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**REVIEW**

OF THE

**REPORTS OF THE**

**ANNUAL VISITING COMMITTEES**

OF THE

**PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF THE CITY OF BOSTON,**

**FOR 1845.**

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A N N U A L V I S I T I N G C O M M I T T E E S ,

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ERRATUM. On the 9th page, 14th line from top, for  
"scurrility," read "severity."

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## REVIEW.

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A "CITY DOCUMENT" of no ordinary character was, early in the last Autumn, distributed to the good people of this Metropolis. It is entitled, "*Reports of the Annual Visiting Committees of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, 1845.*" On the expediency of making public such a document, there has, doubtless, arisen some difference of opinion in the community, as, it is reported, there was in the Committee. Much that may properly come before the constituted authorities and give shape to their proceedings, is not suitable to lay before the people to prejudice their opinions;—especially when, as in this case, the course of the Authorities has been in one direction, and their published papers point in another. For, in fact, the tendency of this document is to create utter distrust in the school system of the city, and in nearly all the teachers by whom it is administered, while the Committee which put it forth, left the system unchanged, and re-elected all the Masters, save four.

It is much to be hoped, that before the citizens read the "*reports,*" they read the "*resolutions*" of the whole Committee respecting their publication, which appeared on the second page of the "*document,*" one of which is on this wise:—"RESOLVED, *That in ordering the Reports on the Grammar and Writing Schools to be printed and distributed, this Board are not to be understood as adopting or rejecting the views therein contained, or expressing any*

*opinion respecting them. And that this resolution be printed with the Report.*" For, however this fact may implicate the good judgment of the Committee, it leaves the reports sustained by no other sanction than that of the names subscribed to them. And, perhaps, before I shall have done with the subject, I may make it appear that some of the names which claim the distinction of gracing these Reports, (or being disgraced by them,) are not so much responsible for the matter of them as the public have been left to suppose. I will not enlarge upon the strangeness of that act of the late School Committee which has thus thrown out to the community a mass of crude opinions upon institutions which are linked with our dearest interests,—opinions so novel and uncertain, that these delegated curators of the establishments which they concern, could decide neither on "adopting or rejecting" them. There were some strange elements in the Committee, and at the period of this publication, these discordant elements had wrought matters into a strange condition. Weariness of resistance to their protean vagaries, betrayed the Board, at last, into a measure to which their fresh, unjaded judgment could never have assented. To a perseverance on the part of the majority of the Committee, only surpassed by the pertinacity of their restless associates, the City is indebted for the conservation of its long tried, and eminently successful public school system. No set of men ever gave a larger portion of gratuitous time and labor to the public service than they. That they were tasked beyond their power of patient continuance in well doing, is more a matter of regret than of surprise. Chiefly is this final concession to be deplored, because it is an encouragement to mischief to strive by dogged persistency to accomplish purposes which justice and sound reason will resist to their uttermost.

The inquiry may naturally arise in the reader's mind, 'Why meddle with a defunct production, on which the

public has already passed a very emphatic judgment at the ballot box?' For no other reason than this—gross misrepresentation of the schools has been committed to the press. It has not been exposed and confuted. The record abides: *scripta litera manet*. And though a triumphant majority of the citizens of Boston have borne witness that they do not believe these slanders, yet it is due to future years, that their refutation should follow them, in equally permanent form. Moreover, though a majority of the people sustained the schools and rebuked their assailants, a few betrayed, by their votes, that their minds had been perverted, and their imaginations bewildered by the misstatements and specious schemes put forth in these reports. And again, though the public have not been led into actual disaffection against the present school system, none can tell to what extent the confidence in it which once prevailed has been shaken. And, finally, though the adult population of this community may have been ever so slightly influenced by this imposing "document," yet how unhappy must be the unarrested effect of some statements contained in it, upon the children now attending the common schools. The whole system of public instruction is declared to be sadly deficient, even inferior to that which obtains in the neighboring towns: a majority of the masters described as mere vocal editions of the text-books, neither aspiring, nor competent to communicate any more knowledge, or in any other form, than that imparted in the books. The men whom they have heretofore esteemed as very fountains of information, children are now bidden to recognize as mere conduit-pipes, dribbling stale truths from shallow cisterns. From any source such suggestions would be mischievous to the ductile minds of the young, but from the guardians of the schools, the chosen literati of the city, for whose opinions their first lesson had taught them to entertain the most undoubting respect, these influences

