

339
57
y 1

ADDRESS

MADE AT THE

CELEBRATION

OF THE

Centennial Anniversary

OF THE

Settlement of Cazenovia, N. Y.,

ON

“School Day,” June 13, 1893,

BY

CHARLES STEBBINS,

Clerk of the Board of Education.



From Author.

‡ ADDRESS ‡

—MADE AT THE—

CELEBRATION

—OF THE—

Centennial Anniversary

—OF THE—

Settlement of Cazenovia, N. Y.,

—ON—

“School Day,” June 13, 1893,

—BY—

CHARLES STEBBINS,

Clerk of the Board of Education.

A339
C+57

PRESSES OF
THE CAZENOVIA REPUBLICAN,
1893.

The Development of the Common School System of the State of New York.

At the time of the settlement of Cazenovia, there were no common schools in the state of New York, nor was there any provisions for them.

And this, although the first public schools in America were established in the state of New York.

In 1631, when the States General of Holland committed the government of the infant colony of New Amsterdam to the Dutch West India Company, it was enjoined that the colony should "find speedy means to maintain a clergyman and a schoolmaster," and it was required that "each householder and inhabitant should bear such tax and public charge as should be considered proper for their maintenance." Four years later, the expenses of the schoolmaster were three hundred and sixty florins, or about one hundred and fifty dollars, no mean sum for those days. In 1664, when the colony was surrendered to the English, every considerable settlement had a public school, taught by more or less permanent teachers, and supported largely or wholly, at the public expense.

With the advent of English rule, all this was changed. The policy of the English governors was to discourage the education of the common people, the rulers being apprehensive that common schools would nourish and strengthen a spirit of independence, which had even then made con-

siderable headway. Not only was the public aid withdrawn from the common schools, but the instructions from the home government to the colonial governors uniformly provided, that no person should be permitted to come from England to teach, even in a private school, without a license from the Archbishop of Canterbury, and that no person here should do so without the license of the governor. It is true that in 1702, an act was passed entitled "An act for the encouragement of a grammar free school in the city of New York," but this bill was passed while the Dutch element was still strong if not predominant and the governor and council refused to approve the measure until it was amended, so as to require that the teacher should be licensed by the bishop of London, or by the governor of the province. When by the terms of this act, its provisions expired at the end of seven years, it was not renewed. Thereafter there were no common schools in the colony of New York.

Under the colonial government, however, Kings, (afterwards Columbia) College, and several academies were founded.

Immediately after the Revolutionary war, that greatest of New York's governors, George Clinton, said to the legislature of 1784, "There is scarce anything more worthy of your attention than the revival and encouragement of seminaries of learning." In that year, the legislature passed an act creating the Board of Regents of the University. The members of this board were the very foremost citizens of the state. The Regents had jurisdiction only over colleges and academies, and had no responsibility concerning elementary schools. Yet in 1787 the board transmitted to the legislature a report containing the following recommendations, probably drafted by Hamilton.

"But before your committee conclude, they feel themselves bound in faithfulness to add, that the erecting of public schools for teaching reading, writing and arithmetic is

an object of very great importance, which ought not to be left to the discretion of private men, but should be promoted by public authority. Of so much knowledge, no citizen ought to be destitute, and yet it is a reflection, as true as it is painful, that too many of our youth are brought up in utter ignorance. This is a reproach under which we have long laboured, unmoved by the examples of our neighbors, who, not leaving the education of their children to chance, have widely diffused throughout their state a public provision for such instruction. Your committee are sensible that the Regents are invested with no funds of which they have the disposal, but they nevertheless conceive it to be their duty to bring the subject before the honorable the legislature, who alone can provide a remedy.”

The legislature paid no heed to this appeal.

Six years after this, and just one hundred years ago, the Regents recurred to this matter urgently, and in their reports of 1793, 1794 and 1795, strongly pressed the subject. In the latter year the old governor spoke to the legislature in this wise:

“While it is evident that the general establishment and liberal endowment of academies are highly to be commended and are attended with the most beneficial consequences, yet it cannot be denied that they are principally confined to the children of the opulent, and that a great portion of the community is excluded from their immediate advantages. The establishment of common schools throughout the state is happily calculated to remedy this inconvenience, and will therefore engage your early and decided consideration.”

