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Geo. W. Emerson

EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS:

EARLY LEGISLATION AND HISTORY.

A LECTURE

OF A

COURSE BY MEMBERS OF THE MASSACHUSETTS
HISTORICAL SOCIETY,

Delivered before the Lowell Institute,

FEB. 16, 1869.

BY

GEORGE B. EMERSON.

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EDUCATION IN MASSACHUSETTS.

LEGISLATION AND HISTORY.

THE subject assigned to me by the Committee of the Historical Society, is Education in Massachusetts,—Legislation and History. I shall endeavor to show, as far as I can do it in a single lecture, what Massachusetts has done for the advancement and diffusion of education, and how she has done it.

In 1636, three, or, at the utmost, four thousand emigrants, mostly from the mild southern counties of Old England, were dwelling in sixteen towns and hamlets, on the sandy shores of Massachusetts Bay. They were not yet hardened to the fierce extremes of a New-England climate, and had suffered and were suffering terribly from the heats of summer, the blustering chilly winds of spring, and the cold and snow-storms of winter, in their hastily built log-cabins, and wretched huts and hovels, no better, often, than the wigwams of the savage Indians. They were the most religious people under heaven; yet their only place of worship in Boston was built with mud-walls and a roof thatched with straw. They had been exposed to scarcity of all kinds, sometimes nearly approaching to absolute famine. When the large colony led by Governor Winthrop reached Salem, in June, 1630, they found that, during the previous winter, more than a fourth part of their predecessors had died, and many of the survivors were ill; and, of the new-comers, a fifth part fell victims to disease before the end of autumn.

Yet, in the first volume of the Records of the General Court, we read, —

“At a Court holden Sept. 8, 1636, and continued by adjournment to the 28th of the eighth month, October, 1636, the

Court agreed to give £400 towards a school or college; £200 to be paid next year, and £200 when the work is finished; and the next Court to appoint where and what building." At a General Court held at Newtown, on the 2d of the ninth month, 1637, "The college is ordered to be at Newtown." †

The people of Massachusetts at that time were poor, with all the hardships of new settlers in a savage country, clearing up the forests, building houses and barns and churches, enlarging their pastures, and bringing the earth into cultivation.

Four hundred pounds sterling, then, would correspond to \$2,000. This would be a grant of fifty cents for each individual of the four thousand inhabitants, equal to a grant, at the same rate, for each individual of the present population, say one million two hundred and fifty thousand, of \$625,000. But it must be remembered that a dollar then was equivalent to several dollars now; and that Massachusetts then was one of the poorest States in the world, and is now one of the richest,—its valuation in 1865 being more than one thousand millions. Considering these things, we may well conclude with Dr. Dwight, "It is questionable whether a more honorable specimen of public spirit can be found in the history of mankind."¹ The name of the town was soon afterwards changed from Newtown to Cambridge, "a grateful tribute to the transatlantic literary parent of many of the first emigrants, and indicative of the high destiny to which they intended the institution should aspire."²

"In the year 1638," says President Quincy, "while they were only contemplating its commencement, John Harvard, a dissenting clergyman of England, resident at Charlestown, died, and bequeathed one-half of his whole property, and his entire library, to the institution. An instance of benevolence thus striking and timely, proceeding from one who had been scarcely a year in the country, was accepted by our Fathers as an omen of divine favor. With prayer and thanksgiving they immediately commenced the seminary, and conferred upon it the name of Harvard."³

What was done in the endowment of Harvard College has been imitated a thousand times since. The beneficence of the State has been enlarged and multiplied by the beneficence of

† Dwight's Travels in New England, vol. i. p. 481, as quoted by President Quincy, in History of Harvard University, vol. i. p. 8.

² Quincy's Hist. H. U., vol. i. p. 9.

³ Id., pp. 9, 10.

individuals. The State gives £400 for the founding of a school at Cambridge; John Harvard adds £800. The towns throughout the colony contribute according to, or far beyond, their means; individuals with wonderful munificence. In the course of eight years, £269 18s. 8d. were given by the towns in the four colonies,¹ for the benefit of the officers and students in the college. Of this sum, Boston gave nearly £85; Charlestown, £37 16s. 2d.; Lynn, £1. In 1654, Rev. Mr. Allen, of Dedham, gave two cows, valued at £9. In 1656, Richard Dana, in cotton cloth, 9s.; a widow in Roxbury, £1; Richard Saltonstall, £104. The inhabitants of Eleuthera, one of the Bahama Islands, "out of their poverty, in testimony of their gratitude towards the inhabitants of Massachusetts, for necessaries sent them in their extreme want," £124. This shows that charity to strangers began early in Massachusetts. The island of Eleuthera was then farther off than Ireland or Crete is now.

In 1669, of £2,697 5s. paid by the inhabitants in contributions for erecting a new college building, the town of Portsmouth gave £60 a year, for seven years; of which Richard Cutts subscribed £20 per annum; and Boston £800, of which Sir Thomas Temple gave £100, and Benjamin Gibbs £50; Salem, £130 2s. 2d., of which Rev. Mr. Higginson subscribed £5, Mr. William Brown £40, Mr. Edmund Batter £20; the town of Hull, £3 18s.; Scarborough in Maine, £2 9s. 6d.:² so universal was the generous feeling towards the college.

The amount of donations in money during the seventeenth century was £6,134 16s. 10d. Then there were large gifts in land and books. The poor gave according to their ability; Richard Harr, one great salt, and one small trencher salt; Mr. Vane, a fruit-dish, sugar-spoon, and silver-tipped jug; Mr. Wilson, one pewter flagon; Sir Thomas Temple, one pair of globes; John Willet, a bell; Edward Page, one silver goblet; the farmers, gifts in corn, from many bushels down to a single peck.

One of the most remarkable things in the history of Harvard College is the fact that, in all the constitutions of the college, there is nothing illiberal or sectarian, nothing to check the freest pursuit of truth in theological opinions, and in every thing else;

¹ Plymouth, New Haven, Connecticut, and Massachusetts.

² Quincy's H. C., Appendix, vol. i. p. 508.

and this, too, while the founders of the college were severely and strictly Orthodox, often exclusive in their own opinions, and that their object was unquestionably to provide for the thorough education of ministers of the gospel of like views with themselves. Whether it was that they had confidence that free inquiry would lead others to the same conclusions it had led themselves; or that there were differences of opinion among them, which prevented the framing of a declaration of faith that should satisfy all; or that they were beginning to find that a declaration of faith, while it excluded those who honestly differed, could never exclude hypocrites; or that they had a profound and reverent belief that the living God would, in all future time, be near the souls of all true and earnest men, to enlighten and guide them; or whether it was by a special providence that we have been secured from what has been elsewhere a plague and a snare, — we know not: we only know that no subscription or declaration of faith has ever been required from any officer of the college. The device on the first seal was three open books, with VERITAS upon them: Search for THE TRUTH everywhere; for a college or school, the noblest and best motto possible. This was succeeded by *In Christi Gloriam*, — to the glory of Christ; and this soon after by the present motto, *Christo et Ecclesie*, — to Christ and the Church.

How earnest and sincere our Puritan Fathers were in doing all that could be fairly done to secure soundness in the faith, is shown by the uniform character of their legislation.

In the Records of the Court for May 3, 1654, we read, —

“Forasmuch as it greatly concerns the welfare of this country that the youth thereof be educated not only in good literature but sound doctrine, this Court doth therefore commend it to the serious consideration and special care of the officers of the college and the selectmen of the several towns, not to admit or suffer any such to be continued in the office or place of teaching, educating, or instructing of youth or children, in the college or schools, that have manifested themselves unsound in the faith or scandalous in their lives, and not giving due satisfaction according to the rules of Christ.”

The conditions for admission at Harvard College, established by President Dunster, for the year 1642 and onward, are as follows: —

1. "Whoever shall be able to read Cicero, or any other such like classical author, at sight, and, correctly and without assistance, to speak and write in, in prose and verse, and to inflect exactly the paradigms of Greek nouns and verbs, has a right to expect to be admitted into the college; and no one may claim admission without these qualifications."

