

MAINE STATE LEGISLATURE

The following document is provided by the
LAW AND LEGISLATIVE DIGITAL LIBRARY
at the Maine State Law and Legislative Reference Library
<http://legislature.maine.gov/lawlib>



Reproduced from scanned originals with text recognition applied
(searchable text may contain some errors and/or omissions)

DOCUMENTS

PRINTED BY ORDER OF

THE LEGISLATURE

OF THE

STATE OF MAINE,

DURING ITS SESSION

A. D. 1845.

AUGUSTA:

WM. T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1845.

TWENTY-FIFTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 27.]

[SENATE.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, March 11, 1845.

THE Committee on Education, to whom was referred so much of the Governor's Message as relates to common schools, have had the same under consideration and ask leave to report the bill submitted, and the views that have induced the committee to submit said bill.

Readily responding to the views of the Executive, your committee consider the common school system as demanding the earnest attention and as commending itself to the most favorable consideration of the people of this State and its Legislature. This has been an ever present and a paramount subject with the statesman, and warmly cherished in the affections of the philanthropist. It was among the earliest objects of our care as a people—and the same wisdom and patriotism that called into existence our State, embodied into its constitution as a sacred principle, “that a general diffusion of the advantages of education was essential to the preservation of the rights and liberties of the people.” This declaration was considered as one of those great and indispensable truths intimately interwoven with the happiness and liberties of the people, and therefore as appropriately to be set forth in the constitution, to warm the faith and invigorate the action of those who acknowledge the authority of that constitution. Early was perceived the intimate connection between the education and the liberties of the people, and they who felt most deeply all the worth of the latter

were the most anxious and energetic in extending the former—and never have those who fully realized the greatness of a popular government, ceased to inculcate the value of popular education, or relaxed in their efforts to diffuse and secure it. Indeed it may be said that we all appreciate the vital importance of this system—that we all acknowledge it as an indispensable element of freedom; and we can say with feelings of pride and satisfaction, in reference to the legislation upon this subject, and the consideration it has received, that partizan and sectarian biasses have but little, if at all, been known, and that its blessings have been imparted with but little of bitterness.

It is a matter of congratulation, that upon this subject, if upon none other, where the whole community participate in such action and discussion as may be had, that there exist no unpleasant memories to disturb the considerations that we may be called upon to bestow, or affect the decisions that we may be required to give—no embittered contests to divide our feelings or diminish our zeal. It is a matter of congratulation that here we have stood so far aloof from the prejudices and passions and novelties of the times, and that we have suffered no wild innovation to invade the sacred precincts of the common school, to pervert its purposes or impair its benefits. Still it is believed that the system admits of improvements, of great improvements, that should be gradually introduced, and which by the aid of the wisdom and discretion that are at the command of the State, may be permanently engrafted upon that system. It is believed that the State with the funds that she has provided, can accomplish, if she but will it, far more for the purposes of education than she has ever hitherto accomplished.

Cheered by the auspicious influences to which we have before alluded, and deeply impressed with a sense of that greatness and glory that repose upon the broad foundation of popular education, your committee feel themselves called upon to present to your consideration such views as they believe would meet in some degree the repeated suggestions of present and past Executives. The attention of our legislators has been repeatedly invoked to this subject, and rarely has issued an annual message of the Executive that

has not bespoken for it the interest and careful protection of the legislative department. At times this subject has occupied an extended portion of those communications, and been earnestly presented to the consideration of the Legislature. The popular voice too, has been constantly coming into the halls of legislation and suggesting improvements, and asking for laws in aid thereof. Nor have there been wanting in the halls of legislation those who were ready to respond to these calls, and to make generous efforts to advance an institution in which are involved such vast interests. These efforts, though at times receiving a large share of favor, have not hitherto been successful. Amid more noisy pursuits and more ambitious subjects, it is not so much a matter of surprise as regret that the common school should have been treated with some degree of neglect—that legislation should have been bestowed rather upon the active and clamorous that beset the halls of legislation than upon the multitude of children quietly receiving in their thousands of departments whatever their guardians may choose to bestow. Too humble to demand, too immature to prescribe, those children, but the recipients of our care and dependent upon our kindness, have been subject to the same fortune as ever will be those whose influence cannot be immediately felt. The unpretending must yield to the importunate, and weakness must succumb to power, and however much duty may indicate a course the reverse of this, we cannot close our eyes to the lessons of expediency.