These representations produced from the legislature of 1795 an act entitled, “An act for the encouragement of schools.” It appropriated \$100,000 each year for five years from the state treasury for the purpose of encouraging and maintaining schools in the several cities and towns of this state,

in which the children of the inhabitants residing in the state shall be instructed in the English language, or be taught English grammar, arithmetic, mathematics and such other branches of knowledge as are most useful and necessary to complete a good education." The sum appropriated was munificent, when we consider that the assessed value of the property in the state was but \$100,000,000 and that the state was heavily in debt. In addition to the state appropriation, each town was required to raise by tax one half as much money as it received from the state. This generous action had great and immediate effect. Three years after the passage of the act, or in 1798, there were within the state 1,352 common schools with 59,660 pupils.

Still there was provided no general control or supervision of the schools. It was left to the people of the several towns, to organize school districts, erect school houses and maintain schools.

The annual appropriation of \$100,000 expired by the terms of the act in 1800, and, owing to a difference of opinion in the legislature as to the propriety of providing for a system of state superintendence, it was not renewed.

The several governors in each of the five succeeding years brought the subject of common schools to the attention of the legislature, until in 1805 acts were passed creating a permanent common school fund, and from that time the common school system has, in spite of some neglect and many set-backs, on the whole grown in strength and usefulness.

In the first decade of this century, many acts were passed for the encouragement of common schools in particular localities, some providing for the raising of money by local taxation, some by setting apart for the purposes of schools particular local funds, such as the excise fund. Notable among these acts, was one passed in 1805 incorporating DeWitt Clinton and others, as "The society for es-

tablishing a free school in the city of New York for the education of such poor children as do not belong to, or are not provided for by any religious society," a corporation which had control of the common schools of New York city until 1853.

Up to 1812, all the acts passed by the legislature were for the *encouragement* of public schools; the *establishment* and government of the schools was left to the discretion of the towns and the zeal of the inhabitants.

In 1812, the time had come when the state government was ready to *command* the founding of common schools throughout the state and to provide imperitatively for enabling every child in the state to have at least the rudiments of an education. So, on the 19th day of June 1812, was enacted "An act for the establishment of schools". A State Superintendent of Common Schools was to be appointed, with an annual salary of three hundred dollars, who was to have the general charge of the common schools of the state and to distribute the public school monies among the several counties. In each town, Commissioners of Common Schools were to be elected at town meeting, whose duty it was to divide the towns into school districts, and to call upon the inhabitants of each district to meet for the purpose of organizing the districts, for the election of trustees, and to provide for the erection of a school house and the maintenance of the school. Inspectors of schools were also to be elected in each town, whose duty it was to examine and license teachers and to visit schools.

Gideon Hawley, then a young lawyer in Albany, was appointed State Superintendent, and owing to his energy and ability, the new system was put into successful operation throughout the state in an almost incredibly short space of time. Since that time, every child in the state has had an opportunity of obtaining the rudiments of an education.

In 1821, the office of State Superintendent was abolished,

and its duties devolved upon the Secretary of State. This action, which, at the time, it was feared would be disastrous to the interests of the common schools, proved to be, on the whole, beneficial, owing entirely to the zeal and eminent ability of the four great men, who from 1826 to 1845 occupied the chair of Secretary of State—Azariah C. Flagg, John A. Dix, John C. Spencer and Samuel Young. To Henry S. Randall, also, Secretary of State in 1852 and 1853, the common school system owes a debt of gratitude for his invaluable service in its behalf. In 1854 the Department of Public Instruction was created. In 1841, the office of County Superintendent of Common Schools was created, and it was abolished in 1847. The offices of Town Commissioner and Town Inspector were abolished in 1843 and the office of Town Superintendent was created. In 1856 the latter office was abolished and the office of District Commissioner was created. Thus we have had supervision of the common schools by state officers since 1812, by county or district officers from 1841 to 1847 and from 1856 to the present time, and by town officers from 1795 to 1856.

At present the system is highly centralized, owing to the vast powers, original and appellate, which from time to time have been vested in the Department of Public Instruction. The Superintendent of Public Instruction is now the most powerful officer in the state. Practically, he has complete control of every school officer and every teacher in the state. His hand reaches into the remotest school district, and from his mandate there is no effectual appeal, even to the courts. It is but just to say these great powers have not been abused, but have been exercised with the greatest wisdom and vigor, and have never been prostituted to personal aggrandizement or political advancement. To Abram B. Weaver, State Superintendent from 1833 to 1874; to Neil Gilmour, Superintendent from 1874 to 1883; and to Andrew S. Draper, who held the same office from 1886 to

1892, from whose address delivered before the State Teachers' Association in 1890. many of the foregoing facts are quoted, we owe, in a great measure, the existing admirable system for the training and examination of teachers and for the vigilant superintendence of the schools and school officers.