And, throughout their course, the scholars were not, within the college limits, upon any pretext, to use the vernacular, unless when called to deliver an oration, or some other public exercise, in English.¹

From this it appears that the standard for admission was higher than it has been since. I believe that, not comparatively, but absolutely, boys were better fitted for college than they are now. They had better teachers. Few teachers at present are able, by their own example and usage, to teach boys to speak the Latin language readily and correctly. Few are themselves able to read Cicero or Tacitus at sight. A great mistake, one of the greatest possible, has been made, in relinquishing the mode of teaching the Latin language at that time prevalent, I believe, in England and throughout Germany, as well as in this country. For, unquestionably, the only sure way of learning a language rapidly, pleasantly, satisfactorily, and so as to be a permanent acquisition, is the natural way; that is, as a spoken language. In consequence of this change, the character of the

¹ *Scholares vernaculâ linguâ intra collegii limites, nullo pretextu, utuntur, nisi ad orationem, aut aliud aliquod exercitium publicum Anglice habendum evocati fuerint.* (President Dunster's Laws and Rules, 1642-46, in Quincy's Hist., vol. i. p. 578).

"The learned and excellent Henry Dunster," says Dr. Palfrey, "when he accepted this great charge" (of the Presidency of the college), "had just arrived from England, having been there a non-conformist minister, after receiving an education at Emmanuel College, Cambridge." (Palfrey, vol. ii. p. 49.) He drew up the Laws and Rules of the college, and probably settled the course of study, according to the practice of the English Universities at that time. It consisted, in a large degree, of Latin, Greek, and English, with something of Hebrew, Syriac, and Chaldee, and also of divinity. It included Arithmetic, Geometry, Physics, Logic, Ethics, Politics, and Rhetoric. In the Saturday afternoons or summer, lectures were given on the nature of plants; in winter, on history. Much time was spent in discussion, and still more in composition. ("New-England's First Fruits," in Mass. Hist. Coll., vol. i. pp. 245-6.)

Few persons, if any, have done so much for education and discipline, in America, as President Dunster. See many curious particulars of his life, opinions, and death, and appearance, so far as relates to the body, two hundred and fifty years after his death, in the second of the instructive and delightful volumes of Dr. Palfrey's History.

professed teacher has been declining, perhaps continually, in the beginning of this century.

In other respects, also, the boys were better fitted for college than they recently have been.

There were no cities. The greater part of the people lived in the country, nearly all on farms. In Boston there was little room for farms, and not much for gardens; but many of the inhabitants had gardens and farms on the islands of the Bay and at Muddy River, now Brookline, where their herds were kept. The boys spent most of their time in the fields and forests and along the rivers and the sea, hunting bears and deer, trapping foxes, shooting wild turkeys, wild geese, and wild ducks; or fishing, riding, driving, swimming, rowing, and sailing; or at work with those who were laying out roads through the woods, digging wells and ditches, making walls, and fences against the wolves, building houses, barns, fortifications, churches, ships, mills, boats, and ships, laying out and cultivating gardens, planting orchards, and engaged in all the labors of husbandry. They thus became hardened to the climate, and gained good constitutions and health, and moreover became acquainted with natural objects,—rocks and soils; animals, wild and tame, savage and civilized; the trees and shrubs of the woods, and the flowers and herbs of the gardens and fields; and saw the powers of water and of wind, and felt the effects of sunshine and cold and all the forces of the atmosphere. The elder boys belonged to the train-bands, which, under able officers, were drilled—not over twice or thrice a week, the law provides—to the use of the musket, the sword and the spear. Such were their summer occupations.

In winter, they helped to clear the woods and cut down the forest-trees, sledded the logs to the wood-pile and the timber to the mills, and assisted at first in hewing it, afterward, in sawing it into beams, posts, joists, planks, boards, clapboards, and shingles, or squaring it and building it directly into houses. The winter evenings, on those solitary farms, were probably spent in reading,—an easy and pleasant thing, before the existence of theatres, balls, concerts, and dram-shops. And they doubtless had their huskings and other merry-makings.

Has any system been devised to take the place of this, and give the young man, in a higher degree, full possession of all his

powers and faculties of body and mind, or to give him, in the same degree, the masculine qualities of hardy self-reliance with cautiousness, manly courage with coolness, resolution with patience, and power of endurance with habits of strenuous and cheerful labor? What better discipline have we devised or are we devising for the drawing out and training these manly qualities?

A few men, whom we have known, have been obliged by force of circumstances, to approach this heroic early education. And it may be a fair question, Would Mark Hopkins, Francis Wayland, Daniel Webster, Jared Sparks, Cornelius Felton, Thomas Hill, have been finer specimens of humanity, or even better scholars and teachers, if they had been put, at seven, into schools, and kept there ten months of every year, till they entered college at sixteen, instead of giving their early years to the labors of the farm, the forest, and the workshop?

Milton calls "a complete and generous education that which fits a man to perform justly, skilfully, and magnanimously, all the offices, both private and public, of peace and of war." This primitive, heroic boyhood was not only a true preparation for the offices of a peaceful, private life, for the duties of town officer, magistrate, and representative to the General Court, and for those of privates and officers, in the wars always threatening from the Indians around, and often from the French at the North and the Dutch on the South; but it was the best preparation for the studies of the college, as it gave the student, for the object of his thoughts while engaged in those studies, instead of mere words, the facts of nature, real things and their properties and relations.

Everybody is now ready to admit the important place which natural and physical science should have in a liberal education; but all are not aware that such science, to be real, must be founded on personal observation. These boys were laying such a foundation. A boy engaged in stoning a well, in raising stones for a wall, or in drawing water from the well by an old-fashioned well-pole, was studying the properties of the lever. In splitting logs, he became acquainted with the wedge; in making roads, with the inclined plane. In helping to lay out a farm, with a surveyor's chain and compass, so as to fix, justly and

accurately, the bounds between neighbor and neighbor, he got the first elementary ideas which lie at the very foundation of geometry, and a feeling of the importance of doing justice, at the same time. In selecting, hewing, and shaping the different trees for all the purposes of the primitive essential arts, he became acquainted with the strength, elasticity, hardness, tenacity, and other properties, of all kinds of wood. Even in his play, he was still at his studies. In rowing, he was studying the lever; in seulling, the resolution of forces,—feeling as well as seeing. When he hoisted his sail by pulling at a rope passing round a truck at the head of his mast, he was studying the element of the pulley; when, to raise the sail to the utmost, he pulled out the middle of that rope fastened at the foot, to haul taut and belay, he was learning the properties of the rope-machine. When, sitting in the stern of his boat, he trimmed his sail to the varying wind, on a narrow, winding creek, or on Neponset River, or Charles, obliged often to come as near as possible to the wind, he was studying the resolution of forces, in the most favorable position in which they can be studied. When for the well-pole he substituted the windlass, and with it drew water from the well, he was learning the nature, by observing the uses, of the wheel and axle. When he dug a ditch or assisted in building a dam and arranging a flume and a gate for the water-power, he was studying hydrostatics and hydraulics. Arranging the stones for grinding corn, he was studying the combination of wheels; and, setting the stones to grind, the centrifugal force. The saw-mill and the wind-mill, when they were introduced, showed him machinery in more complicated action.¹

Then again, in those early days, there were no spelling-books nor English grammars for children to waste their time upon. The deluge of children's books had not begun. Children learned their letters from verses in the Bible, — from those sublimest of all sentences: "In the beginning, God created the heaven and the earth;" "and God said, Let there be light, and there was light."

¹ I perfectly well remember standing, when a child, in a still morning, on the bank of a river, and watching a man engaged in chopping wood, at a distance, on the other side. I heard every stroke of his axe, but I heard it some little time after it was struck. It was my first lesson in acoustics and optics. I saw the slowness of the motion of sound compared with the velocity of that of light.

Boys and girls were obliged to read the few books they had, which were often the most excellent that we have, again and again, till they knew them thoroughly, almost by heart. They became, of necessity, familiar with the Gospels, with the beautiful histories of the Old Testament, the glorious poetry of the prophets, of Job, and the Psalms, the profound wisdom of Solomon and the divine wisdom of the apostles.¹ The little time given to the Latin language was spent in learning and using the words essential to conversation; and in studying the language of Cicero and Virgil, instead of the unintelligible generalizations of grammar, what John Milton calls "the most intellective abstractions of logic and metaphysics," so commonly begun with at the present day.