It is however the conviction of your committee that there never has been in many respects a more favorable period for reviewing the history and investigating the situation of our schools for the purpose of adopting such measures for extending their usefulness as may be deemed expedient and within the compass of our means—never was the popular mind more alive to the impulses of liberty, more convinced of the blessings of equal laws, than at this day; and the ardent and discriminating friends of liberty and law ever lay the foundations of such principles upon an enlightened and educated people. The spirit of progress that pervades a free people is never limited to a single subject. It may be that some one topic is more absorbing than another, but that spirit exerts an expansive

influence which spreads out in every direction, controlling or modifying every subject, and politics, education and religion, all feel the predominating power.

Important changes in our common school system should be the result of deliberate counsel and thorough investigation only. The experiments and experience that may have been furnished by other States, afford one of the safe methods of forming our opinions and correcting our errors. We wish briefly to invite your attention to the results of that experience.

In April, 1837, Massachusetts established a board of education. Eight years will have elapsed in April since the organization of that board, and it will be useful to ascertain what advantage it has been to the community.

The objects in establishing the board were to collect school statistics, and cause such portions of them as might be deemed useful to be laid before the Legislature—to collect information of the actual condition and efficiency of the common schools and other means of popular education—to diffuse through the State information of the most approved and successful methods of conducting and promoting the education of the young. Since the board of education was established, eight annual reports have been made by the board, and eight annual reports by the secretary of the board. The system of schools at home has been thoroughly investigated—defects pointed out and remedies suggested—full and exact information collected upon the whole subject matter, and made known to the community—the neglect and deficiency of school houses—the want of qualifications of teachers—the irregularities of school attendance—the multiplicity of school books—all have been closely examined and largely discussed.

The schools of other countries have been visited for the purpose of gathering more perfect information, and their practice and improvements presented to the community through the secretary of that board. From all this extended examination and thorough investigation, a flood of light has been shed over the common school system and important acquisitions made to the details of the science of education. One great object sought to be gained by establishing this board, perhaps the most important, was to excite a higher

degree of interest for schools, and arouse the people from apathy upon the subject—for it was perceived that if the people could only be made to realize the magnificence of the subject, every thing was accomplished. And the board express a belief that in this respect their assiduous efforts have enkindled a zeal which will burn brighter and brighter and that is to be contemplated with a spirit of pride and exultation, shedding the most favorable and cheering influences upon the aspect of the common schools.

The school house has undergone a great change for the better—the sum raised by taxation by the towns largely increased. Since 1842, about \$60,000 have been expended for school district libraries, and exclusive of the city of Boston, two-thirds of all the districts in the State have been supplied with libraries—three Normal schools established exerting the most beneficial influence, and regarded with so much favor that from all the reports of school committees the school committee of but one town have expressed themselves opposed to the Normal schools—the average attendance of scholars has been largely increased—the average length of schools been extended from six months twenty-five days, to seven months and twenty-two days.

Such are some of the important results in Massachusetts. An interest hitherto unknown has been awakened through the earnest efforts of the board of education. More money has been raised—an increased attendance effected—the time of schools extended—the teachers better qualified through the aid of Normal schools, and lastly, libraries extended to a large portion of the school districts in the State. In regard to the success of the library system, we will quote a paragraph from the report of Mr. Mann. Says Mr. Mann, in his eighth report, “it gives me great pleasure to say that no legislative measure has been adopted for the improvement of our schools which has obtained such universal approval, or been responded to by such heartfelt expressions of gratitude, as that for the establishment of a school library in every district in the State. Since the adoption of this measure I have read three sets of the annual reports of the school committees, amounting to nine hundred in number—and from one town only has there been a dis-

senting voice—a degree of unanimity probably unparalleled in regard to any measure of any kind ever adopted in this State which involved the necessity of self-taxation by the people.”

New York too, is achieving through her common schools a greatness and glory before which will dwindle away those proud and those obtrusive monuments to which we are accustomed to recur as imperishable evidences of her wisdom and power—and the generous and prudent protection which she has extended to the 700,000 children taught in her district schools, throws around her a lustre which even her giant effort, the Erie canal, never bestowed.

The past year she distributed from her treasury for the use of common schools, \$275,000. She has a school fund growing out of the sales of her lands, of \$1,992,916, yielding a revenue of \$133,826. Her deposit fund received under the act of congress of 1836, amounts to over four millions of dollars, and the interests of this appropriated almost exclusively to the purposes of education.

Besides the sum of \$275,000 appropriated to common schools during the past year, she also distributes about \$45,000 to her academies, being in the whole \$320,000, distributed in one year from her state treasury for the purposes of education. In addition to this sum there was paid during the same year for wages of teachers, \$992,222. Her school district libraries contain 1,038,396 volumes. The number of children taught in the district schools during the past year was 709,156. Each school has upon an average a library of about 100 volumes. The average length of time during which schools were taught in the several districts was eight months. Hitherto appropriations have been made for sixteen academies in order to sustain teachers' departments, and recently a Normal school has been established at Albany for the purpose of educating teachers. There is a general superintendent of all common schools, and in each county there is a county superintendent, whose duty is to visit and examine all the schools in his district and to make a full report to the State superintendent. In this manner there is a perfect organization and supervision of the schools throughout the State. Besides the general topics which may come

under the consideration of county superintendents, they are called to investigate and report upon particular subjects which are assigned to them, and thus each year develops all the facts connected with each school district, and furnishes a vast fund of valuable information and suggestions to the people that may serve to supply all deficiencies and correct all evils.

