

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. 1846.



AUGUSTA:

WM. T. JOHNSON, PRINTER TO THE STATE.

1847.

TWENTY-SIXTH LEGISLATURE.

No. 10.

SENATE.

STATE OF MAINE.

THE committee on Education, to whom was referred the memorial of Amos Brown, Philip Eastman, Alpheus S. Packard, and Samuel P. Benson, a committee appointed by a State convention of the friends of education, praying for the establishment of a board of education in this State, and for the adoption of other measures for improving the free school system, have had the same under consideration, and ask leave to report, that five hundred copies of said memorial be printed for the use of the Legislature.

E. M. THURSTON, *Chairman.*

IN SENATE, June 12, 1846.

Read and accepted.

Sent down for concurrence.

DANIEL T. PIKE, *Secretary.*

IN HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES, }
June 13, 1846. }

Read and concurred.

SAMUEL BELCHER, *Clerk.*

MEMORIAL.

*To the Honorable the Legislature
of the State of Maine.*

IN the month of January last, a convention of instructors and of the friends of popular education, was held in Augusta. The object of that convention was to consider the defects in our system of popular education, and to suggest measures for their removal. Lectures were delivered by gentlemen appointed for that purpose by a committee of a previous convention, and discussions were had, in which some of the prominent defects in our system, or in the operation of it, were exposed, and remedies suggested.

The convention found, that they could not come to a definite result on the various points, which were presented for their consideration ; and it was accordingly concluded, that the whole subject of our State system of popular education, should be submitted to a committee consisting of five individuals, who should inquire into its defects and their remedies, and address a memorial to the next Legislature on the subject, containing such suggestions as they might judge advisable.

This committee had one session in the month of February. They took a general view of the defects in our system of popular instruction, and having divided among themselves the most important topics, they agreed to address the public through the public journals on the several subjects, which had, or might, come under their notice, in order that their fellow citizens at large might be informed of what is in agitation, and might direct their attention to the topics thus presented to them. The committee are not given to a love of change ; but they are persuaded that much is needed to give ef-

iciency to our system of free schools, even as it is. They know that our State is falling behind most of the New England States in the cause of popular education, and their own state pride, as well as a desire to promote the ends of a system of public instruction, has prompted them to make, in obedience to a call of a respectable meeting of the friends of education, an effort to excite the attention of our community to the more prominent defects in our free school system, or in the proper execution of the system as it already exists.

In presenting their memorial, the committee beg leave to state to the Legislature what they consider some of the defects in our system of popular education, and in compliance with the wishes of the aforesaid convention, to suggest how these defects may be remedied. They also beg leave to state some of the circumstances and reasons, which have led them to feel the importance and necessity of the subject, and which have determined them to offer to the Legislature the propositions, which they now lay before them.

The following are the more prominent defects in our system, as they were brought under review in the convention, or subsequently in the committee :

1. Serious evils in our system of common schools arise from the multiplying of school districts. Parents wish their school to be near their own door, and for this reason alone, school districts are often divided. The town money drawn by one of the school districts in this State, was recently one dollar and fifty cents ; by another, two dollars and fifty cents. There was doubtless in each of the cases a great saving of time and exercise to the children in walking to school : but was it on the whole good economy ? It is a fair question whether a child would not be better to walk, *even in winter*, a mile and a half to a school of three or four months continuance, than ten rods to a school kept only six weeks ?

2. Great evils arise from the prevalent inefficiency of school committees. Sometimes no committee is chosen, and the town thinks it good economy to pay the fine laid by law for such neglect, rather than to pay the expenses of a school committee. School committees are often chosen without suitable care to select com-

petent men. Often, moreover, the committee do not discharge faithfully their duty as examiners of candidates for teachers, or as inspectors of the schools. No system of schools, will be effectual without vigilant inspection.

3. The want of suitable qualifications in teachers, is a great source of evil. Ignorant or inefficient teachers are employed, and even immoral men. Cheapness is often the best recommendation a candidate can offer.

4. The want of a proper classification in our schools, is a serious evil: whether it arises from the multiplication of school books, or from the want of system in the course of study. Something like a course of study with the proper text books, should be marked out and recommended by competent committees, and then the time and energies of the teachers would not be wasted, as they now are, by a great number of text books and a minute subdivision into classes. In most branches, the teaching is most effective with a number of pupils.