What a pleasant way of learning a language must that have been!—Walking about with the teacher over the farm, in the barn-yard, and in the woods; and learning from him how to speak, in Latin, of all they saw. How easy for persons so taught to continue the use of the language, in college! and how deeply fixed in the memory must all the usual forms of the language thus become! Whoever has had the good fortune to learn any modern language by hearing and speaking it alone for a few years, must know how imperfect and superficial, in comparison, is the knowledge obtained from books only.

Such was the necessary but real and noble preparation for college which was given to nearly all the boys in Massachusetts purposing to receive the highest education of the time. Has any thing better been yet introduced to take the place of such a preparation? Does the vast time given to arithmetic, destined to be never used; or the innumerable lessons in geography, destined to be speedily forgotten; or the volumes of choice and exquisite selections from the best and finest poetry and prose, most of it wholly beyond the capacity of those who are to read them, — give a better preparation? Are these an adequate substitute for readings from the book of Nature, from the works and word of God?

¹ The English language is spoken by the common people of New England far better than it is anywhere else. This is owing, I doubt not, to the fact, that they have always been familiar with the Old and New Testaments, in our beautiful translation.

In the year 1847, the President of this Society, — I heard it from his own lips, and know that he will pardon my telling the story, — himself a lineal descendant of John Winthrop, under whose administration the grant I have read, and the laws I am going to read, were passed, was sitting in the diplomatic gallery of the House of Commons, with Sir Robert Peel, to whom a letter from Edward Everett had introduced him, engaged in conversation; when Sir Robert suddenly interrupted himself, and said, “I must now leave you, as I see that Macaulay is going to speak, and I always want to hear what he says.” He left him; and our friend presently heard, among other good things from Macaulay, —

“I say, therefore, that the education of the people ought to be the first concern of a State. . . . This is my deliberate conviction; and in this opinion I am fortified by thinking, that it is also the opinion of all the great legislators, of all the great statesmen, of all the great political philosophers, of all ages and of all nations. . . . Sir, it is the opinion of all the greatest champions of civil and religious liberty in the Old World and in the New; and of none — I hesitate not to say it — more emphatically than of those whose names are held in the highest estimation by the Protestant Nonconformists of England. Assuredly, if there be any class of men whom the Protestant Nonconformists of England respect more highly than another, — if any whose memory they hold in deeper veneration, — it is that class of men, of high spirit and unconquerable principles, who, in the days of Archbishop Laud, preferred leaving their native country, and living in the savage solitudes of a wilderness, rather than to live in a land of prosperity and plenty, where they could not enjoy the privilege of worshipping their Maker freely, according to the dictates of their conscience. Those men, illustrious for ever in history, were the founders of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts; but, though their love of freedom of conscience was illimitable and indestructible, they could see nothing servile or degrading in the principle, that the State should take upon itself the charge of the education of the people. In the year 1642,” [should he not have said, 1647?] “they passed their first legislative enactment on this subject; in the preamble of which they distinctly pledged themselves to this principle, that education was a matter of the deepest possible importance and the greatest possible interest to all nations and to all communities; and that, as such, it was, in an eminent degree, deserving of the peculiar attention of the State.”¹

¹ Macaulay's Speeches, vol. ii. pp. 334 and 335, ed. of Redfield, New York, 1853.

That preamble is in these words :—

“ It being one chief project of the old deluder, Satan, to keep men from the knowledge of the Scriptures, as, in former times, by keeping them in an unknown tongue, so, in these latter times, by persuading from the use of tongues, that so at least the true sense and meaning of the original might be clouded by false gloss of saint-seeming deceivers ;—now, that learning may not be buried in the grave of our fathers, in the Church and Commonwealth, the Lord assisting our endeavors,”—and here follows the law :—

“ It is therefore ordered, that every township in this jurisdiction, after the Lord hath increased them to the number of fifty householders, shall then forthwith appoint one within their town to teach all such children as shall resort to him, to write and read, whose wages shall be paid, either by the parents or masters of such children, or by the inhabitants in general, by way of supply, as the major part of those that order the prudentials of the town shall appoint, provided, those that send their children be not oppressed by paying much more than they can have them taught for in other towns ; and it is further ordered, that, where any town shall increase to the number of one hundred families or householders, they shall set up a grammar school, the master thereof being able to instruct youth so far as they may be fitted for the university, provided that, if any town neglect the performance hereof above one year, that every such town shall pay £5 to the next school, till they shall perform this order.”¹

A grammar school was then understood to be a school in which the Latin and Greek languages were taught.

In 1683, Oct. 10, we read, “ The Court doth order that whenever a town has five hundred families, it shall support two grammar schools and two writing schools.”

On June 14, 1642, the following law was passed :²—

“ This Court, taking into consideration the great neglect of many parents and masters, in training up their children in learning and labor, and other employments which may be profitable to the Commonwealth, do hereby order and decree, that in every town the chosen men appointed for managing the prudential affairs of the same shall henceforth stand charged with the care of the redress of this evil ; . . . and, for this end,

¹ Mass. Records, Nov. 11, 1647, vol. ii. p. 203.

² I had considerable doubt, and still have, whether this law or the one of 1647 were the one referred to by Macaulay ; but, as this law really has no preamble, but only a short introduction in no degree remarkable, and, as it is almost wholly upon the matter of apprenticeship, I have concluded that it must have been the other that he had reference.

they, or the greater number of them, shall have power to take account, from time to time, of all parents and masters, and of their children, concerning the calling and employment of their children, especially of their ability to read and understand the principles of religion, and the capital laws of this country, and to impose fines upon such as shall refuse to render such accounts to them when they shall be required; and they shall have power, with consent of any court or the magistrate, to put forth apprentices the children of such as they shall find not to be able and fit to employ and bring them up; . . . and for their better performance of this trust committed to them, they may divide the town amongst them, appointing to every one of the said townsmen a certain number of families to have special oversight of. They are also to provide that a sufficient quantity of materials, as hemp, flax, &c., may be raised in the several towns, and tools and implements provided for working out the same."¹

Next to the law providing free public schools for all, this law providing for the accustoming of all children to labor, and their proper and sufficient training in some useful employment, shows most strikingly the wisdom and forethought of these men of Massachusetts. The observance and the perfecting of the former law, and the copying of it by other States, have been an immeasurable blessing to the world. The neglect of this latter law has been an equally vast misfortune.²

A very large part of the poverty found now among the natives of New England may be traced to this neglect. A great deal of the crime has this same cause. To this neglect, more probably than to any other cause, is due the great number of persons setting up in business, without any skill or knowledge or experience or any other qualifications, and soon failing; — ninety-seven per cent in the principal street in Boston, as was found a few years ago to have been the case for many years. To this neglect is owing that great army of middle-men, who, even now, are preying like vain-

¹ I have not quoted the whole of this law. It contains, at some length, farther provisions for the certain and safe employment of children of both sexes, in things useful to the Commonwealth.

² My own opinion is, that the education of no girl or boy ought to be considered finished, even so far as common schools are concerned, who has only had his mental, moral, and spiritual faculties developed, and knowledge given, principles fixed, and reverential habits formed. His bodily powers ought also to be exercised upon something useful, at every step in his course. This might be done without any loss to his intellectual nature, and with immeasurable benefit to his physical. Such an education would make every work and duty of after life more easy and pleasant.

pires upon the poor in this town and this country. The present very intelligent warden of the State Prison, Gideon Haynes, informs me, that "of the convicts committed to this prison in the last forty years, over eighty per cent had no trades." "I cannot with any certainty," he adds, "say how many of that number might have been saved by learning a trade; but from the fact that all received, who were capable of learning, have during the above period been taught one, and that only *nine per cent* of the number have been recommitted, I am satisfied that at least fifty per cent might have been saved by a good trade."

Those legislators sought, not only to prevent ignorance of law and of duty by universal education, but to prevent poverty and crime by universal intelligent industry.

A considerable portion of the inhabitants of all the large cities of the Atlantic coast are paupers. Here we have one cause. Is it too late to take measures to prevent much of the poverty and crime of Massachusetts, by laws requiring every child not provided for by the wealth of his parents with a thorough and learned education, to be brought up to some trade or other useful occupation?