New York and Massachusetts are far in advance of us upon this subject—nor these alone—everywhere around us generous efforts have been made to elevate and improve the common school. Connecticut, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Michigan, have warmly enlisted in this cause and have summoned forth their distinguished men to impart light to common schools. And now the question arises, can anything further be done in Maine to promote the interests of education—can she gather any valuable suggestions from the experience and labors of other States, and will she catch anything of that spirit that is abroad awakening the energies and interests of man in that which so largely involves the destiny of the republic? State after State has appropriated from the treasury large sums to investigate this subject, to gather up both at home and abroad whatever might be new and useful, and to carry out in practice what might be sanctioned by the judgment—and Maine would be unfortunate indeed in her policy, if she should refuse to put forth her hand and grasp the fruit that is placed before her at the expense and toil of others—if she should refuse to place before her people the information and experience that have been elsewhere accumulated.

Your committee have recurred to the magnitude and importance of the school system—to the generous interests and efforts that the subject has called forth in other States, and to the favorable position in which we stand to avail ourselves of their labors and improvements. We would now invite your attention to a few questions involving the ability and action of our own State in reference to this matter—believing that you will be satisfied that there is much that should be accomplished, and that the State has the power, with the resources already provided, to accomplish far more than has hitherto been done.

What is the amount and what is the condition of the school fund of Maine?

What is the best mode of appropriating that fund?

What defects are there in the present school system?

What remedies are at the control of the State?

We will briefly examine the points involved in these questions.

What is the amount and what is the condition of the school fund of Maine?

By virtue of the act of 23d of February, 1828, the land agent under the advice and direction of the governor and council, was authorized to sell twenty townships of the public lands, and required to pay the proceeds thereof into the treasury of the State. It was further provided that the treasurer of the State be directed to keep a separate account of all moneys he may receive from the sale of said lands and from the notes in payment therefor, and the same shall constitute a permanent fund to be reserved for the benefit of primary schools, and said fund shall be put out on interest in such manner as a future legislature may determine, and the interest annually distributed among the several towns and plantations in this State according to the number scholars therein. There was a further provision that when the State shall receive any sum or sums of money on account of the claims of Massachusetts on the United States for services rendered by the Militia of that Commonwealth during the late war, the excess over and above what the State may then owe, shall constitute a fund to be appropriated and distributed as above.

By virtue of the resolve of March, 1834, the land agent was directed to select twenty townships of the public lands, and make sale of the same under certain restrictions, in order to promote the objects of the law of 23d of February, 1828, and it was required that the proceeds of said lands should be applied in the manner prescribed and contemplated in the several provisions of said act. The townships have been selected and a small portion of the lands have been sold. All of one township has been sold and a portion of three other townships. Sixteen townships remain unsold. The sum of \$57,629.51 has been paid over to the State treasurer on

account of said sales, and the proceeds of the timber taken from said townships, and securities remaining in the land office for \$37,000 more. The value of the lands remaining unsold, being sixteen townships and portions of three other townships, is estimated at \$75,000, which is probably a low estimate.

Thus the proceeds of the timber and land already sold amount to \$94,629.51. If the lands remaining are not overvalued at \$75,000, and probably they are not, we have means to the extent of \$169,629.51, which, if yielding an income equal to six per cent., would afford us the sum of \$10,177.77, as an annual fund to be appropriated to the purposes of advancing our common schools.

In addition to this, we have the annual fund accruing from the tax on the banking capital, which is by law appropriated to common schools. This has been hitherto a very fluctuating fund—in 1837 being \$49,415—in 1843 being \$27,823. Though the income derived from the tax of one per cent. on the banking capital will ever be a fluctuating fund; yet it is believed that it will not be reduced lower than at present. The business of the State will in all probability demand a banking capital as large as the existing capital. This being the case we may confidently estimate the annual fund possessed by the State to be appropriated to the common schools, at the amount of \$37,000. This revenue, judiciously managed, may be made to contribute largely to the greatness and glory of our State, but it is believed that its utility will depend much upon different application than what has hitherto been made.