The first Normal School for the training of teachers in this state was founded at Albany in 1844, and the second at Oswego in 1863. There are now within the state eleven of these institutions, and their influence in raising the standard of qualifications for teaching cannot well be over estimated. Not only have those teachers who have attended those schools been greatly benefited, but their indirect influence has been in the highest degree beneficent. Indeed it may be said, that the effect of these schools has largely tended to elevate the business of common school teaching to the dignity of a profession, instead of being a make-shift for earning a living in the intervals between other avocations.

In 1849, the policy was adopted providing for the instruction of classes in academies in the science and practice of common school teaching, thus giving at a small expense much needed and useful training to a very large number of common school teachers.

The first Teachers' Institute was held in Tompkins county in 1843, by the School Commissioner with an attendance of twenty eight members. It was a local enterprise, and received no aid from the state. In 1847, the legislature appropriated the sum of sixty dollars for the use and benefit of Teachers' Institutes. From this small beginning has arisen the existing system with its staff of instructors, its elaborate methods, and its very large application. The Teachers' Institute, besides bringing to the knowledge of teachers the latest methods in pedagogy, and the latest improvement in school books and apparatus, are invaluable occasions for the exchange of ideas and for the inspiring of

the *esprit du corps* which is so necessary in a lonely profession. The establishment in recent years of the "Regents examinations" for the scholars, and of uniform examinations for the teachers, have done very much for the cause of education.

In glancing at the development of the common school system in this state, two striking facts force themselves upon our attention. The first is the steady advance towards the centralization of power. One hundred years ago, all elementary schools were private affairs, receiving no aid from the state, and subject to no control or even supervision. In 1795 and 1805 common schools were encouraged by state aid, but their establishment was left to local action and there was no supervision. By the act of 1812, the state compelled the establishment of common schools throughout the state, and provided for the a state superintendent, but the government of the schools and the licensing of teachers was committed to town officers, the state superintendent's office being little more than a bureau for the distribution of public monies, with only advisory powers. Gideon Hawley, however, exercised these powers with such ability and zeal, that, at the end of his term, the bureau had become a department. Thirty years later, county officers were provided for, having certain appellate jurisdiction over the town school officers. In 1856, the power of licensing teachers was taken from the towns and given to the District Commissioners, and in recent years this power has been practically vested in the State Department. In effect, all power is now vested in the State Superintendent, whenever he chooses to exercise it. By the provisions relating to costs, even the courts are practically deprived of the jurisdiction which they habitually exercise over the other, even the highest branches of the state government.

Two changes remain to be made to complete a logically uniform system: First, the abolition of the school districts

and the creation of town boards of education with a paid practical teacher as executive officer: and Secondly, the abolition of the elective office of District School Commissioner, and the devolution of its duties upon officers appointed by, and immediately responsible to, the State Department of Public Instruction. These changes, in my opinion will soon be made

This tendency to centralization in the administration of school matters is well worthy of attention of statesmen, and, all the more so, because the movement was gradual, and at each step of its progress scarcely observed, or at least was little commented on. The same tendency can be noted in the change made in organization of the militia, and is beginning to be dimly perceptible in the new law relating to highways. It may be, that we have outgrown the system of the local administration of public affairs, so highly prized by our forefathers and that the new conditions imposed upon us by the vast improvements in the means of communication, and by the concentration of influences in larger towns, may demand that the administration of all branches of government shall be committed to a central bureau.

Again, until 1867, the expenses of maintaining the common schools after applying to that purpose the public monies received from the state, were collected from the parents of the children attending. This evidently tended to the diminution of school attendance, and in the villages, to the encouragement of private or select schools. In that year the common schools were made absolutely free. In 1874, an act was passed requiring that every child between the ages of eight and fourteen years should attend school at least fourteen weeks in each year.

Thus, one hundred years ago, a parent, desiring to give an elementary education to his child, was obliged to provide it at his own pains and cost. Later, the state, recognizing the advantage of general education, encouraged the establishment of

schools by the grant of public monies. Then the whole territory of the state was mapped out into school districts, and supervision and inspection by public officers provided for, the parents however being still responsible for part of the expense. Next the whole expenses of the common schools was imposed upon the tax-papers, and the schools made absolutely free. Finally by law every child in the state is compelled to attend school long enough to gain a knowledge of the rudiments of an education.

Thus a century ago, an elementary education was a privilege which, if enjoyed, must be paid for by the individual. Now it is a duty, imposed by the state, provided by the state, and enforced by the state under pains and penalties.