A negro had been left, by one James Smith, at Portsmouth, and been retained in bondage. In the records of the General Court, for Nov. 4, 1646, we read, —

"The General Court, conceiving themselves bound by the first opportunity to bear witness against the heinous and crying sin of man-stealing, as also to prescribe such timely redress for what is past, and such a law for the future as may sufficiently deter all others belonging to us to have to do in such vile and most odious courses, justly abhorred of all good and just men, do order, that the negro interpreter, with others unlawfully taken, be, by the first opportunity (at the charge of the country, for the present), sent to his native country of Guinea, and a letter with him of the indignation of the Court thereabouts; and, in justice hereof, desiring our honored Governor would please to put this order in execution."¹

Such was the sublime consistency of these men. Was there any earlier or more decided utterance against slavery and the slave-trade than this?

If this is not a serious challenge, what is? It should be remembered that, at the time when this indignant protest was

¹ Mass. Records, vol. ii. p. 168.

made, every other government on earth was, apparently, altogether indifferent to the existence and evil of slavery. It must be admitted that this lofty Christian tone of feeling did not last always. With the decay of education, this spirit of universal liberty decayed. Mingling with the rest of the world, the people of Massachusetts gradually lowered their standard, and felt and acted like the rest. Some of them held slaves. The oldest members of some of our oldest families must still remember them. Of cruelty towards them, I know not that there is even a tradition.¹

The spirit of the laws I have read is purely republican. They protect the children and apprentices in their right to be instructed, against the indifference or cupidity of masters and parents, but leave it to the majority of the inhabitants of each town to provide the means in their own way. Further, — what was quite as essential to the accomplishment of the design of the law, they provide a standard below which the qualifications of a teacher in the grammar schools shall not fall. He shall “be able to instruct youth so far as they shall be fitted for the university,” thus bringing within the reach of all the children of every town of one hundred families the means of preparing themselves for the highest course of instruction then or now existing in the country. Had this law continued in operation, youth from nearly every town in the Commonwealth would now be enjoying this privilege.²

The whole policy of the Puritan colonists in this matter ought to fill us with admiration. In their simplicity they conceived, and in their poverty executed, a scheme which had proved too high for the intellect and too vast for the power of every previous potentate or people, — the hitherto unimagined idea of universal education. Fugitives from the persecution of the Old World, and hemmed in between the waves of a stormy

¹ Those amongst us who have openly or silently sympathized with the spirit of this law, have for many years been accustomed to hear reproaches heaped upon us, because we allowed such disturbers of the peace as Garrison, Phillips, and May to go unhanged. The reproach now is, that such men did not arise two centuries ago, that this law was ever allowed to fall into oblivion, that such men as Garrison did not live amongst us always.

² Much of this, and several subsequent paragraphs, is taken from an article in the “North American Review,” published many years since.

sea and the savages of a boundless wilderness, so little were they subdued by the hardness of their lot, that they regarded ignorance, irreligion, and sin as the only evils, and religious instruction, intellectual discipline, and proper employment, as the effectual remedies. Where shall their descendants look for a higher example?

How it came to pass that the early colonists of New England should form laws, for the advancement of education and the rights of men, of such wisdom, liberality, and forecast, it is not difficult to conjecture. The civil, and especially the spiritual, leaders of the first emigrations to Massachusetts were the most highly educated men that ever led colonies. They were independent, liberty-loving Anglo-Saxons. Their leader and many of his associates were brought up "among books and learned men."¹ They possessed, and they long continued to exert, an influence of the highest and noblest, because of the most disinterested, kind. They intended to form a Christian Commonwealth, all the members of which should understand and obey the laws of God and of the State. We may differ from some of their theological opinions; we may regret that, within half a century after the time of which we are speaking, the spirit of persecution, which had such frightful power in Britain and in most countries on the continent of Europe, reached and affected even them. We may regret, while we do not wonder, that they should have been misled by a belief that institutions and laws made for the Jews alone, in one stage of their progress, were intended for all mankind in every stage. But we may search the world in vain for more conspicuous, unselfish devotion to the cause of what they believed to be truth and the rights of humanity. Of the ministers of the fifteen or sixteen towns in Massachusetts,² the greater part had been educated at Oxford or Cambridge. And they were not educated men of an ordinary type. Archbishop

¹ Robert Ryce, writing to John Winthrop, on the 12th of August, 1629, says, "How hard will it be, for one brought up among books and learned men, to live in a barbarous place, where is no learning, and less civility." — See *Historical Collections*, 4th Series, vol. vi. p. 393.

² Palfrey's *N. E.*, pp. 371-2. Newberry, Ipswich, Saugus, Salem, Charlestown, Weymouth, Newtown, Watertown, Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester, Hingham, Medford, Concord, Dedham; and Wessagussett, now Savin Hill and South Boston, or Mount Wollaston, now Quincy. Winnesimit, now Chelsea, belonged to Boston.

Land did not meddle with ordinary, dull preachers. He silenced the famous preachers, — those that were distinguished for their learning and eloquence, their character and influence. Many of the men thus silenced came to Massachusetts. And they came not alone: their parishioners and friends, who loved them best, and most highly valued liberty of conscience, and least feared the terrors of the ocean and hardships of a savage wilderness, came with them.

Under date of Sept. 4, 1632, Governor Winthrop writes:—

“The ‘Griffin,’ a ship of three hundred tons, arrived. . . . She brought about two hundred passengers. . . . In this ship came Mr. Cotton, Mr. Hooker, and Mr. Stone, ministers; and Mr. Peirce, Mr. Haynes (a gentleman of great estate), Mr. Hoffe, and many other men of good estates. They got out of England with much difficulty, all places being belaid to have taken Mr. Cotton and Mr. Hooker.”

Dr. Palfrey says of these men, and he knew of whom he was speaking, —

“In one ship came John Haynes, an opulent landholder of the county of Essex, and three famous divines, — Thomas Hooker, Samuel Stone, and John Cotton. They were men of eminent capacity and sterling character, fit to be concerned in the founding of a State. In all its generations of worth and refinement, Boston has never seen an assembly more illustrious for generous qualities and for manly culture, than when the magistrates of the young colony welcomed Cotton and his fellow-voyagers at Winthrop’s table.”¹

Many of these men brought their libraries with them. Of one, John Harvard’s, of two hundred and sixty volumes, we have the catalogue. There is not probably now a private library in America, of the same number of volumes, so well selected and so valuable. Many of the authors, such as Beza, Chrysostom, Calvin, Luther, Bacon, and Camden, and all the classical authors, — Homer, Plutarch, and Isocrates, Lucan, Pliny, Sallust, Terence, Juvenal, and Horace, — are hardly less valuable now than they were then.

Among them were the writings of Luther, who was not only the great leader of the Reformation, and the translator of the whole Bible into exquisite classical German, — which holds the

¹ Palfrey’s Hist., vol. i. p. 367.

same place for its beautiful language amongst the Germans as King James's translation among the English, — but the most able, eloquent, and strenuous advocate of the highest education in the classical languages, in Hebrew, in History, Philosophy, Botany, Logic, Rhetoric, Music, and the Mathematics, for those who could afford such an education, and of schools for universal, elementary education, which all boys should be compelled to attend.¹ And in these writings they must have read such sentences as these: —

“It is brutish recklessness to act merely for the present time, and to say, as for us, we will rule now; but we care not how it shall be with those who come after us.”²

“For the Prince of Darkness is shrewd enough to know, that, where the languages flourish, there his power will soon be so rent and torn that he cannot readily repair it.”

“Let us bethink ourselves, that haply we may not be able to retain the gospel without the knowledge of the languages in which it was written. For they are the scabbard in which the sword of the Spirit is sheathed; they are the casket in which this jewel is enshrined.”

“Hence we may conclude that, where the languages do not abide, there, in the end, the gospel must perish.”

“The Sophists averred, that the Scriptures were obscure. . . . But they did not see that all that was wanted, was a knowledge of the languages in which it was recorded; for nothing is more plain-spoken than God's word, when we have become thorough masters of its language.”³

“Had I passed my days in obscurity, and had I received no aid from the languages towards a sure and exact understanding of the Scriptures, I might have led a holy life, and, in my retirement, have preached sound doctrine; but then I should have left the Pope and the Sophists, together with the whole body of Antichrist, just where I found them.”⁴

¹ See Dr. Martin Luther's Address to the Councilmen of all the towns of Germany, *passim*. Barnard's American Journal of Education, vol. iv. p. 421.