The justness and generosity of our predecessors, who set apart in 1828, twenty townships of land, and required the proceeds to be put out on interest for the promotion of education has never been met with a corresponding spirit. The amount of \$57,629 paid into the treasury is yielding no income as required by the law creating the fund. Used for the general purposes of the treasury, it exists only as a charge against the State. Is there not just ground for complaining that we have not been true to the trust imposed upon us; and that we have fallen short of those who have preceded us in regard for popular education.

In regard to the appropriation of the income of any fund which

the State may possess, the important question arises as to the best mode of disposing of it.

This question involves the condition of our common schools, their existing defects, and the remedies to which recurrence may be had. It is a wide field upon which to enter and your committee will but run rapidly over it.

The whole number of scholars in this State, as appears by the last returns, is 214,353, but for purposes of convenience we shall make use of the returns of 1840.

By the returns of 1840, there were 189,991 scholars between the age of four and twenty one years. Of these there were during the year attending school 94,044 taught by masters—84,014 taught by school mistresses, or about one half attending school at one time. The school taught by the master averaged about seven weeks—by the mistress nine weeks and four days during the year. An average of the time of instruction, upon the whole number taught, would give eight weeks of instruction to each child.

The time of instruction in each district averaged about four months. Not quite one half of the whole number of scholars were instructed about four months of the year. To be exact, forty five per cent. of the whole number of scholars were instructed sixteen weeks and two days.

Only forty-five per cent. of the number of scholars were taught only four months of the year. The means of education are provided for all, to a limited extent, it is true, but a large portion do not avail themselves of the limited instruction offered. The practical operation may be a little different from this. There are 95,000 scholars taught by the school master—84,000 by the school mistress. The average time is almost eight weeks for the schools taught by the master, and eight weeks for the schools taught by the mistress. The schools taught by one sex were chiefly in the winter, by the other sex chiefly in the summer. The probability is that many of those who attended the winter schools attended the summer schools, so that we have no exact means of knowing the number who do not attend school at all during any one year. If the same scholars attended the schools of the master and mistress the

first view would be the correct one—forty-five per cent. of the scholars receiving instruction sixteen weeks of the year. If the sets of the scholars were entirely different in the two classes of schools, we should have 178,058 scholars receiving instruction eight weeks in the year, and 10,933 receiving no instruction during the year. Let us for a moment look at Massachusetts and see how far we are behind her in this respect.

The number of scholars in Massachusetts in 1843 between the ages of *four and sixteen years*, was 192,027. In summer 147,405 attended school, and the average length of the schools was seven months and twenty-two days—seventy six per-cent. of the number of scholars attending school about four months in summer, and eighty-eight per cent. attending school about four months in winter; while Maine has forty-eight per cent. of her scholars attending a winter school six weeks and five days, and forty-five per cent. attending a summer school nine weeks and four days. The difference between the diffusion and extent of education in Maine and Massachusetts cannot be more forcibly presented than by the simple statement of facts; the schools in Massachusetts being taught twice as long as those in Maine, and the relative ratio of scholars attending school being forty per cent. greater than in Maine. There may be however one consideration about it that would not make the differences quite so striking as to the number in attendance. In Maine the scholars are included from four to twenty-one years; in Massachusetts, from four to sixteen. But in reference to education in Massachusetts, (which is so far in advance of us), the secretary of the board of education estimates that there are “thousands and thousands of children between the ages of four and sixteen years who attend no school whatever from the beginning to the end of the year.” Far more applicable to our State than Massachusetts is the language of the secretary. “Did our ancestors commit so great an error as to provide a system of schools for all the children in the State when only a part of those children would have neither necessity nor occasion for the benefits they confer?” Is so limited an education as our schools are now giving sufficient for the political wants of a community all of whose voters sit in kings’ houses?

If these questions cannot be decided in the affirmative, then ought we not to feel alarmed that so many of our children are annually forfeiting the benefit of our schools? I do not mean the alarm of the simpleton, who is bereft of his sense at the prospect of danger, but the apprehensions of the wise man, who, foreseeing calamity, averts it by timely precaution. Among our most patriotic and philanthropic citizens the inquiry is becoming more and more frequent, whether a right to rear up children in a state of ignorance with all its consequent degradation and danger is one of the "inalienable rights of the republican."

The irregularity of attendance is another evil of great magnitude. The statistics of our common schools furnish us with no means of ascertaining the extent of this evil—but that it exists in a very high degree, admits of no doubt. When scholars are classed the evil is felt the most; and particularly is it felt in those studies where there is an intimate connection between one portion of the text book and another. In arithmetic, for instance, the scholar who is classed does not lose the day in the week merely, but for the whole week is less capable of comprehending and acquiring the lessons. And whether classed or not, interruptions diminish greatly the interest of the scholar when at school, and increase the disposition to be irregular in attendance. The absence of one day inclines him more readily to be absent another, till the school house becomes the place of resort for idleness and amusement rather than serious occupation and study.

