so little as not to be reckoned among the scholars.

The returns of Massachusetts, which are more minute than ours, also show that a large number of scholars do not attend in that State; from the returns of 1837, "it appears," says the report of the Board of Education, "that the average attendance in winter of children of all ages, falls below the whole number of children in the State, between four and sixteen years of age, who depend wholly upon the common schools, 53,533, and in summer it falls below that number 70,097; from the same returns it also appears that 23,216 neither attend in summer nor winter.

These startling facts, we think, show the necessity of further legislative enactments, if we are desirous of diffusing among our people the blessings of an education as general, as is diffused among the inhabitants of monarchical Prussia.

The results of the Prussian system are chiefly owing to its well arranged organization; giving to a central board the general plan and supervision, and leaving to the provincial boards and the school committees the details; thus securing enlightened experience in the foundation of the system and practical knowledge in sustaining and improving it.

In order that the experience of those engaged in the cause of education may not be lost, the Government of Prussia, publishes at its own expense a weekly paper and a monthly magazine, devoted especially to the cause of public instruction, which is distributed among all the schools—which praiseworthy example has been followed by France.

We beg leave also to direct your attention to the following brief account of the system of education in France, believing that if the efforts made by monarchical governments to advance the cause of education, become

known to the people of America, it will lead them, as friends to a republican form of government, to still greater efforts. The first French law relating to primary instruction, was enacted in the year 1791. The act remained almost without effect until the return of Napoleon from Elba, when attention was directed to the subject by a private society, unconnected with the State.

Education, however, continued to languish until after the revolution of the three days. The government of Louis Phillippe has given much attention to the subject, and after the report of M. Cousin upon the Prussian system was made, they adopted the following organization. Education is under the peculiar direction of the minister of public instruction; he is appointed by the King and has afterwards the nomination of all the officers in the universities, colleges and schools throughout the kingdom, besides other powers. A council of thirty members, ten of whom are counsellors for life, is associated with him.

The royal university is the head of education. It consists of as many academies as there are courts of appeal in the country, viz: twenty-seven. These academies, so termed, which in fact exist only in the regulations, are composed of the several establishments within their circuit: of the highest kind called faculties, and of royal colleges, communal colleges, private institutions, boarding schools and elementary schools. All these establishments, except those for primary instruction, are directly provided with teachers and officers by the central authority, most of these officers receiving salaries from the State. There are also thirty inspectors-general, with two inspectors also for each academy; the members of the council may also be called upon to act as inspectors of any of the State institutions.

There are academic councils established in every chief town, of an academy, with a regent at its head. Reports are constantly passing to and from this council, from every intermediate authority up to the chief, and the great council sits twice each week to take them into consideration. "In every city too, where there is a royal college, there is attached to it a bureau of administration, consisting of the *prefet* of the department, the president of the tribunal of appeal, a commissioner of this and of the criminal tribunal; and of the mayor and a *provisieur*."

All private establishments are under the care of the *prefet* of the place where they exist. Primary schools are under the government control, the immediate authorities over which are committees appointed by the university regulations, consisting of mayors or *adjoints* as presidents, and of cures or pastors as members.

In addition to this, there are committees in each *arrondissement* over the primary schools, composed of mayors, *juges de paix*, the oldest cure, a provisor of a college, a head master of a school, three members of the academic council and the *procureur du roi*; having the *prefet* of the department for its head; and these committees are to assemble at least once a month.

There is still in addition to this a special inspector of primary schools in every department. All private schools are under the general direction of the university, receiving their regulations from thence and existing only by their permission.

The university is required at least once in two years to make a report to the chamber of deputies on the state of public instruction. From these returns it appears that in 1835 there had been schools planted in 30,008 communes. There were also sixty-two primary Normal schools for

teachers, attended by 1944 persons. All the instruction given in these establishments (says a writer in *Blackwood's Magazine*) is, with a trifling abatement, gratuitous, and costs the government 5,540,000 francs yearly, independent of the expense of the communes, which considerably augments this amount.

These facts shew that the value of education is duly appreciated in monarchical France, and here as well as in Prussia, a special board with numerous branches is deemed a necessary part of a system of public instruction.

In passing from the Continent to Great Britain, we are struck with the fact that while the latter has far outstripped her continental neighbors in commerce, in agriculture and in the mechanical arts, she falls behind them in the general education of the whole people, and particularly so in England proper; Scotland having for many years enjoyed the benefits of a general system of parochial schools.

The schools in England and Wales, consist of endowed and unendowed schools, supported by voluntary contributions and the payment of those taught.