² American Journal of Education, vol. iv. pp. 432, 433.

³ *Id.*, pp. 434, 435.

⁴ See how Luther valued the work of teaching: “As for myself, if I had children, and were able, I would teach them not only the languages and history, but singing likewise; and with music I would combine a full course of mathematics.” — *Id.*, p. 437.

“Cheerfully let thy son study; and should he, the while, even be compelled to earn his bread, yet remember that you are offering to our Lord God a fair block of marble, out of which he can hew for you a perfect work.” — *Sermon on Keeping Children at School*, p. 440.

“For my part, if I were, or were compelled, to leave off preaching, and to enter

We must remember that all this was written and published throughout Germany in 1524.

There is another thing to be taken into consideration, to account for the wisdom of this legislation. None were chosen to the Legislature but religious men,—men of spotless character, the best, wisest, and most trustworthy to be found,—men who would naturally make the best laws they could. From which of these United States are the best, wisest, and most trustworthy men now sent, and those only? To which Congress, within the memory of any person living, have only men of spotless character, the best, wisest, and most trustworthy to be found, been sent, from Massachusetts? To which branch of which legislature of the State, to which common council of the city, since the first, have such men and such men only been sent? The very thing which should always be considered a disqualification for a place in either of these assemblies is often the only qualification a candidate possesses,—the having some private interest to advance therein.

This law of 1647 was the establishment and the beginning of that great and wise system of common schools for the education of the whole people, which has been and is the honor of this Commonwealth, and which has been spreading, and is destined to spread, until it controls and guides the education of the whole people, not only in every State in this country, but of all States in every country.

From the beginning, the practice seems to have prevailed of transacting the business of the several towns at meetings of all the freemen. Every freeman was here naturally led to inform himself as to all the interests of the community, and was free to utter and urge his opinions. These town-meetings thus became societies for the discussion of real questions of public interest; schools, therefore, of training in argument, logic, and eloquence. These have continued, in all the *towns*, up to the present day, and must have had vast influence

some other vocation. I know not an office that would please me better than that of schoolmaster or teacher of boys. For I am convinced, that, next to preaching, this is the most useful and greatly the best labor in all the world: and, in fact, I am sometimes in doubt which of the positions is the more honorable." — *Id.*, p. 441.

forming men to habits of thought and enlightened discussion.¹

In 1632, the inhabitants of Dorchester designated twelve of their number to meet weekly for the consideration of public affairs. About the same time, Watertown chose three for the same purpose. In 1634, the people of Boston chose "three to make up the ten to manage the affairs of the town."² In 1635, Mr. Frothingham tells us of an "order made by the inhabitants of Charlestown, at a full meeting, for the government of the town by selectmen."³ This is the element of representation; and "at the fifth General Court held in Massachusetts, twenty-four persons appeared, delegated by eight towns; 'namely, three each from Newtown, Watertown, Charlestown, Boston, Roxbury, Dorchester, Saugus, and Salem,'—to meet and consider of such matters as they (the freemen) were to take order in at the same General Court;"⁴ and thus the government of Massachusetts first became truly a representative government.

The leaders and first legislators of Massachusetts were unconsciously laying the foundations and shaping the laws for a government and state of society wholly new. Every act of their legislation is therefore of the highest interest to the student of human progress. But as I found it impossible, in the space allowed me, to give more than a few glimpses of the spirit and action of their Legislature, I have selected the law founding the university, for the highest education; that establishing common schools, for universal education, and opening for all the path to the highest; that which required every individual to be fitted for some employment useful to the Commonwealth; and that which denounced and forbade slavery.

¹ Municipal government—the city—is an anomaly in a commonwealth. In all ages it has been the natural expression of despotism. Not the people of Italy, but the city of Rome, governed the world, as Paris has governed France. In a city the people annually meet, not together, but in wards, and surrender their liberties to men not always fit to govern justly; often to ambitious demagogues who have been devoting their time to intriguing for their own advancement. Faneuil Hall was the creation of a free town. It is almost out of place in a city. The natural tendency of things, in a city, is shown by the present condition of New York, governed by persons seeking, not the best interests of the people, but their own interest,—to make themselves rich.

² Palfrey's Hist., vol. i. p. 381.

³ History of Charlestown, p. 50.

⁴ Palfrey's Hist. vol. i. p. 372.

The schoolmaster was an important person, in those early days. Many of them were distinguished. There is room to speak of only a few. Dr. Bentley gives us a pretty full account of those of Salem for the first century and beyond. John Fiske arrived in 1637. He was educated at Cambridge, in England and was possessed of a large property. He prepared for college under Sir George Downing, a graduate of 1642. Mr. Fiske was frequently in the pulpit in Salem, and in 1644 became pastor of Wenham. Edward Norris succeeded Fiske, whose pupil he had been, in 1640, and continued forty-two years. He was succeeded by Daniel Epes, a Cambridge graduate, who continued till 1698. He was a magistrate and a counsellor. He was succeeded by Samuel Whitman, who was afterwards settled in the ministry; and he by John Emerson, who had been in the ministry, and continued in the school till 1711.¹

To secure proper respect to the schoolmaster, his wife was to be accommodated with a pew next the wives of the magistrates.²

When, in 1643, forty-eight of the inhabitants of Weymouth determined to plant a colony in Seaconk, which they named Rehoboth, the fifth on the list was the schoolmaster. In the partition, by lot, of the woodland; and again, on the registry of lands, his name had the fifth place. Yet Rehoboth was then, as it is now, one of the small towns. It thus had one person, professionally a teacher, throughout the year. It now has schools three months in summer and three months in winter, each of them usually taught by a new teacher every quarter.

Ezekiel Cheever, born in 1614, came to New England in 1637; and, the next year, went with those who founded New Haven. He began his services as schoolmaster in 1638, and continued there with great success till 1650; when he moved to Ipswich, and there taught with distinguished success and celebrity, making that town rank, according to Dr. Bentley, in literature and population, above the other towns in the county of Essex.³ In 1661 Mr. Felt tells us, his agricultural operations required a barn, and that he planted an orchard on his homestead, thereby improving the soil of Ipswich, as well as the souls of her children, by

¹ Mass. Historical Collections, vol. vi. p. 240.

² *Id.*, p. 241.

³ Barnard, *American Journal*, vol. i. p. 304.

healthy manual labor. It is to be regretted, as Mr. Barnard says, that the early practice of attaching a house, for the occupancy of the master, with a few acres of land for a garden, orchard, and the feeding of a cow, adopted from the Old World,¹ had not been continued in all the small towns. It would have been the means of securing, in each town, a permanent schoolmaster, educated for the office. If this practice had been retained, the lamentable decay of the schools throughout nearly all the smaller towns might have been prevented.

In November, 1666, Mr. Cheever removed to Charlestown; and thence, in 1670, to Boston, where his labors were continued for thirty-eight years. He was a good scholar, and made an excellent *Accidence* for beginners in Latin, which continued in use for very many years; but, if the account that Barnard gives of his discipline is to be relied on, he was in his feelings more of a savage than a Christian.²

There were other famous and able public schoolmasters; but there were not enough to supply the wants of the people, and thence the necessity of what were afterwards called "academies." Of one or two of these only have I time to speak.

By the will of Governor William Dummer, who died in 1761, his dwelling-house and farm at Byfield, in Newbury, were set apart for the establishment of a grammar school, to stand forever on the farm. The property was given in trust, the rents and profits to be employed in erecting a school-house, and in support of a master; the appointment of whom was intrusted to a committee of five Byfield freeholders, acting in conjunction with the minister of the parish. The little school-house was built in 1762, and Samuel Moody—the famous Master Moody—was chosen to take charge of it. He continued its master for seventeen years, with an energy, success, and reputation which have rarely been surpassed. Very many of those destined to be the most distinguished men of Massachusetts in the various walks of life, were his pupils. They learned little else but Latin; yet the habits of promptness, independence of thought, exactness and thoroughness, which he formed in them, made all future ac-

¹ Barnard, *American Journal*, vol. i. p. 303.

² See *Life of Rev. John Barnard*, as quoted by H. Barnard, *American Journal*, vol. i. p. 308.

quisitions easy, and success, in most cases, certain. The endowment was not quite sufficient to maintain the master, and fee for tuition were found necessary. This, for some years, was the only conspicuous school in Massachusetts; candidates for the college being very generally prepared by the parish ministers.¹

The example of Governor Dummer was followed by the Phillipses of Andover and Exeter, in the foundation and endowment, in those towns, of excellent academies, which soon reached the high reputation they have enjoyed up to the present day.