Another serious evil in our common schools is the multiplicity of books. From an examination of the returns of the towns in 1840, it appears that there were in use, in the common schools in this State, six different kinds of dictionaries—twelve readers—thirteen grammars—fourteen spelling books—fifteen geographies—and nineteen arithmetics. What is the necessary result of such a state of things? Either one of two evils must grow out of this matter. Parents must be subject to great expense to purchase new books to meet the constant change, or there must be a total want of classification in schools; and doubtless both evils arise from this multiplicity and variety of books. This diversity is a most decided

obstruction to the progress of education, and until it is remedied parents may exhaust their purses without replenishing the minds of their children. This evil your committee believe to be of greater extent than is generally imagined. As has been before remarked, in 1840 there were 189,991 scholars, of whom 95,044 were attending school taught by a master, and 84,014 by a mistress; making in the aggregate 179,058 attending schools taught by school masters and school mistresses during the year. In 1844, there were returned 214,000 scholars. The number of scholars attending schools taught by masters and mistresses, if in the same ratio as in 1840, would be about 195,000 in 1844. Would it be too large an estimate to say that on account of the unnecessary diversities of school books, the additional expense to each of these 195,000 scholars would be ten cents each year for the purchase of school books? Would it not far exceed this? But at this estimate there would be an annual expense, or annual loss of \$19,500. Perhaps the additional expense might be double the sum mentioned, to each scholar. And it may be that this is a small portion of the loss. The loss of time, the loss of more thorough instruction for want of classification would perhaps, if it could be computed, amount to a much larger sum than the unnecessary expense for books.

As the matter now stands, the kind of books depends very much upon chance. The trader provides the common schools with books. He takes such books as the one with whom he deals offers him. Perhaps the traveling agent leaves a supply and it is one variety today and another tomorrow. There is no rule by which to guide in the selection; and the puffs of the agent of one book are rapidly succeeded by those of another. There is no discrimination and no steadiness. The school committees who are authorized to prescribe the books to be used, to a great extent neglect so to do; and when they do prescribe it makes but little difference. The constant change of instructors too, is attended by as certain a change in the recommendation of books. All the spice of life that variety can furnish is most effectually attained in this respect.

There is another influence that is not conceived to be a favorable one to the common school or to popular government, to wit, the

influence of select schools and academies when created as *substitutes* for common schools, or to *fulfill the functions* of the common schools. Our common schools were designed to be in entire harmony with the government we have adopted, and one of the modes of sustaining and carrying out its spirit of equality—where early lessons should endear the great declaration that all are born equal—where alike the children of the poor and the rich should mingle in common sympathy, and feel that they have a common destiny—where such associations should be formed in youth as would preserve in after life kind memories, and bind man to his fellow man, however unequal or widely separated the condition. And is it not desirable to accomplish this if possible—to bring about in early life that social equality of all classes, which is so favorable to political equality, which all demand?

And we would call upon the men of wealth who make the academies and select schools a substitute for the common schools, to remedy this evil.

They owe more to the masses than the tax they pay. Their influence and interest is due to the cause of education. Their sympathies and society should be more largely contributed to common schools, and never will they have done justice to themselves and their country—never will they have most effectually provided for their own comfort and security until the children of the rich and poor are linked together by the early yet long perpetuated associations of a common education in our common schools. Men of wealth and influence do not cherish the common schools as they should. To a great extent they withdraw alike their children and their care from these primary institutions. Is it right? Is it not at variance with the spirit of our institutions, which not only recognizes, but struggles for equality—not by depressing those who are elevated, but by elevating those who are depressed. Is it not a suicidal policy, and which in after years brings dissatisfaction and jealousy? There is no time and no history that will not fortify the position, that in the intelligence of the masses is found the protection of property and the security of man.

Another great evil to be remedied is the want of properly qual-

ified teachers. This is one of the most decided obstacles in the way of education. There is a very general disposition in our school districts to hire the teacher that can be had for the least sum. Low wages are considered of more importance than the necessary requisites of the teacher. The length of the school is a larger object of regard than thorough discipline, readiness and ease of instruction, and systematic arrangement.