have fallen upon the scholars, with a power of detriment which the most successful resistance can but abate,—which long years can alone repair. All these considerations have seemed to enforce the propriety of a calm, yet plain and fearless Review of the Reports of the Annual Visiting Committees for 1845. It is published at a time when it cannot be suspected of having any reference to a city election. There is none of that studied adaptation to political effect in the juncture at which it is allowed to come before the public, which has characterized the missiles of those who have assailed the public schools, and their accomplished and faithful teachers. It is put forth for the honest purpose of reinstating the school system of the City in the confidence of all good citizens, and of directing attention to the source and “motive-power” of the attacks which have been recently made upon it, in such way as to forefend future annoyance from either the one or the other.

The authorship of the following pages is a matter of the least possible concern. They must be judged on their own merits,—if they do not disclose some awkward truths respecting these “reports,” and cast some strange lights and shadows on the prominent actors, and the stage manager who stands scarcely behind the scenes, the failure will proceed not from lack of material, but of skill to turn it to a proper use. Suffice it to say, that no master or masters in the Boston school service has touched his pen to this document, or is responsible for its publication. The writer is in no way interested in the vindication of their fame, or the continuance of their emoluments, except in so far as every honest man is concerned to see merit appreciated, and good service recompensed. He lays this spontaneous utterance of his own outraged feelings, and insulted understanding, an oblation on the shrine of Justice, in humble confidence that where she presides, it will be an accepted offering.

Before we proceed to the internal examination of thes



“reports,” let us devote a few pages to a review of their history. Having no official access to the archives of the Committee, and no intimate converse with the knowing ones who could doubtless tell some things which they have not put on record, we can report but notorious facts, and such others as may be fairly inferred by a collation of those which are already in evidence before the world.

Boston has not yet forgotten that most of its public teachers have, notwithstanding their large experience in the *work* of education, unhappily found their views on that subject at variance with the *theories* of the Hon. Horace Mann, the accomplished and astute Secretary of the Massachusetts Board. His prolific pen has been exercising its fecundity on the subject of education for the last nine years. His small practical knowledge of a science which is eminently experimental, seems to have inspired him with no modesty in the expression of his opinions. Had more of the exuberant vigor of his mind, which has been so lavished on expression, been given to calm, deliberate, patient reflection, and docile inquiry, the world would have had less proof indeed of his activity, but more of his wisdom. He has written in haste, under spasmodic impulse, and his jealousy of any deliberate investigation into the real merits of his doctrine, is very naturally in the ratio of his consciousness that it never had the moulding touch of a cool judgment to give it strength, or comeliness of proportion.\* The Boston teach-

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\* Of his multifarious works, read his own account, written a year and a half ago. “During the last seven years, I have published six large volumes of School Abstracts, which contain as much reading matter as five of the great volumes of Sparks’ Life of Washington. These abstracts contain selections from the School Committees’ reports, principally manuscript, all of which I have carefully read. These reports of Committees which I have examined for this purpose, I think would make at least fifteen such volumes as Sparks’ Washington. \* \* \* During the same time, the Annual Reports which I have written have amounted to eight hundred octavo pages. My correspondence has been at least

ers, whose practice in the work of instruction had not been modified into conformity with the honorable Secretary's schemes, felt, at length, that his official station, and his fervent, captivating style, rendered his publications dangerous to the permanency of a sound public opinion on the momentous subject of popular education. They ventured therefore to join issue with him by publishing a review of some parts of his most voluminous Seventh Annual Report. The pages of their pamphlet were hardly dry, before a sheet of "Observations" thereon, (subscribed with the initials of one whom Mr. Mann, in recompense for his service, eulogized as "that pure-minded, truth-seeking man,") was let off, the signal gun of that broadside which was soon to follow. It was for the most part gentle, like the character of its reputed author, and only demands notice in this connection, as containing a remarkable prophecy or adumbration of the events which have since followed. The augury is in these ominous words: "A current has been set in motion which is not to be checked. It will move onward. *These gentlemen cannot stem it.*

\* \* Let men club together in common cause by scores or by thirties; they may, doubtless, stay the tide for a time; but the deep waves go surging on, *and will at last*