Samuel Phillips, of Andover, a pupil of Master Moody, a graduate of Harvard in 1771, an earnest patriot, a successful man of business, made town clerk and treasurer at the age of twenty-one, member of the Provincial Congress for four years, from 1775; a senator from the first election under the Constitution, and onwards, except one year, when he was lieutenant-governor, till his death; president of the Senate; and, before he was thirty, a judge of the Common Pleas,—this honored and honorable Judge Phillips founded Phillips Academy in Andover, in 1777, which, the next year, went into operation under Eliphalet Pearson.

His own share in the endowment was not large, but his influence secured \$6,000 each from his father, Samuel, of North Andover, and his uncle William, of Boston; \$31,000 from his uncle John, of Exeter, and \$28,000 from his cousin William, of Boston.

This was the first incorporated academy; the act bearing the date of Oct. 4, 1780. One day less than six months from that day, that uncle John announced to his nephew the incorporation of Phillips Academy at Exeter.

The common schools and the town grammar schools continued to decline. In the busy world of Massachusetts, men of ability found more profitable employment; and the great truth was not yet discovered, that women, as teachers and managers and governors of boys even up to manhood, are often gifted, at least as highly as men. Most of the boys were fitted for college

¹ See Nehemiah Cleveland's admirable history of this school.

by the ministers of the gospel, among whom I have the best possible means of knowing, that the practice of teaching the elements of the Latin language, as a spoken language, very generally prevailed as late as one hundred years ago.

Academies and private schools grew more and more numerous; sometimes endowed by public-spirited individuals, sometimes by grants of land from the State, often by both, and usually supported, in part, by fees from the students. In 1834, there were more than nine hundred and fifty of these schools. Those under the supervision of resolute, judicious men, who knew the value of good teaching, and how to secure it; and sometimes others, by a fortunate accident, or a gracious Providence,—had good teachers, and flourished. But the greater number were *very* poor schools; so also were most of the town schools; and the belief and intimate conviction that most of the common schools were wretchedly poor, became, except amongst the most ignorant of the teachers themselves, and the most benighted of the people, almost universal.

The Act of 1789, up to which time the laws of which I have been speaking continued in operation, was a wide departure from the principle of the original law. It substitutes six months for the constant instruction provided for towns of fifty families; and requires a grammar teacher of determinate qualifications for towns of two hundred families, instead of the similar requisition from all towns of half that number of inhabitants. Still, however, far as it falls short of that noble democratic idea of the Puritans, of providing the best possible instruction for all, it would, if in force at the present day, render instruction of the highest kind accessible to the children of more than two-thirds of the towns of the Commonwealth.

By an Act of February, 1824, facetiously called, in the index to the Massachusetts Laws, “an act *providing for* the public schools,” the law of 1789 was repealed; and, for all towns of less than five thousand inhabitants, instead of a master of “good morals, well instructed in the Latin, Greek, and English languages,” a teacher, or teachers, must be provided, “well qualified to instruct youth in orthography, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, and geography, and in good behavior.”

This act was the severest blow the common-school system

ever received; not only because it shut from the poor children, of all but a few towns, the path which had always lain open to the highest order of education, but because it took away a fixed standard for the qualifications of teachers, and substituted no other in its stead. The common schools had hitherto been as nursing mothers to the gifted children of the indigent, who were often raised, through them, to better opportunities, and thence to the highest stations in society. This high duty they utterly abandoned. The poor boy of talent who, under the former system, would have received the elements of the best education, gratuitously, but of right, in his native town, was thenceforward obliged to find or beg his way to a private school or academy, or to remain, for ever, without a learned education. The candidate for the office of teacher, being released from the necessity of an acquaintance with the learned languages, which in most cases implied a certain degree of cultivation and refinement, and amenable to no rule measuring the amount of the mere elements, which only were required, was too often found to be lamentably deficient even in them.

The effects of lowering the standard of instruction in the public schools became, to attentive observers, every year more apparent. For a time, the better qualified teachers continued in the service; but they were gradually supplanted, in many places, by persons who, from their inferior qualifications, were willing to do the work for a lower compensation.

In 1830, a meeting of teachers took place in Boston, which led to the formation of the American Institute of Instruction, intended for the mutual benefit of actual teachers. It had its first annual meeting this year, and began its work with an Introductory Address by President Wayland, of Brown University, its first President. It was incorporated in 1831, and has continued till the present time, to hold annual meetings in various parts of this and other States, with addresses, lectures, and discussions, which have brought together many actual teachers and other friends of education from all parts of the country. Its good effects upon the teachers have been strikingly shown in the improved character and practical nature of their lectures and discussions.

One of the subjects year after year discussed was the condition of the common schools and what ought to be and might

be done for their elevation. These discussions led, in 1836, to a Memorial to the General Court, from a committee of the Directors of the Institute, urging the importance of legislative action for the improvement of the common schools, particularly by raising the qualifications of the teachers, and asking for the appointment of a Superintendent of the common schools, and showing the ways in which he might exercise the most beneficial influence. This was referred to a committee, but led to no immediate action. In January, 1837, another memorial from the Institute was presented to the Legislature, praying that better provision might be made for the training of the teachers of the schools, and particularly "the instituting, for the special instruction of teachers, of one or more seminaries."

The cause of the common schools had been very ably pleaded by J. G. Carter,¹ at that time a member of the House, and earnestly and long and well advocated by our associate, Rev. Charles Brooks, of Hingham, in lectures in many places, two of them before the Legislature during this same session. This gentleman, indeed, for his long, disinterested, and unpaid labors in the cause of education, especially for his efforts to secure the establishment of Normal schools and a Board of Education, is entitled to be considered, more than any other individual, what he has been called, the Father of Normal schools.²

Elisha Ticknor, father of our distinguished friend and associate, George Ticknor, was the first in Massachusetts,—so far as I know,—to suggest the importance of an institution for the education of teachers, which he did in 1787, in the "Massachusetts Magazine." The next was Denison Olmsted, in 1817. In 1823, William Russell proposed seminaries for teachers; in 1825, Thomas A. Gallaudet did the same in Connecticut; and in 1826, Governor DeWitt Clinton in New York. Governor

¹ In Letters to the Hon. William Prescott, LL.D., on the Schools of New England, with remarks upon the Principles of Instruction, p. 123. Boston, 1824. And Essays upon Popular Education, containing an Outline of an Institution for the Education of Teachers, of sixty pages. Boston, 1826.

² Mr. Brooks lectured in nearly one hundred different towns and cities,—in every place where he was invited. By invitation of the Legislatures of Massachusetts, New Hampshire, Vermont, Rhode Island, Connecticut, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, he delivered, to crowded assemblies in each, two or three lectures, besides speaking in most of the capitals between Boston and Washington.

Levi Lincoln, in his speech to the Legislature, June 6, 1827, earnestly recommends "measures for the preparation and better qualification of teachers," laments their present "incompetency," and suggests a public "institution for their appropriate education and discipline." In 1827, James G. Carter asked aid of the Legislature to establish a seminary, in vain.

In 1830, a branch of Phillips Academy in Andover was opened for the express purpose of educating teachers, but was soon closed.

On the 14th of January, 1837, in the Massachusetts House of Representatives, on motion of Mr. King, of Danvers, it was ordered that the Committee on Education be requested to consider the expediency of providing by law for the better education of teachers of the public schools. On April 14, of the same year, on motion of Mr. Carter, of Lancaster, a bill relating to common schools was taken up, and the House resolved itself into a committee of the whole for the consideration thereof; and, after some time spent therein, Mr. Speaker resumed the chair, and Mr. Winthrop, of Boston, from the committee, reported that the committee had had the subject referred to them under consideration, and that the said bill, with sundry amendments recommended by the committee, ought to pass: and the bill was ordered to a third reading.