There is but a small portion of the teachers who make it a business to teach in our common schools, who are dependent or intend to be dependent for support upon success in teaching; consequently the great inducements to effort which men have in every other profession and pursuit, is taken away. The individual rises not beyond the immediate necessities of the case. To hear the lessons and get rid of the noise and trouble is frequently the extent of the teacher's aspiration. Devoid of interest and effort he drags wearily along, succeeding chiefly in impressing his own inertness upon his pupils, who have little excitement or pleasure connected with the school except with its close. The merely temporary teacher lays not broad and deep the foundations on which to build up as a solid and enduring fabric the common school—he does not day by day add those stores of information that may well up as from a perpetual fountain to supply the wants and refresh the existence of the youth—cultivates not those kind persuasive manners and ready sympathies which attract and control the scholar more than all else. In fine, ambition stimulates not and the future is without influence. Look into our winter schools and see how many a similar case presents itself. A young man who wishes to get a little money seeks a school to teach for two or three months during the winter. Without experience, without system, without familiarity with the best modes of teaching, with but little knowledge of human nature, and no discipline over himself—with no idea of the previous habits and studies of those whom he is to teach, he enters upon his task, for task it is—during the period of two or three months, *listens* to his pupils in the *repetition of their tasks*—leaves the school at the expiration of the time in a state of indifference, disorder, and but little improved, never to teach again in that or

any other district. Your committee do not mean to say that this is the predominant character of our common schools, but that it is a common one.

It is believed such a state of things frequently exists in our common schools when under the charge of merely temporary teachers.

But admit it to be so, the question arises what is to be done—where is the remedy?

The remedy is two-fold. In the first place, the inhabitants of the district can have a great control over this matter if they will look to it. When teachers of better qualifications are demanded they will be had. Parents must feel more interest in the employment of a good teacher, and select agents who consider the office a responsible and elevated one—an office which should be exercised by none for the purpose of gratifying a partiality or prejudice, or merely for the employment of a relative or friend, but an office to be exercised with reference to the happiness and prosperity of a young nation. Parents must likewise keep an eye on the teacher—be familiar with the school room—resort there frequently and mark the mode of instruction and the progress of the school. Let each parent or head of a family in a district devote one day at least to visiting the schools during each winter and summer—how vast a restraint it might prove upon the evils incident to the school—how great an incitement to effort both with the pupil and teacher—how much knowledge of inconveniences and defects would be acquired by those who alone could apply the remedy, and which inconveniences and defects existed only because they were not sensibly felt.

Another mode of remedying this evil is to establish schools for the instruction of teachers. This is a subject which has largely occupied the attention of other nations and other States.

Schools for teachers, Normal schools, where may be acquired the profession of the teacher in all its branches of discipline, system, aptness and ability to instruct are thought by many of the wisest and most ardent friends of the common schools indispensable to any great improvement of the system.

There are difficulties no doubt connected with this method in

our country. The limited extent to which teachers could be educated in this way and the apparently partial operation of such instruction, would be considered in some degree objectionable in a community whose tendency is so democratic as with us.

But in this as in many other cases that present themselves, the benefits may far outweigh the inconvenience. Schools to teach the teacher, where all the improvements could be reduced to practice that time and wisdom have bestowed, it is believed would soon invigorate and elevate our system of instruction and send an influence to the farthest removed district and reach the humblest cottage. But a few years would elapse before all its benefits would be perceived and appreciated, and a readiness, a regularity and an energy of instruction would be superinduced of which we have now but a faint idea. On this point we would quote a passage from the report of the distinguished superintendent of common schools in the State of New York, a friend of the common schools no less ardent than able. "A teacher of proper capacity and acquirements thoroughly educated in a Normal school can communicate more learning to his pupils in six months than is usually communicated under the old system of teaching in double that period. If it were affirmed that a mechanic who had been carefully instructed in the theoretical and practical departments of his trade could do twice as much work and do it twice as well as one who should assume that without previous discipline he was possessed of the trade by instinct, the affirmation could hardly fail to be credited. And is it not equally apparent that the educator whose functions embrace in an eminent degree both art and science; who is required to study and to understand the different dispositions and propensities of the children committed to his care; to whose culture is confided the embryo blossom of daily growth, and to aid and accelerate their expansion so that they may yield rich fruit in beauty and abundance; in short who in the incipient stage of its existence, is to attune the delicate and complicated chords of the human soul into the moral and intellectual harmonies of social life; is it not equally apparent that such a mission cannot be worthily performed without careful preparation." It would seem indeed that the office of

teacher was of preeminent importance, and deserving of higher consideration than it has hitherto received from our State. When we look around us we find others have been pressing onward in the glorious struggle to develop human faculties and enlarge the securities of liberty, while Maine has folded her hands and looked idly on. Perhaps it is as well. She can now start with the accumulated knowledge and experience of other States and nations, and from the fruits of their labor derive nourishment and strength.

The present mode of appropriating the bank tax and any other fund at the control of the State, is another subject requiring your careful consideration. Your committee purpose to divert a portion of it from the ordinary channel, and believe that all the school fund at the disposition of the State might be much more usefully applied for the benefit of common schools than at present.