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three times as much as my reports. \* \* \* I am now completing the sixth volume of the Common School Journal, every number of which—with the exception of those issued during my six months' absence abroad—I have prepared. \* \* \* \* I have delivered thirty-six lectures and addresses on education every year since my appointment." To accomplish all this, and much more in other departments of labor, the Secretary declares that he has "made little difference between day and night." The offspring of this "over-sensitive and over-worn spirit," in conformity with nature's law, bear the traces of this confusion. Light and darkness are so blended in them, as to diffuse a most obscure and confounding twilight. Should the honorable Secretary retain his office a few years longer, and continue subject to this *cacæthes scribendi*—this literary diarrhœa—"I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written." I cannot add with St. John, "Amen!"

*reach even them.*" The surge did not disclose to the eye how *deep*, nor how far-reaching were the insatiate waves. Like the prophecies of inspiration, the predictions which I have put in italics—obscure at the time of their utterance—have been expounded by fulfillment. Mr. Mann's "over-sensitive" spirit could not, however, be quieted by the intervention of his friend. The tempest in his soul, like the winds in the cave of Eolus, struggled for egress. Printer's ink was scarcely black enough to be made the symbol of his gloomy and boding thoughts,—type-metal scarcely hard enough to withstand the melting heat of his excitement. His "REPLY TO THE REMARKS OF THIRTY-ONE BOSTON SCHOOLMASTERS," is a specimen of rancorous vituperation, and bilious scurrility, rarely equaled in the world of letters. I advert to that pamphlet in this place, to call attention to one or two expressions which harmonize with the vaticinations of "G. B. E." aforesaid. "I propose to call them," says Mr. Mann, "the 'Thirty-one.' This I do, without intending the slightest disrespect; and I perceive no objection to it, unless, indeed, it may render that, hereafter, *an unlucky number.*" The emphasis which attaches to these last words was given by their author. Their meaning is somewhat obscure,—like the famous response of the oracle, "*Aio te Eaciden vincere posse,*" it might be afterward interpreted to signify one thing, or another, as events should direct. But its most palpable construction is this:—ill luck may therefore befall the individuals comprehended in that number which I now attach, as a mark of proscription, to the whole association. And again. "It (the conflict between him and the masters) is a question of justice, of truth, of moral power, where *annihilation* awaits the wrong." Of course Mr. Mann, in this statement of the issue, regarded himself as the exponent "of justice, truth, and moral power," and the dissentient schoolmasters as representatives of "wrong." The italicised word indicates the destiny of the van-

quished, which of course he did not covet for himself or his cause, and, therefore, allotted in his own resolute purpose to his opponents. Moreover, Mr. Mann, looking forward with prescient eye to the unfolding results of this conflict, and gloating over the distress of men who shrink from impending "annihilation," utters the visions of his head in these portentous accents: "If I do not greatly mistake, it will cost them more sleep *to have written the 'Remarks,'* than it did to write them."

The reader is desired to keep these minatory expressions of the Secretary and his ally in memory. A further development of events will, I think, show that they were not the language of mere effervescent feeling, but of deep, patient, implacable revenge. Hannibal's vow of eternal enmity to the Romans was not more faithfully kept, than has been and will be this settled purpose to *annihilate* the "*unlucky thirty-one.*" They differed from Mr. Mann, and on the day that they uttered their dissent, began the operation of that train of agencies, which, at length, brought out the Reports of the Annual Visiting Committees of 1845. The "deep waves" were then agitated, which, at first with frothy surgings, and afterwards with a treacherous ground-swell, have *reached at last even to them.*

But let us proceed with what Mr. Mann would call the "ante-natal history" of these Reports. It will afford a striking exposition of the portentous language which I have already committed to the reader's memory. Very soon after the appearance of Mr. Mann's entertaining "reply" to the "thirty-one," in the Autumn of 1844, occurred the City Election. I call his pamphlet *entertaining*,—that is its true characteristic. It was eminently calculated to catch popular favor; not cogent, nor philosophical; for so, it would have required too much reflection to give it acceptance with the mass; but personal, pungent, witty, and sarcastic, and so adapted to gratify that universal, but degrading frailty of our nature, *a relish*