5. The great defect after all, is the want of a general interest in our free schools. They are not visited except in the way of office, and scarcely so. We take but little pride in them. We are not aware of their importance. A plan, which will certainly be for their advancement, may be rejected, because it may cost a community of 500,000 inhabitants, a few hundred dollars more or less, or increase the tax of an individual a cent more. These are serious defects in our State system of instruction. They may be easily remedied. Badly executed however as the system is, it is doubtless of great value. What would be its value if it were to have the full operation which was designed? Is it not worth the while to attempt to infuse into it some energy? Suppose it should cost the State something in addition to what is already paid, would not the State receive a good return in the end?

To two or three of these defects, your memorialists beg leave to refer more at large.

The duties of school committees, as provided by law, are to examine candidates for teaching, to visit the schools, and superintend the instruction and discipline pursued in them. They may pre-

scribe the books to be used ; they may dismiss incompetent teachers and refractory pupils. They are to make report to the town of the state of the schools ; and for all their services are to receive compensation. The law is a good one, and if executed in the spirit of it, and with intelligence and vigor, *so far* it will ensure good schools. But these are important conditions. If those who offer themselves as candidates to teach are thoroughly examined by competent men in regard to their qualifications to instruct and to govern, we may generally be sure of competent teachers. If the schools are regularly visited by active, intelligent committees, well versed in the duties of their office, fearless and independent, and anxious to exert the influence which their office gives, we may anticipate well managed and successful schools. But what are the facts in the case ?

Are school committees carefully selected from citizens, who cherish a lively interest in the welfare of our schools, and of such weight of character as will command respect and confidence ; or in the majority of cases, is the choice of the school committee, (a body of officers certainly as important to the town as any other) left to a few who happen to remain at the close of a town meeting, and who care but little who are chosen ? Are school masters carefully and thoroughly examined, and do the committee, without regard to the wishes of friends or neighbors, or to their own personal feelings, fearlessly and conscientiously reject such as they believe to be incompetent ? Are our schools regularly visited ?—The law requires all this, and all this is essential to the ends for which our free school system was established. The object of the law on this subject is to secure for our public schools vigilant, thorough inspection. Without such inspection the best system of schools, will fail of its end.—No seminary of any kind, can long enjoy a vigorous prosperity, without the stimulus of a competent visitorial power. Every human being needs the impulse of a sense of responsibility. How much our law fails of its object through incompetency, or unfaithfulness is well known. There are towns, which have omitted altogether to choose school committees. The fine imposed by law for this neglect, has been paid again and again on the score of econo-

my. It was stated in convention at Augusta, that one town had instructed their school committee to discharge all their duties *except that of visiting the schools*, and this, it is probable, to save the expense of such visitation.

Again, as it regards the examination of teachers, in how many towns is this examination a mere farce? In how many do they omit even the form of examination? So long as this is so, it is useless to speak of a standard of qualification for teachers,—there is no such standard. Many teachers are employed in this State, who are wholly incompetent to teach any one branch usually taught in our schools. It could not be so, if the law, even as it is, were executed.

We have provided, that public instruction shall be *general*, but that does not ensure its being *good*. The *diffusion* of education is one thing, its *quality*, another. The law requires that candidates for teaching “shall be well qualified to instruct youth in reading, in writing the English language grammatically, in arithmetic and other branches usually taught in public schools.” What is it to be well qualified? It is idle for a person to attempt to teach a branch with which he is not familiar. A stammering, blundering reader, is not qualified to teach boys to read; one who has merely *ciphered* through an arithmetic, is not qualified to teach arithmetic,—nor is one, who has passed through Pope’s *Essay*, of course qualified to teach grammar. The teacher should have mastered his branch so that he can promptly detect the difficulties which embarrass the scholar—and readily and skillfully illustrate and explain. His ear should be as quick to detect an error in reading, or grammar, &c., as the ear of a musician a discord. The teacher should be far above his pupils in knowledge, or he will not command their respect. No parent would send his son to learn carpentry of a man who has but half learned his trade. Yet teachers are often employed, who have not half learned the branches they profess to teach. This is a fatal evil in our system of schools. No laws, no influence will make a good school, if the teacher be incompetent. And this evil will continue to weaken the efficiency of our schools,

so long as half taught young men and women, can procure certificates.