The income from this source for the present year is estimated at about \$26,000. What amount would this average to each school in the State, and how long would it extend each school? The number of districts returned in 1840 was 3,477; but in looking over the returns we find there were no returns from school districts from many towns, while in some towns one district embraces many schools. Portland, for instance, with 5,633 scholars and a large number of schools has but one district. The returns of scholars have increased from 189,991, in 1840, to 214,353, in 1844—being an increase of more than 24,000 scholars as by the returns.

The number of school districts in the State would without doubt exceed 4,000 at the present time, and dividing among the school districts the amount received from the bank tax there would not be an average of \$6 to a school.

Look at it in another view—the amount of the bank tax to a scholar is 12 cents. The number of scholars to a school would not average more than forty five throughout the State. This would give \$5.40 to a school, and the largest sum would not be sufficient to extend the winter school more than a week. That fund as at present appropriated, scarcely leaves a trace of its existence. It is indeed frittered away.

The defects to which we have recurred as incident to our com-

mon schools have a variety of sources. Some of them are owing to neglect of parents, and a want of interest in the community.

This can only be remedied by diffusing facts and information and inculcating correct principles through the press, or by means of lectures addressing themselves directly to the people. Other defects grow out of the want of a general controlling power—an efficient supervision of all the schools and of the school system. Other defects grow out of the want of properly *qualified* teachers.

How is this interest to be excited—how these facts and principles to be presented—how this supervision to be exercised—how these teachers to be better qualified? The remedy is at the control of the State alone.

A general supervision that is constant and continued is necessary to perfect the system of teaching. Without this nothing is secure. Without this, succeeding years are marked by a repetition of preceding errors—nay, more: what is gained today is lost tomorrow. A general supervision is necessary to that permanent system that may preserve the past and carry it to the future, bearing onward the youth from year to year with something of that regularity and classification which marks our collegiate institutions. In education a general system and a particular system are both necessary to the greater perfection of schools. That system which pervades the school during one season of teaching will depend upon the teacher. There is another and more comprehensive system, which embraces the progress of the youth from year to year. A higher power than that of a temporary teacher must here be brought to bear—a power that is permanent and pervading—that perpetuates experience and extracts from it whatever of interest or vigor there may be. A general supervision is required, that deliberately abandons—that deliberately adopts—under the influence of a settled purpose and determined will, that shall give steadiness to whatever is under its guidance, and character to whatever it sanctions—a supervision that manifests more eagerness for information than novelties—that is more energetic than enthusiastic, and that seeks permanent benefits rather than sudden and uncertain change.

A board of education is, in the belief of your committee, the first step in the path of future progress, and without it there can be no uniform and pervading system. Establish a board of education that shall exercise a constant watchfulness over our common schools—that shall annually, through their reports, lay before the legislature and community the defects of the system, and the improvements of which it is susceptible—that shall collect and embody whatever of valuable information the experience and research of other States may afford, and suggest such views as may be deemed serviceable; and it would be, if it effected nothing more than this, an institution of surpassing value. Thereby the means of improvement would be pointed out, and through the efforts of the board an interest excited among the people, which are two essential requisites of progress. But there should be more than this attempted. Such a board should be vested with the power to prescribe school books throughout the State; and if the views presented in a former part of this report are any approximation to correctness, this would be a saving of many thousands of dollars, and a vast gain to the scholar, by a more complete and systematic instruction.

Another step would follow or should follow the establishment of a board of education—a portion of the funds that are now paid out of the State treasury for common schools, and the income from the school fund that is at the control of the State should be devoted to the education of teachers, either by establishing Normal schools or by annual appropriations to some of the existing academies. This, too, should be done under the advice and direction of a board of education. The money now in the treasury of the State, and what may be hereafter paid into the treasury, accruing from the lands set apart for scholars, your committee believe should be funded, and that the board of education, when created, might well be constituted a board of trustees for the management of those funds. The law granting those lands required that the proceeds thereof should be put out upon interest for the benefit of schools, but this law has hitherto been disregarded. There are other features which your committee believe should be incorporated in the school system as part of a permanent system, but to which they will not now advert.

Your committee having these measures in view, as measures to be accomplished—as measures to be recommended now to the attention and consideration of the community, propose at the present time a board of commissioners only, to continue for one year for the purpose of thoroughly investigating the whole subject of our common school system, all the improvements and progress that may have been made elsewhere, the changes that might be desirable in the school law, and could be beneficially effected. Your committee have thought it wise to propose a board of commissioners, and for one year only, rather than attempt to carry out at the present time the views previously suggested, believing that if the board of commissioners is established all their views will be accomplished in due season, and that the measure recommended is the most efficient one for this purpose. Impressed with the extent and importance of the subject they believe that the services of the best men in the State should be required—men whose ability and integrity should guarantee for the faithful execution of the trust, and whose character and influence should lend additional weight to the measure they should propose. The sum of money which is recommended to be placed at the control of the Governor and Council to be secured from the bank tax, will not deprive the schools to a large extent of any benefits. The amount recommended would not upon an average deprive each school in the State of instruction for a single day—and it rests with this Legislature to say whether to accomplish the great purposes in view that day shall be given.