Schools of Cazenovia.

The first school in Cazenovia was kept in a building which stood south of the west bridge, near the corner of Lake Avenue and Rippleton road. Who the first teacher was, we unhappily do not know. To this school in 1796, Gen. Jonathan Forman, of revolutionary fame, was wont to lead his little daughter Mary across the low unrailed bridge which then spanned the outlet, as yet unvexed by dams. This little girl grew up to become the wife of Henry Seymour, of Pompey and the mother of several children, one of whom was Horatio Seymour, and another is a lady who for more than half a century has dwelt among us, honored and beloved.

About the beginning of this century, another school house was erected on the west side of Sullivan street north of the Green.

These buildings were successively used for religious services until the erection of the meeting house on the Green.

In 1805, stimulated probably by the provisions of the

statute of that year, nearly all of the principal inhabitants united in an agreement to purchase a lot in a more central locality and to erect a more commodious school house. This agreement, which is in existence and can be seen at the Public Library, provides for the raising of the sum of three hundred and forty-five dollars, in shares of fifteen dollars each, payable one third in cash, one third in wheat and one third in Indian corn. The holders of shares were to be entitled to one vote in the management of the enterprise for each share. There were twenty-six subscribers to this agreement, twenty subscribing one share each and six subscribing half of a share each. It is a singular fact that of only two or three of those subscribers, are there any descendants now residing in this place. A lot sixty feet square was purchased of Lemuel Kingsbury, situated on the east side of Sullivan street where the west end of Seminary street now is for, forty-five dollars. The remaining three hundred dollars were paid to Mr. Lincklaen, who erected the building, doubtless at an expense exceeding the sum subscribed. When in 1814, School District No. 1 (late No. 21) was erected, this lot and building was purchased for its school. At that time, Seminary or, as it was first called, Court street, was being opened, and the court house was in process of erection, and the greater portion of the school lot was appropriated to the new street, the village paying as damages the sum of \$117.50. The school house was then moved north to the north corner of Sullivan and Seminary streets, where it still stands in a dilapidated condition. In recent years it has been used as an engine house. This is doubtless the oldest school house in this region, though for many years it has been perverted to base uses.

At the first town meeting after the passage of the act of 1812, were elected three commissioners and six school inspectors, and the supervisor was authorized to levy for school purposes double the amount of our proportion of the

interest of the school fund, on the taxable inhabitants of the town.

In 1813, the school commissioners proceeded to divide the town into fifteen school districts, and two more were created in the following year. Two of the districts were in the village, the dividing line between them being Mill and Lincklaen streets. Another district was many years afterward created in the north-east part of the village.

It will be seen that the school system was strongly officered, at least so far as regarded numbers, there being three commissioners and six inspectors in the town. As a rule the men chosen to fill these offices were intelligent and patriotic citizens, but it is evident that "the multitude of counselors" in the end proved detrimental to the interests of the schools, and in 1843, the people abolished the offices of town school commissioners and school inspectors and vested their functions in a single Town Superintendent. It may be remarked in passing that the Inspectors received a salary of fifty cents per day. In 1814 the school houses were erected and the common schools were opened, and from that time to this have been in continuous operation with various degrees of success. The school house in the west village district was, as has been heretofore stated, on the north corner of Sullivan and Seminary streets, and that in the east district was erected on Centre street, which then, at its outlet into Albany street, was a mere lane. About forty years ago, the original school house of the west district was sold to the village, and a new two story building erected on the lot where the Union School now stands. About the same time, the eastern district purchased the house and lot on the corner of Nelson and Fenner streets, and removed its school hither. In the latter part of 1875, the three village districts were united into a Union School District, and in 1887, a new school building was erected on the Sullivan street lot, in which, since that time, all the departments of the school have been held.

Select Schools.

There have been in the village, at all times until the formation of the Union School District, private or select schools, sometimes as many as seven. It would be impossible, if it were desirable, to enumerate these schools, as there is, of course, no record of them. Some were kept for only a single term, and others continued in operation for years. Some were good, some bad, and some indifferent. Those that were elementary need no particular mention as they probably did not differ greatly from the common schools, except that, being confined mainly to the instruction of small children, they were more orderly.

I may be permitted to say, however, that one of these schools was held in the building which I now occupy as an office, and there I went to school before I was three years old. Thus I am ending life where I began it, sleeping in the room in which I was born, and passing my days in the room in which I began the business of life.

There were some schools of a higher grade.