What are the evils of having incompetent teachers? The public money is wasted. The money is raised for the purposes of instruction, which, under incompetent teachers, the children do not receive. Errors are inculcated. An incompetent teacher will teach his scholars many things which they will be obliged to unlearn. Under such a teacher, the children will not be stimulated—there can be no progress. Pupils must of course be shut up to the field of the knowledge of the teacher—their minds then will be cramped—there can be no advance or expansion among them. The condition of the school, moreover, will act upon the district. You may judge of the one by the other. A district or town which has badly managed schools, will soon make that defect manifest to the passers by. Now if we would ensure vigorous intellectual growth in a school and in a community, (*for the character of a community depends on that of its schools,*) we must, for one thing, have competent teachers.

But the great evil arising from incompetent teachers is that they bring the free school system into contempt. The object of our free school system is to educate the public mind. It should furnish an education sufficient for the wants of the community at large. But the pernicious practice of cutting up a town into small districts—and of employing incompetent teachers (and this last practice is a direct and unavoidable consequence of the former) injures the public schools—and gives rise to private schools. Short *public schools and poor teachers render it necessary (for those who are able,) to employ private teachers in all our towns and villages.* The consequence is, that the children of the poor are kept in the free schools, while those of the more wealthy are sent to private schools. Before long, we shall have the great mischief become general, of a separation between the rich and the poor, springing out of the mismanagement of our free school system. This ought not, it must not be. It makes education more expensive, without making it in reality any better, than is designed by our free school system.

During the last century some of the best men Scotland could boast of, were reared in the parish schools. In many towns in New England, the public schools now give as good an education, as is to be obtained in any private school.

Allusion has not yet been made to the moral qualifications of a teacher. What parent would send his children to a school, where the teacher was known to have an infectious disease? Better do that, than place them under one that is low, vulgar and impure. If the teacher is corrupt, however fair may be his appearance and manner, his corruption will show itself, and will affect his pupils. Says Mr. Mann: "if none but teachers of pure taste, of good manners, of exemplary morals, had ever gained admission into our schools, neither the school rooms, nor their appurtenances would have been polluted, as some of them now are, with such ribald inscriptions and with the carving of such obscene emblems, as would make a heathen blush."

Again, every practical teacher knows that he can teach better, and pupils will learn faster, when his school is properly classed. Any one may perceive that if any instructor should undertake to teach his pupils one by one, he would expend both time and labor at great disadvantage. The advantages of system in a school are quite as important as in a manufactory. But what system can avail much with a teacher, if he has as many separate recitations, as there are pupils? A man can instruct a dozen with more ease to himself and with more effect on his pupils than he can the dozen, one by one. The instruction given to one will answer just as well for a dozen, with this advantage, that in the latter case it is given with more spirit and vivacity. A teacher, that is stupid with a bright and intelligent class before him, must be a dolt. In all our higher institutions, they teach in classes. Why not so in our common schools? The first object then of parents and committees should be to aid the teacher in classifying his school. He will then work to the best advantage.

But how is it? Here is a school where there are half a dozen reading books, as many spelling books, as many arithmetics, as many geographies. What classification can be effected in that

school? Would it not be decidedly better to have all of the same rank in arithmetic and geography and grammar, placed in the same class, that they may stimulate each other, and receive the benefit of the undivided attention of the teacher to that particular branch, at a particular hour? If the six in one branch have different text books, they manifestly can each have, at most, but one sixth of the attention from the teacher, which they would have if they all recited together. “Without *uniformity* in books,” says Mr. Mann, “*classification is impossible, and whatever defeats classification, destroys the power of the teacher.*”

Such are a part only of the defects which might be enumerated. They are however important defects, which cripple, and which, if uncorrected, must eventually destroy an instrumentality that is fraught with the richest blessings to our whole community. The schools of our cities and of some of our larger towns, it is admitted, constitute to a good degree, exceptions to the whole class throughout the State. Within a few years, this portion of them have made advancement and have undergone valuable changes. In the aggregate, these however, are but an inconsiderable portion of the whole number. Generally, our free schools remain unimproved and apparently unregarded. Especially is this true of those situated in the remote and poor and thinly peopled districts. “But the buds of genius are scattered as bountifully in these remote districts as elsewhere. On the rough hills and among the sterile fields, the noblest of plants, the human soul, springs with as divine capacities, and if kindly and skillfully nurtured, will expand with as large and vigorous a growth, as in any of the most favored regions; nay more, the very absence of the softness and luxuries of life will give an inward vigor and sturdiness most favorable to the highest talents and the best virtues. But a kindly nurture they require. Good schools they must have. How shall these schools be reached?”