By the parliamentary returns made in 1833, it appears that the number of endowed schools was about 4200, the number of unendowed about 34,800, making a total of about 39,000 schools, attended by 1,276,000 children—which includes about 3000 infant schools, attended by 89,000 children. There are also about 17,000 Sunday schools, attended by nearly 1,600,000 children. Many of these children receive no other education than that which they obtain at these Sunday schools.

The census of 1821, shows the number of children between the ages of four and fourteen to be 3,400,000, and

as the number has increased since that time, it is estimated by a writer in the Edinburg Review, that the deficiency of schools for the whole number of children is full one half, a state of education strikingly contrasted with that of Prussia, as before named.

Of the state of the schools that do exist, but little can be said in their favor; to borrow the language of the writer above named, "they neither profess to teach what they ought, nor do teach what they profess. Reading, writing and a very little cyphering, is the whole amount of instruction which the great bulk of those seminaries pretend to teach; and with most of them even that is but a pretence."

We give this true picture of the state of education in England proper, dark as it is, because we believe that we as a people more closely resemble the British than any other; we have received our language, our laws and many of our habits from them, and like them we are becoming a great commercial, agricultural and manufacturing people. Is there not therefore danger that, in directing our attention to these national peculiarities, we shall like them neglect the more important matter of the education of our children—prizing like them the youthful hands because they may add something to our wealth, rather than the youthful mind, which is above all price?

This error, however, has not escaped the notice of the friends of education in England, and they have not only induced the government to adopt many important improvements, but as the first great step towards a real reform of the system of education, they have brought before parliament a bill for the establishment of a new board of education. The leading feature of the bill is to appoint a minister of public instruction, who shall be

president of the board—the board is to act as a council, and to consist of the protestant and catholic archbishops, a presbyterian clergyman and five lay members, which is nearly the composition of the existing board.

“The functions to be vested in this body,” says the writer to whom we are indebted for these facts, “are the general superintendence of all schools, subject to their jurisdiction; that is, established by their aid; the preparing of masters by Normal or training schools; the laying down from time to time general regulations for schools and teachers; the appointing teachers to schools, but chiefly the planting of schools where those are wanting. This is to be done by the board making a proposal to the rate payers of any parish, that the expense of the land, building and master’s house will be defrayed, provided the parish bind itself to furnish the salary, repairs and other current expenses. The amount of school fees is to be fixed by rate payers; and a committee is to be chosen by them of at least four of their number, with the protestant and catholic clergymen, the senior magistrates and medical officer. This committee is to manage the affairs of the school, and superintend the conducting of it in all respects, except the instruction, with which they are to interfere only when they are directed of the board.”

The act also proposes to appoint school inspectors to examine all schools aided by public grants, or established by the local authorities and over all endowed schools. Another and perhaps the most important feature of the act is to authorize the board to establish schools for training teachers, or *Normal schools*, as they are called on the continent. Such are briefly the leading features of the measures brought before parliament the last year for the advancement of the cause of education.

Before leaving the subject of education in England, we ought to remark that Scotland is far in advance of England proper in this respect. Parochial schools were established there at an early period by the dissenters. The statistical returns of crime show the amount of criminal offences to be much less in Scotland than in England, and Lord Justice Clerk attributes that difference to the fact, that the parochial schools of the former are more widely adopted than the schools of the latter. In 1834, there were bailed or committed in England 22,451 persons, in Ireland 21,381, in Scotland 2711; sentenced to death in England 480, in Ireland 197, in Scotland 6; executed in England 34, in Ireland 43, in Scotland 4; in England 864 persons were sentenced to transportation for life, in Scotland 30; in England, 688 were sentenced for fourteen years, and in Scotland 46; in England were sentenced for seven years, 2501, in Scotland 195.

Efforts for the education of the people are also making in several other kingdoms of Europe, and the public mind there has been particularly directed for several years to the improvement of the system of public instruction. Even Egypt, but a province of the Turk, has her minister of public instruction.

We have thus given somewhat at length, a view of the state of education in Europe at the present time; our object, however, in bringing before you these details of the subject, has not been to ask for the adoption of all these minute regulations in our system, for some of them, we admit, are inapplicable to our country; but we have believed that a knowledge of the benefits derived from a general system of education in other countries, might afford useful hints to us in the improvement of ours.

If they have gone further in their minute details than

the spirit of our institutions would justify, we on the other hand have erred for want of legislation on this subject. While upon almost every other subject, we have perhaps legislated too much, we have on this most important one legislated too little.