In 1815, Theophilus Wilson, a young physician of great promise, and, in the language of the inscription on his tombstone, "a graduate of Dartmouth college and an ornament to his profession, to society and to the church," died by taking poison through mistake, leaving a widow, Grace Wilson, and a son a few months old. The young widow, in order to support herself and her child, opened a girls' school on Sullivan street, directly opposite Seminary street, and continued it for about twenty years. The building was of two stories and there were two departments, one for young

ladies, and one for little girls. The only boy who ever attended this school, besides Mrs. Wilson's son, was the late Denise Ledyard. The little girls were taught in the lower room by an assistant, who for many years was Miss Abby Staples a neice of Mrs. Wilson. The young ladies were taught above by the principal. The whole school, however had their lessons in writing from Mrs. Wilson, who excelled in penmanship, and the assistant taught arithmetic in both departments, as Mrs. Wilson was not good at figures. Besides the ordinary curriculum, the young ladies were instructed in embroidery, in drawing and in painting in India ink and in water colors. In painting and drawing, monumental urns shaded by weeping willows were the favorite designs, and many specimens of this work are still extant. Mrs. Wilson lived in a small house situated near the center of the lot now occupied by the Union School House. The front yard was full of lilac bushes, with a grass plot between the house and the school, and an apple orchard at the sides and in the rear of the house. A lady who attended this school in 1825 says, "to my childish eyes this was the prettiest and greenest of spots."

In 1834, a Miss Talcott opened a young ladies' school of high order, at first kept in Mrs. Wilson's school house, and afterwards in the old Madison County House on the south side of the public square. Of this school, the same lady remarks, "she changed our studies from dry Arithmetic and Latin to the more interesting ones of History, English Literature, Physical Geography, etc., to our great delight. I must say that old Dr. Blanchard was a splendid teacher of mathematics."

For some years, about 1850, the Misses Savage, nieces of Gideon Hawley, the first State Superintendent, had an excellent girls' school on Mill street.

About 1830, Daniel E. Burhans opened a boy's school in a building which stood on Seminary street, just west of

the Baptist church. Burhans was the son of an Episcopal clergyman of prominence in Connecticut, and was himself a highly educated man. He must have been a good teacher for those times, or his grave faults would not have been so long tolerated. It was a large school, boys of all ages being admitted, and there being at all times an assistant teacher. He was of intemperate habits, and it was not unusual on a Monday morning to find a notice on the school house door, to the effect that the school would be closed for a time on account of the sickness of the teacher. On recovering from the effects of his Sunday debauch, he would reappear and the school would be resumed. He was cruel to the last degree. The boys regarded him with absolute terror, and yet they had a certain respect for his abilities. At last, the time came when Burhans' sprees became so frequent and so prolonged, that toleration ceased to be a virtue, and a High School was instituted in a building which was erected for the purpose on the corner of Sullivan street and the public square, under the general auspices of the Rev. E. S. Barrows, the pastor of the Presbyterian Church. I think I am not mistaken in believing that this school was started in rivalry with, if not in opposition to, the Seminary. Its head teachers were college graduates, and its course of study was about the same as in the academies of those days. Among its teachers were Lysander H. Brown, afterwards a prominent lawyer of Northern New York, who died within the past year; Henry Callahan, who died in 1888, having for the last quarter of a century of his life been the principal of a celebrated school in Delaware County, and a Mr. Whiting, a queer absent minded man, who afterwards became a Mormon elder. There was another master of this school, as to whom I deliberately and solemnly resolved that, if I lived to "grow up" and ever met him, I would whip him if I could; and further, that if I did not live to "grow up", or should never meet him, I

would, on the Judgment Day, myself arraign him at the bar of Almighty God for his cruelty to me. When I did "grow up" I, of course, thought better of the latter part of this resolution. The first clause of the resolution I have never formally recanted. Whether, if we should meet, I would carry it out, I declare I do not know. I used to long to meet him ; now I hope we shall never see each other. It seems horrible—it is horrible, that I should thus bear an enmity for a life time. But I vividly recall with what savage glee he lacerated my tender flesh with his cruel raw-hide, upon little or no provocation, and now, after the lapse of more than half a century, my old, sluggish blood runs hot with indignation, when I recall the physical agony, and, more cutting than his blows, the deep humiliation, the abasing degradation which this man inflicted upon me, causelessly and wantonly. But there was another teacher, Frederick Dean, just, kind, capable, accomplished, and I think learned, whom I loved with the passionate devotion which I think only a school-boy can feel for one of his own sex. He administered corporal punishment, but for just cause, not brutally, but as if he suffered more than the culprit, and when it was over, often both teacher and pupil were in tears. Soon after leaving Cazenovia, he went as a missionary to far-off and benighted Texas, and died of yellow fever almost immediately upon arriving there. I remember that, on the Saturday afternoon after I heard of his death, instead of joining my fellows in their sports, I went alone to the cemetery to mourn for my friend who then lay buried in a distant land. After Mr. Barrows went away, the High School as such was discontinued, but many private schools were kept in the school-house on the square, some for boys, some for girls, and some for both sexes. Many of these schools were of high character.