That something should be done to render effective the means of education now in use in the State, and to provide increased facilities to promote it, is a sentiment very generally admitted. This we infer from the fact that repeated recommendations of legislative

action on this subject, by different governors of the State, have been favorably regarded; from the instructions of the pulpit and the press; from public addresses on education, and from resolutions emanating from conventions held at different times and places to consider and mourn over deficiencies which they could do but little to remedy. And that this life-giving and life-infusing process must originate in legislation of some sort, is probably a sentiment equally prevalent with the former.

In these sentiments, we believe the Legislature most deeply sympathize. We dare not impute to them the inconsistency of making a liberal provision for the development of the material resources of the State, in its mineral and vegetable treasures, and yet remaining indifferent to the infinitely greater treasures, the whole intellectual and moral resources of its future population. What agency, if we except that of religion, is of equal value to man with education, whether it be positively or relatively considered? Positively considered, it early impresses man with a sense of human dignity; rescues him from that state of degradation to which he is doomed unless redeemed by it, unfolds his physical, intellectual and moral powers, and fixes his eye on that moral worth, which through the narrow vista of human nature, leads him to catch distant glimpses of an almighty and infinite goodness. Or expressed in another form, man is the creature of habit; by practice, he becomes fitted for spheres of action for which he was previously unfitted. Exercise develops, strengthens and beautifies his powers. It enlarges his conceptions, expands his memory and invigorates his judgment; it elevates reason and gives energy to conscience. It is not however, random practice, nor every kind of exercise, that accomplishes these results; but exercise put forth in accordance with the laws of mind; well directed, well timed and well proportioned exertion. Whatever then, mind itself is worth in its capacities to conceive, remember, reason and reflect; to feel, to enjoy and to will, that is education, positively considered, worth.

Relatively considered, a comparison of the savage that roams through the forest, with an enlightened inhabitant of a civilized country, would be a brief, but an impressive representation of its

importance. Well disciplined mind subserves our interests and our happiness. It traces out and elucidates those principles which form the basis of those rules that regulate practice. It constructs sciences, promotes the arts, stimulates to industry, and furnishes motives to economy and virtue. As then, we prize the great principles of religion and of morality; of law and of civil polity; of music and painting and poetry; as we prize the arts of navigation, manufactures, and agriculture; as we value well regulated society and well administered laws; an appropriate and a refined language, cultivated taste and polished manners, so ought we to prize education in this latter sense—in its importance to the State. Certainly is this true in a government like ours, where the people is the sovereign power; where the will of the people is the law of the land; which will is openly and directly expressed; and where every act of the government may justly be called the act of the people. Our republic may justly be said to be founded on the intelligence and virtue of the people. With much propriety has Montesquieu said, “in a republic the whole force of education is required.”

In their recent report to the Legislature of that State, the board of education in Massachusetts express themselves to this effect: If you would make the citizens of the State virtuous and happy, educate. If you would promote commerce, agriculture and manufactures, educate. If you would give stability to law, and prevent those hurtful mistakes into which men so often fall in the conduct of their affairs, whether civil, ecclesiastical, or domestic, educate.

The soundness of these views is susceptible of illustration, and they apply to ourselves no less directly, than to those for whom they were originally intended. Already to a great extent, the people of Maine are a mechanical people; and from our position, the character of our climate and soil, from the fact that peculiar advantages of various descriptions exist for this species of industry, it may be safely inferred that we shall become yet greatly more so. “Our pecuniary well being as a people, the individual competence and independence of our citizens, will depend more and more upon this department of industrial labor.” There is that withholdeth more than is meet and tendeth to poverty, and there is that scatter-

eth and yet increaseth. It is idle to believe that any outlay of money for the proper education of our youth would be treasure lost, like water spilt on the ground. Such an investment of their means would be the most profitable which our citizens could make, yeilding them some thirty, some sixty, and some an hundred fold.

Fortunately we are not left to conjecture, nor speculation in this matter. The art of printing was invented at about the commencement of the fourteenth century. In speaking of the period preceding that time, Dr. Priestly remarks: "If we only for a moment, imagine ourselves in the place of our ancestors, we cannot help fancying it to be almost impossible for us to have lived with any comfort." The best method of making ourselves fully sensible of the real value which we derive from improvements in the sciences and the arts, is to endeavor to form clear ideas of the condition of mankind before these improvements took place.