Mr. Carter's report was as follows:—

"The Committee on Education to whom was referred so much of His Excellency the Governor's Address as relates to education, and to whom was also referred 'The Memorial of the Directors of the American Institute of Instruction,' and the petition of a convention of delegates from each of the towns in Plymouth County, and who were directed by order of the House, Jan. 14, 1837, to consider the expediency of providing by law for the better education of teachers of the public schools of the Commonwealth, have carefully considered those subjects, and report thereon the accompanying bill: Be it enacted, &c.:—

"Sec. 1. His Excellency the Governor, with the advice and consent of the Council, is hereby authorized to appoint eight persons, who, together with the Governor and Lieutenant-Governor, shall constitute and be denominated the Board of Education."¹

¹ The first members of the Board were Edward Everett, George Hall, J. G. Carter, Emerson Davis, Edmund Dwight, Horace Mann, Edward A. Newton, Robert Rantoul, Jr., Thomas Robbins, Jared Sparks.

The remainder of the act designates its duties. The common schools were probably, at this time, at their lowest point of degradation. From what we can learn, they had, in most parts of the Commonwealth, been gradually declining, until, by this act, the Legislature showed its disposition to interpose and arrest their downward progress.

The Board of Education, at its first meeting, held June 29, 1837, appointed as their secretary, Horace Mann,¹ at that time President of the Senate of Massachusetts. Mr. Mann had been known to the individuals of the Board as a member of one or other branch of the General Court for the ten previous years, and especially as the principal mover and agent in the erection of the State Lunatic Hospital at Worcester.

He had, moreover, been recently engaged in the revision of the laws of the Commonwealth, and had been charged, together with another, with the supervision of the Revised Code; and was therefore as familiar, probably, as any other individual, with the laws, institutions, and interests of the State. Immediately on his appointment, he gave up a lucrative practice in his profession, and, abandoning all other pursuits, devoted all his energies, time, and thoughts to the work he had entered upon.

The most important and one of the first acts of the Board was the establishment of schools for the special education of teachers. Two Normal schools went into operation in the course of 1839: one at Lexington, for females; the other for pupils of both sexes, at Barre: the former, in July, under the superintendence of Cyrus Peirce, a man long and favorably known as a teacher, at Nantucket; the latter, in September, under the charge of Samuel Phillips Newman, a gentleman who had been for many years a professor, of high reputation, in Bowdoin College. The first of these schools was soon moved to West Newton; and thence, after some years, to Framingham, where it was finally settled, at a point within a few rods of the exact geographical centre of the State. The second was removed

¹ The almost universal expectation of teachers and others interested in the subject was, that J. G. Carter would be appointed. He was far better acquainted with the condition of education in Massachusetts, and had done, by his eloquent writings, more than any one else in making that known to the people. Advantage has been taken of his investigations and of his statements, but almost always without acknowledgment.

from Barre to Westfield, where it now stands. A third Normal school, for both sexes, went into operation at Bridgewater, Sept. 9, 1840, under the charge of Colonel Nicholas Tillinghast, a professor of high reputation at the Military School at West Point;¹ a fourth, for females only, June 2, 1853, at Salem, under the care of a man who had received his education as a teacher at the Normal School in Bridgewater.

In the establishment of each school, the inhabitants of the town, or their friends, provided a school-house, or made large donations for that object. The State sustains the schools, paying the salaries of the teachers and the necessary expenses of the school, granting aid to pupils of limited means residing at a distance, and making appropriations for apparatus and other helps in instruction.

All these schools are now in successful operation, and are accomplishing vastly more than their most sanguine friends ever dared to hope. They have greatly improved the old methods of teaching and introduced new. They have improved in modes of study, in thoroughness, and particularly in the study of subjects by topics, with personal inquiry, thought, and research, instead of servilely following the text-book. They have improved in the surprisingly ready use of the blackboard, upon almost all subjects, and of real objects and other sources of illustration; in method; and in the organization of schools and the theory of discipline after a lofty standard. They have substituted real *teaching* for the old way of *hearing lessons*.²

¹ Mr. Tillinghast introduced into the Normal schools excellent modes of teaching arithmetic and other branches of science, which have been greatly improved by his pupils, and by them, directly and indirectly, introduced into the other schools. He was extremely well qualified for his position in all respects, except one,—he was ignorant of the Latin and Greek languages; and he felt and often said, that a person cannot teach *language* without something of this attainment. He always lamented his want in this respect; and, I believe, shortened his life by his attempt to make up for it, when the labor necessary to carry on the school was constantly as much as he could bear. His ignorance of Latin shortened his sleep and his life. He felt that if he could have devoted to the study only a year or two, before he was old enough for science, he would have far better understood every thing which he had to learn.

² In a recent conversation with the faithful and able teacher of the school at Bridgewater, he gave an account of his way of teaching mineralogy. A single instance may suffice to give an idea of his method. For learning a lesson on granite, each pupil was furnished (instead of a text-book) with a piece of the rock, and the names of the three constituent minerals, whose properties he was to study.

And, in accomplishing this, the very object of their institution, and as a means of accomplishing this, they have been and are teaching, in an admirable manner, all those branches of knowledge which are deemed most important for the rising generation to be acquainted with. The Normal schools are thus colleges of purest character and noblest aim, perfectly suited to prepare females for their special vocation in life, that of teaching children from birth up, — a vocation which is really, taking all things into consideration, the highest vocation on earth.¹

No teacher, though he may have given his life to the work, can spend an hour at one of these schools, without feeling how much time he might have saved, and how much better and pleasanter and more useful his whole life's work would have been, if he could have had two years of such preparation at the beginning of his career.²

By the exact knowledge, habits of investigation and thought, and clear understanding given to the great numbers who have in them been prepared to take charge of the common schools of the State, nearly all these schools are now very much better than they ever were before. Let any one who has any doubt upon this subject, visit any of the schools, Primary or Grammar, of this city, or of any town in the neighborhood.³

¹ The best education for a teacher is really the best education that a woman can receive, since it requires a thorough knowledge and understanding of whatever it is most important for everybody to know. If better colleges are wanted for females, they may best be had by carrying out the plan which the Board of Education have now under consideration, — that of lengthening the course at the Normal schools.

² Many years ago, an officer, P. A. Sileström, was sent by the Court of Sweden to look at our schools. After witnessing, for two hours, the instruction given by young ladies in the Normal school then at West Newton, he told me, "This is worth coming across the Atlantic to see. This is a great discovery. There are maiden ladies in Norway who could easily be prepared to teach all the little scattered mountain schools in that country, — schools in regard to which the government have long been almost in despair."

³ In 1856, I went into Prussia for the express purpose of examining the gymnasia and, more particularly, the seminaries for teachers, after the model of which our Normal schools had been formed, in consequence of the knowledge given in the Report on them by Cousin, which had been introduced here by his correspondent, our friend and associate, Charles Brooks. I found no difficulty in gaining admission to them, through our minister Governor Vroom; and devoted a week to the examination of one of them in Berlin, which had been pointed out by the Minister of Public Instruction and Religion as a fair representative of the Normal schools of Prussia.

There is another thing which should not go without mention in the briefest sketch of the history of Education in Massachusetts; that is, the signal ability, intelligence, and thorough acquaintance with every thing relating to the instruction, moral elevation, and discipline of the schools, shown in the extracts from the Reports of the School Committees of every part of the State, which accompany the Annual Reports of the Board of Education.

The signal success of our Normal schools, and the supervision exercised over the common schools, have been possible only through the existence and wise management of the School Fund, of whose legislative history it is therefore necessary to speak.

In January, 1828, the Committee on Education, in the House of Representatives, in a report made by the Hon. W. B. Calhoun, declared that means should be devised for the establishment of a fund having in view not the support, but the encouragement, of the common schools, and the instruction of school-teachers.

In January, 1833, Mr. Marsh, of Dalton, suggested the expediency of investing a portion of the proceeds of the lands of the Commonwealth in a permanent fund, the interest of which should be annually applied for the encouragement of common schools. The committee say, —

“It is not intended, in establishing a school fund, to relieve towns and parents from the principal expense of education, but to manifest our

I patiently heard every teacher and every class, in every study they were pursuing, and saw the instruction given by some of the pupils to classes in the Model school.