The Seminary.

Of the Seminary, it is not within the scope of this address to speak. Although it has been of the greatest benefit to the educational interests of the place, its influence has been general rather than local. "Its sound has gone out into all lands, and its words unto the ends of the world." Yet it would be inexcusable not to mention the names of Augustus W. Smith, erudite and blameless; of John W. Tyler, who dying at the age of twenty-six, leaving neither child nor literary production, yet left a memory which, after the lapse of sixty years, is still green; of George Peck, shrewd and far-sighted; of Alverson and Armstrong, thorough and enlightened; of the Bannisters, Henry and Edward; and of Bostwick Hawley, not to speak of those now living to adorn the highest stations in the church, or the leading chairs in universities; or of those, of lesser fame, who have played well their part in the conflict between ignorance and knowledge, between vice and virtue. The glorious history of the Seminary was recited at the semi-centennial of 1875 and is recorded in the volume published the next year entitled, "The First Fifty Years of Cazenovia Seminary." Of its present condition, we shall hear something later this afternoon.

It would be unpardonable not to mention Orlando Blanchard, in even the briefest review of the educational institutions of Cazenovia. He taught in the Seminary, in the select schools, and gave private lessons. He was a profound mathematician, an enthusiastic astronomer, a skilful chemist, an expert pharmacist, and a practical mechanic. He

wrote an arithmetic, which far excelled anything published before his day. He constructed orreries, clocks and organs. He calculated for himself the orbits of the planets and measured the flight of comets. But he loved no man and hated every woman. "Grand, gloomy and peculiar," without kindred and without friends, he pursued alone the tenor of his way, commanding respect for his splendid and versatile genius, and repelling all sympathies by his intolerable eccentricities.

Schools of Olden Times.

In speaking of the schools of former times, I can only speak of them as they were in my school days, that is from 1830 to 1840.

Two things must be first said. The rural district schools at that time were superior to the village district schools. For this, there was good reason. The rural population was then at its height. The rural population of school age was at least double what it is now, and they continued their attendance upon school to a much later age. It was common for young men and young ladies to attend the winter district school until the age of from 17 to 21. So it was, that in districts where there were in attendance sixty years ago forty or fifty pupils, there are now no more than fifteen or twenty, or even less.

In the village, however, there were always select schools, which took away the larger number, and, on the whole, the better class of small children, and the young men and young women went to the Seminary, the high school, or to Mrs. Wilson or Miss Talcott.

Again, the district schools were not as uniform as they are now. There was no standard of qualification for teachers,

and no system for their examination. School officers granted certificates to teachers upon such examination as they chose to make, or upon no examination. Then there was no effective supervision. The district commissioners had not been provided for, and the office of State Superintendent was vested in the Secretary of State.

In fact, every thing depended upon the teacher. If the teacher was capable, it was a good school. If he was inefficient, it could not be helped.

The furniture of the school house was of the rudest kind. There was a continuous desk around the wall for the older scholars, with backless benches, generally made of slabs, before them, and smaller benches down the middle of the room for the little ones. There was a small black-board about large enough for one or two children to use, and that was all the apparatus, except the instruments of torture.

The text books, according to modern standards, were wretched. They contained rules which were to be learned by heart, but explained nothing, and illustrated nothing. Even the geographies were as dry as the multiplication table.

The teachers were of as many kinds as there are trees in a forest. They had absolutely no training in the theory and practice of teaching. Though Pestalozzi had died in 1827, his works were unknown in this country, and Horace Mann did not commence his great work until 1837. There were no normal schools, teachers classes, or teachers institutes. There were no teachers associations, and no periodicals treating of methods in teaching. The teacher worked in his own way, absolutely uncontrolled and unadvised. There were some college men, who worked their way by teaching school in the long winter vacation. There were other bright young fellows who took up teaching to earn the necessary means to prepare for the professions. There

were some hard headed older men, like Enos Cushing and the Severances, who taught school in the winter intervals between their other avocations. There were a few capable men and women who made teaching their profession. And there were a host of young men and women, half educated, immature and wholly indifferent to their work, who taught for a term or two, through the favor of the trustees, simply for the pittance they could earn by it. When a teacher had a genius for the work, an enthusiasm was aroused which is never evoked at the present day.