We think ourselves very happy when we have a comfortable fire in a private sitting room or bed chamber; but we should think ourselves much more so, if we considered how lately it is that any such convenience could be had; and that in all times of antiquity, there was only one hearth belonging to any house, placed in the middle of a large hall, from which the smoke, ascending in the middle, went out of a hole in the top of the room; and particularly, if we considered that all the habitations of the English were formerly nothing better than the huts of the Scotch Highlanders and the Irish peasantry, at this day. Chimneys were not general till about the time of Elizabeth. In the fourteenth century, candles were reckoned an article of luxury—shirts were made of serge—linen worn only by persons of distinction, and there were no such things as either chimneys or stoves. The first coach was seen in England in the reign of queen Mary.

One of the chief sources of the great wealth of England is her manufactories, and the connection of philosophy with the improvement of these, is shown by the following fact: From 1771 to 1780, before the invention of the spinning jenny, the amount of raw cotton annually imported into England, was on an average, 5,735,000 pounds only; but from 1817 to 1821, the amount was

about 144,000,000 pounds, of which 130,000,000 were worked up in that country. To which increase, the invention of the spinning jenny is supposed to have contributed entirely.

It is but a little more than two hundred years since the soil of Massachusetts was covered with a dense forest—the abode of savage beasts and more savage men ; but these have passed away. In the place of the forest, have sprung up flourishing cities and towns and villages containing a population more distinguished for intelligence, and all that subserves our various wants, than any other people on the globe. In that state more than eighty five thousand persons are engaged in manufactures and trades, which number represents a population of at least three hundred thousand, or six-fifteenths of all the inhabitants of the commonwealth, the annual income of whose labor is about \$90,000,000.

We marvel at such results ; but they are not causeless. Among the first settlers of that colony, were men of sagacity and of far reaching prudence ; men who loved their race, and who could forego, if need be, a present enjoyment for a greater future good. Then men taxed themselves for the support of learning in the commonwealth to a degree, which tried by the standard of modern benevolence, seems to us like an imaginary tale.

For the support of her common schools, Massachusetts expended the last year \$1,000,000. With a territory many times larger, and a population about equal, we expended during the same time, for the same cause, probably not more than \$300,000.

As a people we are largely engaged in navigating the ocean ; consequently in foreign and domestic commerce ; and to the successful performance of these branches of *business* is needful a familiar knowledge of the sciences of navigation, geometry and book-keeping. We are likewise extensively a farming community ; and that our soil may be made to produce the largest amount with the least labor, an acquaintance with the sciences of chemistry, geology, mineralogy and botany, is essential.

In ancient times, in certain countries bordering on the Mediterranean and Red seas, the people had attained to a high state of intellectual advancement. These nations were also skilled in many

of the arts, and to a considerable degree in husbandry. About the fifth century of the Christian era, the Roman empire, which had for more than five hundred years extended over the known world, was destroyed. Consequent upon which, a thousand years of depression and ruin overspread society; in which scarcely a vestige of human effort remains worthy the attention or imitation of succeeding ages. Now respecting this deplorable result, Mr. Hallam writes: "In tracing the decline of society from the subversion of the Roman empire, we have been led, not without connection, *from ignorance to superstition, from superstition to vice and lawlessness, and from thence to general rudeness and poverty.*"

What is not seen may be thought not to exist, and causes which produce the most beneficial results, are oftentimes the least noticed.

Few can connect the present with the past, and see in what is, that which has been. To many, doubtless, the revival of learning and the invention of printing, seem to be events of ordinary importance only, limited in their influence to the period of their origin — at all events, to the few whose thoughts are exercised chiefly by such matters. "When ignorance is bliss, 'tis folly to be wise."

Well would it be however if the want of knowledge could prevent the evil consequences resulting from it.

At the period when so great was the ignorance which prevailed, that persons of the most distinguished rank could neither read nor write; when even many of the clergy did not understand the breviary, which they were daily accustomed to recite, and which some of them could scarcely read; when history was but a record of legendary and of fabulous tales, and philosophy but a medley of scholastic jargon;—at this period precisely, it was, we are told, that *the "culture of the land was very imperfect," and that commerce had scarcely an existence.*

Priestly, in his lectures on history, says: "It is but since queen Elizabeth's time, that the English have had any settled notions about agriculture." Mr. Hartlib, to whom Milton dedicated his treatise on education, says, that old men in his days, remembered the first gardeners who came over to Surry and sold turnips, carrots, parsnips, early peas and rape, which were then a great rarity, being imported from Holland. They introduced at that time, the plant-

ing of cabbages and digging the ground for garden stuffs. Cherries and hops were first planted in the reign of Henry VIII; and apples were still brought from France, also onions from Spain.