It has been truly said by J. Orville Taylor, a distinguished friend to education, that "on the great subject of education there has been no book kept; there is no light in the past to throw its rays into the future; no voice to teach and no decision to counsel. What with us was experiment fifty years ago, is experiment still." On the subject of education, teachers and nations have had but little communication with each other, no exchange of views and sentiments, no mutual aid. Each one has toiled alone, and their practical knowledge has been buried with them.

From Europe we will now return to our own country, and we shall at once perceive that we have in fact made but little advance beyond those regulations which our fathers established almost as soon as they had become permanently settled in New England.

Excluded from the high seminaries of England, our puritan fathers keenly felt the unjustness of those laws which debarred any part of the community from the light of knowledge on account of their religious belief. Enlightened by the intolerance of which they had been the subjects, they established at an early period the college at Cambridge; and still further resolved that the blessings of education should be given to the whole people without exclusion; and to our parent state, Massachusetts, belongs the honor of first establishing, by law, common schools.

In 1647 Massachusetts passed an act making it an in-

dictable offence not to keep and maintain a public school. "To the end," says the act, "that learning may not be buried in the graves of our forefathers, in church and commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors," it was ordered that every township numbering fifty householders, shall appoint one within their towns to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read, whose wages were to be paid by the parents of the children, or by the inhabitants in general, as the majority should appoint. It was further ordered by the same act, that towns of one hundred families or householders, should establish a grammar school, where children might be fitted for the university.

In May, 1671, says a writer in the North American Review, the court upon weighty reasons judged meet to double the penalty for neglecting to keep a grammar school.

In 1683, towns of five hundred families were to maintain two grammar schools and two writing schools. The province law of 1692 re-enacted the colony laws, except that of 1683. Several acts were passed from time to time to enforce the existing requirements and supply deficiencies in the former laws. "In 1718," says the same writer, "it being found by sad experience that many towns very able to support a grammar school, chose rather to pay their fines, the penalty was raised to thirty pounds, on towns of one hundred and fifty families; forty pounds for two hundred families, and in the same proportion for two hundred and fifty or three hundred families.

The Constitution of 1780, made it the duty of the Legislature to cherish the interests of literature and the sciences, and all seminaries of them, especially the university at Cambridge, public schools, and grammar schools.

in the towns. Various acts have been passed under that Constitution, modifying the existing laws, without any essential change, however, and these acts formed the system in our State until the separation. The Constitution of Maine, under the 8th article, provides for the support of public schools as follows:—"A general diffusion of the advantages of education being essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people: to promote this important object, the Legislature are authorized, and it shall be their duty to require the several towns to make suitable provision, at their own expense, for the support and maintenance of public schools; and it shall further be their duty to encourage and suitably endow, from time to time, *as the circumstances of the people may authorize*, all academies, colleges and seminaries of learning within the State."

Under this provision, an act was passed and approved, March 15, 1821, which, with some modifications, since made, is the basis of our present system.

In comparing our existing laws with those of several of our neighboring States, we find that they have adopted many improvements which might be easily engrafted into our own system, were it made the duty for instance of a Board of Education, to ascertain and promulgate these improvements. Massachusetts, whose system most closely resembles our own, under an act passed in April, 1837, established a Board of Education, and already has a great impetus been given to the cause of education, by the indefatigable efforts of the Secretary of the Board, Hon. Horace Mann, aided by its members. The duties of the Board, as prescribed by the statute, are, says the first report of the Board, "to prepare and lay before the Legislature in a printed form, on or before the second Wed-

nesday in January annually, an abstract of the school returns received by the Secretary of the Commonwealth, and to make a detailed report to the Legislature, of all their doings, with such observations as their experience and reflection may suggest, upon the condition and efficiency of our system of popular education, and the most practicable means of improving and extending it." Full returns are made annually to the Secretary of State, thus enabling the Board to judge where any alteration may be necessary. A liberal donation having been made by a citizen, the State has appropriated an equal amount for the establishment of a Normal School for the training of teachers. Connecticut, it is well known, has a school fund sufficient to maintain her schools without resort to taxation. The low state of her schools, it is generally admitted, proves that a large school fund is an injury rather than a benefit to the cause of education—public attention, however, has become directed to the existing evils in that State, and the friends of education are moving there, as well as in other States.

In New-York, the Secretary of State is ex-officio commissioner of public schools, and the proposition has already been made to appoint a separate officer as commissioner of schools, which probably will be done at the present session of the Legislature. Part of the surplus revenue in that State has been appropriated to the establishment of district libraries, and other improvements in the common schools. It has also been proposed to connect with a sufficient number of the academies already established, a department for the express purpose of educating teachers for common schools—the teachers of these departments to be paid from the State funds.