The number of scholars attending high schools, private schools and academies in this State, is 4,140. The number of all the scholars is fifty times larger than this—and the number attending the common schools at any one time during the season of teaching, is more than twenty times the number attending the academies, high schools and private schools. Nineteen out of twenty persons in the United States are educated in the common schools alone. But one out of twenty has any other or higher education.

These are facts that should speak to us most forcibly of the absolute and relative importance of the common schools. How many

are there of us whose memories and whose history can be safely appealed to as illustrating at the same time the importance and deficiencies of the common school—how many of those who will be called upon to decide the question that your committee will submit are there who have received none other education than the common schools have bestowed, and who while they rejoice in what they have received deplore what they have lost. Will those who now stand here regretting the disadvantages under which they have labored subject others to the same disadvantages? Will those who stand in the relation of fathers and brothers to the youth of our State, the constituted guardians of more than 200,000 scholars, disregard the interests of those scholars? They have no representatives here unless their fathers and brothers will represent them; they have no voice in legislation or representation now, but they will soon stand in these halls where we now stand to speak for themselves and prescribe the law to others; they will stand here with the enlightened and liberal characters we may choose to bestow; they are silently but rapidly approaching to administer the laws and control the State.

But the State is in debt it may be said. This appropriation adds nothing to that debt. It only diverts a small portion from one channel to another to be applied to the same purposes, and as is believed in a more beneficial manner. We are contracting no debt thereby. But there is a debt that has long been neglected, of a higher nature than any we are discharging, due to the children of this State and to the cause of freedom, and which we are bound to discharge by considerations involving the happiness of the people and the security of our institutions. You committee will close earnestly invoking the aid of the Legislature in furtherance of the views submitted.

S. HENRY CHASE, *Chairman.*

STATE OF MAINE.

IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD ONE THOUSAND EIGHT HUNDRED AND
FORTY-FIVE.

AN ACT establishing a board of commissioners of com-
mon schools.

*Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Represent-
atives in Legislature assembled—as follows :*

SECTION 1. The Governor with the advice of Coun-
cil is hereby authorized to appoint not less than three
nor more than five suitable persons who shall consti-
tute and be denominated a board of commissioners
of common schools ; said board to exist one year from
and after the first day of May next.

SEC. 2. It shall be the duty of the board to devote
themselves diligently during the time for which they
are appointed, or so much of said time as may be
necessary to the collection of all such statistics and
information as may be made to further the improve-
ment of common schools. And it shall be the duty
of the board to examine thoroughly into the condi-
tion of the common schools of this State—the diver-

•

9 sity of text books—the expediency of establishing
10 school district libraries and Normal schools, and to
11 examine into all other matters pertaining to or con-
12 nected with the common school, and to make a full
13 and specific report after a thorough investigation of
14 the whole subject matter of such plan for the better
15 organization and improvement of common schools
16 as may be deemed advisable, and upon the expedien-
17 cy of constituting a permanent board of education
18 and the mode and manner of constituting it, and the
19 power and duties thereof; such report to be made to
20 the Governor previously to the meeeting of the Leg-
21 islature of 1846.

SEC. 3. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of
2 State to cause so many copies of such report to be
3 printed and for such purposes as the Governor and
4 Council may deem advisable—reserving for the mem-
5 bers of the Legislature of 1846 not a less number
6 than 350.

SEC. 4. It shall be the duty of the Secretary of
2 State to transmit to the selectmen of the several
3 towns and the assessors of plantations of the State
4 such blanks to be filled up in such manner as the said
3 board may prescribe; and it is hereby made the duty
4 of said selectmen and assessors to make returns of
5 the condition of said schools, in conformity with the

6 forms so prescribed, to the Secretary of State, and
7 within such time as he may prescribe.

SEC. 5. A sum not exceeding two thousand five
2 hundred dollars is hereby appropriated for the forego-
3 ing purposes, to be paid out of the money accruing
4 from the bank tax, to be expended under the direc-
5 tion of the Governor and Council.

STATE OF MAINE.

IN SENATE, March 11, 1845.

ORDERED, That 2,000 copies of this report with the bill accompanying the same, be printed for the use of the Legislature.

J. O. L. FOSTER, *Secretary.*