In the beginning of the fourteenth century, the inhabitants around the Mediterranean sea, first steered into the Atlantic ocean, towards England and France. What diverted almost the whole course of trade out of its former channel, and makes the most remarkable revolution in the whole history of commerce, says the writer last mentioned, was the discovery of a passage to the East Indies round the Cape of Good Hope by the Portuguese, and to America by the Spaniards. These discoveries they were enabled to make by means of the COMPASS, which then (about the year fourteen hundred) first began to be applied to navigation.

Your memorialists might proceed to illustrate this close connection so evidently subsisting between an increase of learning and that of temporal gain, gratifications and security, in other kindred relations;—to show that education is one of the principal sources of civilization—that it is the handmaid of religion, and in fact the very pillar of social organization, since it discovers the rules of justice and practically gives them their sanction;—to show also, its influence in promoting domestic order, purity and bliss; in curtailing crime, in breaking down factitious distinctions, in elevating woman, and in harmonizing interests, which are too often conflicting and discordant.

But not to press this train of remark, they would turn the attention of the Legislature, to what may be done to remedy the evils which have been by them set forth.

What shall the remedy be?

If in efforts to promote education, Maine has done less, than some of her sister States; for the wisdom of most of her statute regulations touching this matter, there is, nevertheless, good cause of congratulation.

These regulations seem to us deficient, that is, limited within too narrow a sphere, rather than erroneous, either in their principles or in their practical tendencies. And moreover, we are impressed with the conviction, that it is not so much the formation of a new

system of education, which is now requisite to answer the ends of legislation on this subject, as the enlargement and improvement of that which already exists.

The convention of Education in Augusta, the last winter, passed for substance, the following resolution: That the time has come for the establishment of a board of education in the State, and that its establishment should be demanded of the Legislature, with a power and energy which will not be resisted. The language employed in this resolution by the convention, is expressive of their deep sense of the utility of the measure which they recommend. They evidently regarded it as a fundamental measure; as the measure upon which the utility of others, tending to the same effect, will mainly depend. From the opinion of the convention, the committee cannot dissent; and they are induced to propose the resolution to the Legislature, asking for it deliberation.

Nor must the language in which it is couched, be understood as intending to cast invidious reflections on past legislation, or to be in any way disparaging to ourselves. It was intended to be only, the earnest expression of fact.

The time has come, say the convention. As a state we have existed scarcely more than a quarter of a century; and to have imposed burdensome taxes upon the people at the outset, for the support of a good cause even, would doubtless have proved impolitic. Besides, means of advancing the cause of learning, which a few years since were considered of doubtful tendency, have been found to be highly advantageous. Instead therefore of attempting to advance by the uncertain light of untried theory, we may now do so by the light of theory justified by experiment.

The time has come, the convention repeat, when those who have the power to act must be urgently solicited to act.

The arguments in favor of this measure, have some of them, been already adduced. They are found in the defects of the practical operations of our school system, and also in the positive and relative worth of education itself.

That these arguments will be appreciated, we confidently believe. "We believe, that upon the importance of free schools—an institu-

tion, which in its action, comes home to the mind of every child in the State; which does or may do more than any other, to bring out his powers, to furnish him with good knowledge, to form his character, to give him noble aims, and to fit him in all ways for his duties as a citizen and a man, and for his whole future existence—any statement we could make would fall far short of the truth, and of the convictions of the wise and patriotic citizens who represent the people of the State.”

If the foundation be insecure, how shall the fabric stand? and, if other interests of far less value, are deemed of sufficient importance to engage the attention and efforts of persons designated to the service, why shall this be treated with less respect, and be left to a more casual or uncertain supervision?

Another argument in favor of this measure is, that wherever a board of education has been established, whether in Europe or this country, it has proved to be highly beneficial. Prussia, in respect to her schools, is the admiration of all intelligent travelers. The same is true to a degree, of France and Holland. In Prussia, as early as the reign of Elector Joachim the second (1546), visitors were appointed to inspect the town schools of the electorate, with express directions to report in relation to the measures deemed necessary for their improvement. These appointments have been renewed by succeeding rulers, at various times, till the present.