Of methods, there were none. The lessons were learned from the text book by heart and recited literally. If the pupil could recite the lesson in the very words of the text book, it was all right, whether he understood it or not. If he could not, punishment followed. The teacher sat in his chair all the time, except when replenishing the fire, or administering discipline. In arithmetic, we learned the rules by heart and applied them to the examples, understanding nothing of the reason of the processes. I did not understand square root until I was nearly a man, although I could work out all the examples. In geography, we were made to recite in concert the names of the rivers, capes, mountains, etc., thus: "Lake Maracaibo, Lake Maracaibo, Lake de los Palos, Lake de los Palos," etc., Cape May, Cape May, Cape Henlopen, Cape Henlopen," etc., but we knew nothing of Physical or Political Geography as it is now taught.

Much attention was paid to oral spelling. Spelling contests were frequent, and often the older inhabitants of the district would gather at the school house in the evening and heartily engage in the fray. I do not think, on the whole, the pupils spelt as well as the school children do now. Writing was done mainly with the slate and pencil. Paper was dear and there were no wooden lead pencils. A very few children had pencil cases of real or base silver,

the others had “plummetts,” which were of hammered lead about as large as a slate pencil, sharpened to a point. When a child was promoted to the dignity of writing in a copy book with pen and ink, he brought a goose quill to school with his copy book, made of cheap paper stitched together. The time of the teacher between the hearing of recitations was fully employed in making and mending the pens, of which there was always a pile on his table, and in “setting copies.” In one exercise alone were the schools of fifty years ago superior to those of the present day. In reading and in declaiming, the greatest pains were taken. Saturday forenoons, (for the schools were then kept five and a half days in the week,) were given up to reading and declamation. The boys declaimed and the girls read before the school at least once a fortnight. Then at the end of the term there was an “exhibition,” at which essays were read, orations were declaimed, poems were recited, dialogues and colloquies were rendered with great effect. I am very much mistaken, if, at those “exhibitions” and even at some of the Saturday morning performances in the schools, there was not better enunciation, emphasis and general delivery than is often found at the “readings” and the “recitals,” that we now pay money to hear in the Casa-Nova. I know that Andrews used to “speak” better on the Seminary chapel stage, than he does now from the pulpit, and Tench Fairchild on a Saturday forenoon would deliver Webster’s reply to Haynes, or Mark Anthony’s oration over the body of Cæsar, with more force and effect than is now often exhibited on the stage. Oratory seems to have become a lost art, or least is relegated to the stage and in a few instances to the lecture platform.

The schools were governed by terrorizing the pupils. Corporal punishment was administered habitually, daily, and often with the greatest severity. The ferule, a hard wood ruler half a yard long and a third of an inch thick,

was the usual instrument. Besides, there were the strap of sole leather, the switch and the terrible raw-hide. These were applied upon the hands, the thighs, the arms, legs, and sometimes even upon the head or the feet. Some teachers were very ingenious in devising new tortures. Children were made to stoop over and hold their finger over a particular nail in the floor until their backs ached fearfully from the unusual strain; they were hung by their hands upon an open door until the edge made creases in their fingers; they were sent out to cut an apple sprout to be used for their own torture and compelled to harden it in the stove. A peculiarly irritating punishment was to have ones ears snapped by a quill pen, especially when it was administered by the teacher approaching stealthily from behind. Perhaps the worst punishment that can be inflicted upon a child five years old, is to shut him up in a dark closet with the intimation that, if he made an outcry, some crawling thing would come out of the dark corners and bite him. All these punishments and others I have suffered, and I was a good boy too, as boys go. I do not mean to say that teachers were uniformly unjust or that all were intentionally cruel. The children often acted very badly, and I am sure that the teachers often did not know how much pain they inflicted. It was the general custom to flog and to flog severely. It was a point of honor with the boys to make no outcry, as long as it was possible to refrain. The boy who could take a severe whipping with a grin on his face was the hero of the hour. We never told our parents of any punishment inflicted on us, and if they discovered the blisters on our hands or the welts on our bodies, we made light of it to them. This was partly because we thought it manly to refrain from complaints, and partly because we believed, often mistakenly, that they would side with the teacher and punish us again. The effect of these severe punishments upon the sufferers varied