In several other States movements are making to im-

prove the existing systems of education, and it is generally admitted that a special board, composed of those individuals who are interested in the cause, is best adapted to our system of public instruction.

We find on examination of the School returns of our State, made the past year, that the whole amount raised and expended for public schools in 1837, was \$221,448 68, and expended in 3,446 districts. If the same amount of money were to be expended for any other purpose, it would be considered necessary to adopt some general system in order to secure its judicious disbursement. Why should not this large expenditure, be subjected to a similar supervision?

There is also much money unwisely expended in the construction of school houses, and the Board of Education of Massachusetts, knowing this fact, have made, through their Secretary, a special report upon the subject of school houses. This matter has been, heretofore, much neglected in America, while in Prussia, uniform plans are drawn by the government for the several kinds of school-houses needed, and all houses are built by these plans. It has become a well authenticated fact, and admitted by respectable physicians, that the foundation of many diseases is laid in our school rooms, by their improper construction; and on one occasion it has been discovered in one of our principal cities that the eyes of all the pupils were injuriously affected by the manner in which the seats and windows were placed. It is well known that about four of the 21 parts of oxygen in air are destroyed at every breath—hence, says the report above named, “if one were to breath the same air four or five times over, he would substantially exhaust the life giving principle in it, and his bodily functions would convulse for a moment, and then

stop." How few of our school houses are so constructed as to give at all seasons the proper ventilation and warmth so essential to the scholars' health—to remedy these evils would be one of the particular objects of a Board of Education.

If there were any doubt as to the expediency of further legislation upon this subject, we might urge the improvement and extension of our common schools on the ground of the prevention of crime; for it has become a well established fact that the diminution of crime is in exact ratio with the increase of education among a people.

In Prussia, for example, after the school system, as before described, had been in operation 14 years, the proportion of paupers and criminals had decreased 38 per cent; and in each of the years 1832, '33 and '34, in the same kingdom, there were but two executions, and the average number of murders for those years, seven and one-third—thus giving a population of over thirteen millions, a less number of executions and murders than occurred in the single State of Massachusetts during the same period.

If further evidence were wanting to sustain the well known axiom that "ignorance is the parent of vice," we might point to the reports of our various prisons in confirmation of the fact. For example, it appears from the official reports that three-fourths of the convicts in the prisons of New-York, have either received no education, or a very imperfect one. Almost one half of those committed to the Connecticut State Prison were unable to write, and one-sixth were unable to read. Of 228 committed to the Auburn prison, 56 could read and write only—50 could read only—and 60 could not. It also appears that of 276 persons in the Ohio Penitentiary, nearly all are below mediocrity—176 are grossly ignorant

and in point of education scarcely capable of transacting the ordinary business of life. These facts, we think, show conclusively that the cause of education is the cause of morality itself, and that in a country like our own, where the spirit of the people is in favor of extreme liberty in all our relations, education is the only preservative principle that can wield its gentle, yet effectual power, over the whole mass of the people.

We have thus, even at the hazard of being somewhat prolix, endeavored to show that foreign governments, having become awakened to the importance of education, have improved even upon our system in some respects—that Prussia has appointed her special minister of public instruction, and numerous boards of education; has, in one respect, far outstripped us—namely in the establishment of Normal Schools for the training of school masters, and diffused the blessings of education even more widely than we have done in republican America. We have also shown that France has followed in the steps of Prussia—has appointed her minister of public education, and established Normal and primary schools at a very considerable expense to the government—that England is also moving in this matter, and has before her a project for the reorganization of her present neglected system, and the appointment of a board to superintend the important subject of education. We have also shown that several of our own States have adopted new regulations upon this subject, and concur generally in the idea that to a special board should be committed a cause so important as is the common school system. We have also alluded to the value of education in a moral point of view, and from the statistical records of crime, shown that education is the best substitute for penal legislation. And the same rea-

soning, we may add, will hold good on the score of expense ; for the school house is cheaper than the State's prison.

We believe that the period has arrived for us to act ; it is for us to say whether we will be content to remain, in this respect, behind our sister States ; or whether, keeping pace with the enlightened spirit of the day, we will avail ourselves of the improvements which have been made by others : for, says M. Cousin, " the true greatness of a people does not consist in borrowing nothing from others, but in borrowing from all whatever is good, and in perfecting what it appropriates."

Believing, therefore, that the people of Maine are not only ready, but even anxious, to advance the cause of education throughout the State, we humbly pray that you would pass an act establishing a Board of Education, with such powers, and under such restrictions as you may deem expedient and proper.

JEDEDIAH JEWETT, }
 JASON WHITMAN, } *Committee.*
 J. W. CHICKERING, }

Portland, Jan. 1839.