Referring to this and kindred exertions in that country, President Bache, who had for a considerable time resided there, inquires:

What is the real social result of all this? How has it affected the population—for good or for ill? How is it likely to affect them for the future? The narratives given by Pestalozzi, De Fellenberg, Oberlin, and Pere Girard, of the singular revolution, mental and moral, I may also add physical, effected by the application of their system of teaching on a hitherto ignorant and vicious population, though admitted to be isolated experiments, ought not the less to be considered evidences of the intrinsic force of the instrument itself, and of its power to produce similar results wherever and whenever fairly tried, without reference to country or numbers; that is, whenever applied with the same earnestness, honesty, and

skill in other instances as in theirs. And of this portion of Prussia, of the Rhenish province, it may be surely averred, that it has now been for some time, under the influence of this system, and that during that period, whether resulting from such influence or not, its progress in intelligence, industry and morality—in the chief elements of virtue and happiness, has been steadily and strikingly progressive. In few parts of civilized Europe is there more marked exemption from all crimes of violence than in this happy land; not only from those graver delinquencies which stain the calenders of the more luxurious states of Europe, but even from those minor offenses against the person, such as riot, assault, &c., from which none scarcely are to be wholly excepted. The safety of the public roads, contrasted with their notorious insecurity in many parts of England, is supported by unequivocal facts. The same abstinence from offenses against property is conspicuous in towns. I have already had occasion to refer to the comparative rarity of theiving amongst the lower classes, especially to the diminution of the offense in that very class and age most subject to it in England, and most likely to be influenced by the want or supply, the badness or goodness of education. There is not only little amount of crime and juvenile offenders, but this amount and number are progressively diminishing. Doubtless much of this most gratifying result may be ascribed to comfort and employment. But this again must be ascribed to some still higher cause. There is comfort because there is frugality; there is employment because there is the desire and search and love of it. There is industry, incessant, universal, in every class, from high to low; because there are the early habits of useful occupation, and there are these habits, because there is sound and general education. In all those relations of life where truth, honor, confidence, and mutual kindness are most required—where fraud is most easy, but most injurious—where reciprocal good faith is of such import, but so easily disturbed—in all pecuniary, especially in all commercial transactions, the “*Deutsche Treue*” is more than ever proverbial. A promise is a bond—a word, an oath. The clergyman admitted that his flock had not become worse christians for becoming more intelligent men; the officer,

that his men had grown more obedient, as they had grown more instructed—a word now led where a cane formerly was insufficient; the farmer, for the increased profits of his farm, as the manufacturer for those of his factory, thanked the school. Skill had increased and conduct had improved with knowledge; profits with both. Even household management had reaped its advantage, when the first vanity and presumption arising out of the partial nature of instruction had worn off—when it had become general, sound, and appropriate. The servant, especially the female servant, was not less faithful, and had become far more useful than before.

In Massachusetts, a board of education has existed for a period of about eight years. At recent interviews with intelligent gentlemen of that State, the following have been stated as some of the beneficial results of that organization.

An increased interest in the subject of education among the people of the State generally. As an evidence of this, works on education are more read than formerly; lectures on this subject are more popular; schools are more the topic of conversation at social gatherings and in public conveyances; they have assumed greater importance in the transaction of town affairs; school committees are selected with more caution, the election usually turning in favor of the most intelligent, discreet, and high minded men; schools are more often visited by parents and others; the office of teacher is more respected. Another result is, that the qualification of teachers has been greatly advanced and greater pains are taken by teachers to keep themselves informed on all matters relating to their employment. The government of schools is more effective, at the same time its severity has been greatly diminished; teaching is more practical and thorough; a better classification of scholars and greater uniformity of text books, have been secured. Through the influence of district libraries, a taste for appropriate and useful books has been extensively induced; *the length of schools has been increased on an average one month*; school houses have been essentially improved. In some of the more populous towns, elegant edifices have been erected for this use, at an expense of eight and ten thousand dollars each. And, what is worthy of remark,

all these results have followed, while yet the taxes for the support of schools have not been materially increased.

A board of supervision has also for some time existed in New York ; and assurances are given by many of the most intelligent and influential men there, that this agency has effected results no less important in New York than in Massachusetts. Similar reports are made of the effects of this instrumentality in Ohio and in Rhode Island.

Two questions respecting the subject of the establishment of a State board of education, claim brief attention ; to which the further consideration of the Legislature is respectfully solicited.

The first. What shall be the duties of this agency when elected ? And the second ; by what method shall it be elected ?