I had kept myself acquainted with all the operations of the Normal schools in Massachusetts, from the time when Father Peirce began with his class of three girls, at Lexington, to the end of the school-year in 1855; and I was obliged, to my infinite surprise and gratification, to come to the conclusion, that there was not a single point in which the Massachusetts schools were not immeasurably superior to the Berlin. Our course of studies was better, our methods of instruction and discipline, the intelligence and vivacity of our teachers; but the greatest difference was in the character of the materials out of which the future teachers were to be made. Instead of the bright, earnest, wide-awake, intelligent Yankee girls, who formed eighty per cent of the pupils in our Normal schools, I saw only ingainly, awkward, dull young men, of whom it was impossible to help feeling, that most of them were there because they were too lazy to work, and too stupid to hope to succeed in any calling which required intelligent, thoughtful activity.

In the gymnasium, I speedily came to a different conclusion; for, while I nowhere saw — in mathematics, in natural philosophy, astronomy, and kindred branches — instruction given better than I had often seen at Cambridge, and in the High School in this city, in instruction in the elements of language, and the subsequent course in Latin, in English, in French, and especially in their own German, I was obliged to admit that they were far beyond what I had, then, anywhere seen here.

in, and to give direction, energy, and stability to, institutions calculated to individual happiness and the public welfare. . . . Therefore we commend that a fund be constituted, and the distribution of the same so ordered as to open a direct intercourse with the schools; that what wants may be better understood and supplied, the advantages of education be more highly appreciated, and the blessings of wisdom, virtue, knowledge, carried home to the fireside of every family, to the bosom of every child."

February, 1834, a committee, after a very able Report, full of most valuable suggestions, reported, by their chairman, A. D. Woodbury, an Act to establish the Massachusetts School Fund:—

That all unappropriated moneys now in the Treasury, derived from the sale of lands in the State of Maine, and from the claim of the State of Massachusetts on the United States for military services, be appropriated to constitute a permanent fund for the aid and encouragement of common schools."

Under this Act, the "Massachusetts School Fund," went into operation on the 1st of January, 1835.

By an Act passed in 1854, the fund was enlarged to a million and a half of dollars, by the transfer to the Fund of 2,944 shares of the stock of the Western Railroad Corporation held by the State. By a law of 1859, the School Fund is to be further increased, from the proceeds of the sale of lands in the Back Bay;¹ and it has been thus increased by the addition, from that source, of the sum of \$456,930.06; making it, since the 1st of January, 1866, \$2,000,000; to which sum, for the present, it is limited.

"The establishment of the School Fund," says Governor Boutwell, "was the most important educational measure ever adopted by the government of the Commonwealth; and, in connection with the organization of the Board of Education, it has wrought a salutary change and reformation in the character and influence of our public schools."—"With the aid of the fund, it is possible to obtain accurate and complete returns from nearly every town in the State. Without it, all legislation must prove ineffectual. With the aid of the fund, all material facts are annually made known to the Legislature; without it, each town is kept ignorant of what its neighbors are doing. With the fund, we have a system; without it, all is disjointed and disconnected."²

One-half the income of this fund is annually "distributed among the cities and towns of the State, in proportion to the

¹ Twenty-fourth Report of the Board of Education: Secretary G. S. Boutwell's Report, p. 74.

² *Id.*, p. 76.

number of children in each, between the ages of five and years;" on condition, however, that no apportionment shall be made to a town or city which has not sent in a report, and which has not raised by taxation, for the support of schools, during the previous school-year, a sum not less than one dollar and fifty cents for each person between the ages of five and fifteen. This is now increased to three dollars for each child.

From the other half of the income of the School Fund shall be paid "all money appropriated for other educational purposes such as the support of the Normal schools, schools for the deaf and dumb, for feeble-minded persons, &c.

By the wise and careful distribution of the former half of the fund, with its conditions, the inhabitants of the towns and cities in the Commonwealth have been induced to raise, by voluntary taxation of themselves, sums for the support of the schools which have been constantly increasing from 1837 to the present. The mere increase for 1867 "amounting," according to the secretary of the Board, "to \$362,328.87; a sum added in a single year nearly, or quite, equal to the entire amount raised by taxation in 1837."¹

The small bonus of twenty cents, or at most twenty-five cents for each child between five and fifteen, has been used as a stimulus to induce the people to raise by voluntary taxation, every year from twenty-nine to forty times that sum, in all the towns of the Commonwealth.

We were recently told, in an admirable school report, by one of our associates,² who is as careful in his statements as he is eloquent in the enforcement of truth, that, in France, two and a half millions of children are taught at a cost of over six millions of dollars, that is, at \$2.06 each child; and that, in 1856, the total expense of primary instruction, for 3,850,000 children, was over eight millions of dollars, or \$2.07 for each child; by primary instruction being meant all instruction below that of the colleges.

In Massachusetts, in 1867, the money raised by voluntary taxation, for 261,408 children, between five and fifteen, including only expenses for wages, board, fuel, care of fires and school rooms, was \$2,355,505,³ that is, \$9.10 for each child; and "t

¹ Thirty-first Annual Report, p. 39.

² Rev. R. C. Waterston.

³ This money undoubtedly comes mostly from the rich, and the greatest gain is to the poor. Yet it is voted readily, and paid most willingly. "Government e

amount from taxes, tuition, and funds, and expended on public schools, private schools, and academies, exclusive of the expenses of buildings and school-books, is \$3,160,665.94; which is equal to the sum of over \$12 for every person in the State between five and fifteen years of age."¹

Besides these, we know what large sums are annually spent on buildings and in school-books.

There is another work, another change, which has been silently and constantly going on, under the guidance of the Board of Education and the secretaries, and through their great organs—the Normal schools and the enlightened experience of the people, not less important than any other that has been spoken of. The common schools have, every year since the establishment of the Normal school, been taught and managed by a larger number of females than in any year before. To take only the last eleven years that have been reported. The whole number of different persons employed as teachers in the public schools, during the year 1856, was 7,153, of whom 1,768 were males and 5,385 females.

The whole number employed in 1867 was 7,759, of whom 1,020 were males and 6,739 females; showing an addition, in eleven years, to the number of female teachers, of 1,354, or 123, on an average, each year; and a diminution in the number of male teachers of 748, or 68 a year, the number of schools having increased in those eleven years from 4,300 to 4,838.

In the matter of compensation to female teachers, there always has been, and still is, a deplorable disregard of propriety, right feeling, and justice. The average wages of female teachers in 1837 were \$11.38 per month; less than \$3 a week. They are now, or were in 1867, \$26.44 per month, that is, \$6.61 a week; an increase of 50 cents a month each year for thirty years. But still what a wretched pittance for such services! Absolutely unintelligent labor, mere digging, is better paid than the intelligent, refining devotion and care of highly educated teachers.

not," as Mr. Webster said, "subject the property of those who have estates to a burden for a purpose more favorable to the poor, and more useful to the whole community. This is the living fountain which supplies the ever-flowing, ever-refreshing, ever-fertilizing stream of public instruction and general intelligence." — *D. Webster's Speech in Massachusetts Convention of 1820.*

¹ Thirty-first Annual Report of the Board of Education and of the Secretary, Hon. Joseph White.

One can hardly help feeling that the mere cleaning of streets, digging of ditches, and raising crops of potatoes and cabbages,—all to be forgotten in a year,—are more important, in the eyes of the fathers of the people, than the refinement, elevation, and delicate training of their children, on which their own happiness, after middle life, will depend, more than on all other causes together.

Now, are not the legislation of Massachusetts, in regard to the School Fund and the Normal schools, and the action of the agents of the State in carrying this legislation into effect, in perfect keeping with that legislation of our Fathers, which, as we have seen, is the object of praise and admiration throughout the world? In this one particular, we have not fallen below their high standard. We have, through our Governor and Council, selected year after year, from all the inhabitants of the State, such persons, to form the Board of Education, as seemed best fitted, by their wisdom, experience, and knowledge of the wants and actual working of the schools, to take charge, without pecuniary remuneration, of the interests of education: and we have required the Board "to lay before the Legislature an annual report of school returns, and of all the doings of the Board, with such observations upon the condition and efficiency of the system of popular education, and such suggestions as to the most practical means of improving and extending it, as the experience and reflection of the Board dictate."¹

The Board have chosen to the office of secretary, who is the organ of communication between the State, its officers and representatives, and all the schools of the State, men—Horace Mann, Barnas Sears, George S. Bontwell, Joseph White—as signally well qualified for the office as could be found in the State, perhaps in the world.

¹ Twenty-fourth Report, sec. 3, p. 64.

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