with their dispositions. Some, a very few, became sneaks and tell-tales; some became sullen, moody and dispirited, and some brave spirits bore their pains manfully, and exercised all their wits and energies in the endeavor to get even with the teacher. The effect upon the discipline of the school was unqualifiedly bad. There was almost constant war between the teacher and the scholars, at least the male portion of them. This war was open and declared when we dared. When we did not dare, it was an guerilla warfare. All sorts of tricks were played, and all kinds of annoyances contrived to make it unpleasant for him. It was not uncommon for the teacher to be thrown out of the school house by the larger boys, and the school to be broken up. It was often stipulated in the contract between the trustees and the teacher, that he should have no pay, unless he taught to the end of the term. Some districts acquired a notoriety for its bad boys, and the principal qualification for a teacher in them was to be able to whip the whole school. Fighting was common, both between the boys of the same school, and between them and outsiders, and no attempt was made to suppress it. There was war for many years between the high school boys, with their allies in the village, and the Seminary students. They fought singly and by battalions. The Seminaricians were called "Brimstones," I suppose because of the fervid character of the Methodist sermons of those days, and in return they called the village boys "Sulphurs." When a party of Seminaricians strayed beyond their precincts, especially in the evening, the cry of "Brimstones" would be raised and the villagers would hasten to the fray. All this has happily passed away, long since.

But our school days were not, on the whole, unhappy. Some of the teachers were kind, and many were just if severe, and even the cruel ones had their gracious moods. Even at the worst, we consoled ourselves with the common

maxim, philosophical if ungrammatical: "Scolding don't hurt none, licking dosen't last long, kill me he dasn't." Then there were the joyous recesses and noontimes, with their "two-old-cat," their "turn-out-jack" and their "prisoner's base." And there were the blessed Saturday afternoons, looked forward to with eagerness and remembered with delight, when the "mountains and hills," the "ice and snow," the "seas and floods," "all the green things upon the earth," the "beasts and cattle," the "worms and feathered fowls," and "all that move in the waters," awaited us. And above all the childish friendships. Other loves there are, more fervent and more dear; filial, fraternal, conjugal and paternal. But all these have something of obligation. The love of a boy for his fellow alone is unconstrained, free, equal and without a taint of selfishness. It was my happiness to contract some of these friendships, which have lasted through life, and the fragrant memory of which, when severed by death, is the solace of age.

The rural school house in the olden time was much more the centre of social life of the district than it is now. Besides the spelling matches, there were held in the school house religious and political meetings, singing schools, debating clubs, and literary societies, at which were often read essays and poems of no little merit.

The Union Schools.

In the autumn of 1875, as has been heretofore stated, the village school districts were consolidated into a Union School District. For the remainder of the school year, however, or until the fall of 1876, the former teachers were retained and the schools carried on separately as before, as it was a difficult task to arrange the course of study for the graded school, and to grade the pupils. A comparison therefore of the reports of 1876 and 1892, will show the difference between the existing Union School and the district schools immediately preceding it. In 1876, there were in the village seven select schools; now none, except a kindergarten for children under the statutory age. In 1876, there were 516 children in the district between the ages of 5 and 21; in 1892, there were 483. The number of resident children attending the district schools some part of the year in 1876 was 217; the number in 1892 was 329. The average attendance of resident children in 1876 was less than 96; in 1892 the number was over 246. The whole number of days attendance of resident children in 1876 was 16,779; the number in 1892 was 47,872. In 1892, every child in the district, except one, between the ages of 8 and 14, the compulsory age, attended the Union School. The number of teachers in the district schools in 1876 was 4; in 1892 the number was 7. The expense of the district schools in 1876 was \$1,218.80; in 1892 it was \$4,391.04. The cost of a day's schooling in 1876 was about seven cents; in 1892 it was about eight and a half cents.

There is no academic department in the school. The course of study includes only the "common branches." There are nine grades occupying a year each. The pupils are instructed in reading, writing, spelling, grammar, arithmetic, civil government, American history, physiology and vocal music. There is also a cooking class a part of the year. In connection with the school there is a savings institution, the net deposits of which by the children in the school year 1892 amounted to \$548.04.

There can, I think, be no doubt that this school is, as it ought to be, by far the best school of its grade that ever existed in Cazenovia—as regards the character and capacity of the teachers, the methods and thoroughness of the instruction, the discipline of the school, the behavior and studiousness of the scholars, and the happiness of both teachers and pupils.



LIBRA



0 02

LIBRARY OF CONGRESS



0 022 115 461 7