The duties of the board cannot be legislative, but must be suggestive, advisory and executive entirely. The board must be a servant, acting from derived powers, and not from those which are self-originated ; or if at all so, to a very limited extent. A specification of its duties might include the following : The devising of means for the improvement of teachers, and for the formation of better teachers ; the imparting of instruction to those interested on these subjects—on the position, construction and furniture of school houses, and the recommending of ways by which schools may be encouraged. It might also come within the duties of the board, to make suggestions upon the subjects of discipline, classification, &c. ; and in these respects as well as others, to endeavor to secure among the several schools of the State, concert of action ; to collect and present to the Legislature, the experience of other States, and foreign countries on subjects interesting to the common schools.

“ From a knowledge of the condition and wants of the agricultural and manufacturing population of the State, the board could do much towards enabling the Legislature to determine the question whether any thing can be done, better to adapt the instruction given in common schools to their wants, or whether separate institutions may with advantage, be established. The board might also determine the questions, whether further instruction in the useful arts can be introduced into all our schools ; and whether a higher

moral influence can be exercised, thus to do something more to prevent the crimes, which it now costs the State so much to punish.”

The second and third sections of the law of 1837, on the subject of the duties of the Massachusetts' board of education, read thus: “The board of education shall prepare and lay before the Legislature in a printed form, on or before the second Wednesday of January, annually, an abstract of the school returns received by the secretary of the commonwealth, and the said board of education may appoint their own secretary, who shall receive a reasonable compensation for his services, and who shall, under the direction of the board, collect information of the actual condition and efficiency of the common schools and other means of popular education, and diffuse as widely as possible throughout every part of the commonwealth, information of the most approved and successful methods of arranging the studies and conducting the education of the young, to the end that all children in this commonwealth who depend upon common schools for instruction, may have the best education, which those schools can be made to impart.

“The board of education annually, shall make a detailed report to the Legislature of all its 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.”

What should be the mode of electing a State board of education, is an important question.

On this point we may be permitted, we hope, to speak freely; we would not be misunderstood. In nothing, which we say, do we intend to impeach in the slightest degree, either the wisdom or the fidelity of those, who now, in any manner, represent the government.

The first qualification of men elected to this office should be fitness to discharge the duties of it, alike as it respects their literary qualifications, their ability to think calmly, and to judge discretely, and their deep interest in the cause, which it is made their duty to superintend.

A second qualification should be freedom from political bias, and from sectarian tendency, to that degree certainly, which will give security that the board shall never be prostituted, in any sense, to party purposes.

The objection to entrusting this electing power to the Governor and Council, or to the Legislature, would be, that, in many minds a suspicion would be raised that it might not always be judiciously exercised, and that the board might at length degenerate into an organ of church, or of State, perhaps both.

If the choice were made by the popular vote immediately, no greater certainty could be afforded of obtaining judicious and interested persons for the office.

Should the board be empowered to perpetuate itself, its independency might deprive it of sympathy.

A mode of electing this body, to which many would give preference, among others the Hon. H. Mann, secretary of the board of education of Mass., would be to refer the election to persons, who had been themselves elected by the people specifically for that object. The electors might be the chairmen of the school committees of the several towns, who might be empowered and required to meet annually, or at longer intervals, at some central place in each county to discharge their duty.

Besides to a good degree, obviating objections, to which the other modes seem liable, there would be advantages connected with this, which could not attach to them. There are, in the State, thirteen counties, containing in all about three hundred and sixty towns. By this method, consequently, there would be annually collected, or as often as might be thought best, more than three hundred men in thirteen distinct associations.

Now if these gatherings occurred in different years, or at different periods of the same year, opportunity would be given for the agent of the board to be present at each of them, when he might accurately ascertain by reports, or otherwise, the actual condition of towns respecting their educational efforts, and when having got this knowledge, he might impart valuable suggestions, and advice as to methods of greater improvements, or of removing apathy.

These assemblies might be empowered to decide many important questions pertaining to the welfare of the schools in their several counties. Such as for example, the branches of studies to be pursued in schools; books to be recommended, in what branches teachers shall be examined; how such examinations shall be conducted, and what shall be considered necessary qualifications of a teacher.

They might also discuss subjects pertaining to the districting of towns; to raising of moneys for the support of schools; and numberless others of a kindred nature.

These occasions would likewise afford convenient opportunities for holding county conventions of education, when teachers and others interested in the advancement of learning, might come together to devise ways and means for the fulfilment of their desires.

Moved by these considerations, your memorialists respectfully pray you to consider the expediency of appointing a board of education, and of devising such other means as in your wisdom shall seem best, for the benefit of our free school system.

AMOS BROWN.

PHILIP EASTMAN.

A. S. PACKARD.

SAMUEL P. BENSON.