for the home thrusts which other people receive. Busy tongues were soon put in action, to cry up the necessity of a change in the Boston schools, and this, *it was said*, could be done only by making preparatory changes in the School Committee. Who they were, that thus strove to sway public opinion, and to give practical efficacy to the honorable Secretary's malediction, it would be as impossible to specify now, as it was to find at the time. What "*they* say," has a most alarming influence in the political world. Few take the trouble to inquire who "*they*" are;—and proceed at once to quadrature their own opinions, and conform their action, to the dictum of this invisible autocrat, "THEY"—whose only influence results from the grimness and impudent inflexibility of his mask. The rumor that such a change must be had, brought together in the ward meetings all the malcontents, and discontents, and non-contents of the city,—that is, such as were averse to the schools, and the system of administration,—such as were yearning for something better, though not *dissatisfied* with what they had; and such as were mere change-lings, who live by experiment,—glory in revolution, and, out of pure benevolence, long to see the whole world as shiftless as themselves. So far as the hue and cry could be trusted as an index of popular opinion, Mr. Mann and his doctrines were quite in the ascendant. He had given the last blow,—and lookers-on are prone to consider the last stroke in a conflict decisive, until they see it returned. Favored by this prestige, his representatives succeeded in some of the wards in procuring the nomination of individuals for School Committee, who would favor the application of Mr. Mann's views, and, I will add, the gratification of his spite upon the Boston schools. Nomination and election are, under ordinary circumstances, nearly tantamount. It is enough for many voters that respectable men are named on a ticket. They accept, and deposit it in the ballot-box without raising questions concerning

their peculiar affinities. And so it happened that many electors were unconsciously implicated in the work of entrusting the care of their schools to persons whose theory of education (if there be one compacted) fills, by its spiritual presence, the encephalon of the Hon. Horace Mann. The variety and character of the appliances, whereby something was accomplished in this sort, it would be difficult to trace out. Thus much has transpired: that one individual, a candidate for election in one of the wards—(and, alas! a successful one)—by some electro-magnetic telegraph, communicated his thoughts and wishes across the bay to sundry individuals, respecting the person who, in his judgment, “would be a good man for the office” of School Committee in their ward. The person so named having been a subordinate to his interested, though distant friend in one institution, would, by force of habit, it was doubtless thought, prove equally subservient in another.\*

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\* At a public meeting held at East Boston, on the evening of the 18th of August, 1845, the “following statement was made by a gentleman present, an active and influential member of the Whig party.”

[From the Boston Daily Times, of Sept. 1st.]

Sometime last fall, previous to the Presidential election, Mr. ———, a young gentleman residing at East Boston, who I have understood was formerly an assistant in the Asylum for the Blind, called on me and said there would be a vacancy in the School Committee from East Boston, and he would like the office; that Dr. Howe had called on him, and said he thought he would be a good man for the office, and he had better attend to it, &c. I replied that I had heard nothing about it, and inquired if Mr. Morgan had declined being again a candidate. He said he did not know that he had exactly declined, but he would be elected Representative, and could not expect to hold both offices. I told him that after we got through the Presidential and State elections, there would be time enough to think of the municipal. Subsequently, on the day the Whigs in ward 4 were notified to meet to nominate ward officers, I met another gentleman residing in the ward, and he asked whom we intended to nominate for the School Committee from East Boston. I mentioned the name that had been agreed upon, and he immediately told me he had heard a Mr. ——— (the same who first called on me) named as a very suitable person for the office. I said that I understood Dr. Howe had nominated that gentleman, but as Dr. H. resided in ward 12, we rather preferred selecting a candidate for ourselves. At the meeting in the evening, when in conversation with gentlemen there, I mentioned whom the citizens of East Boston wanted to nominate, and in

How far this "Mutual Assurance Society," carried their reciprocal favors, the public will never know. By hook or by crook, some few whose sympathies were known to have attached them to the honorable Secretary in his conflict with the masters, became members of the School Committee, for 1845. To what degree the sudden zeal of these gentlemen in the cause of public instruction had been influenced by the "School controversy," and whether their entrance upon the Committee was attended with any design to visit avenging retribution on the refractory subjects of a would-be educational despot, are questions on which observers will judge for themselves, enlightened by the history of subsequent proceedings.

The effort to revolutionize the School Committee had failed. A minority inclined to new measures, found itself unable to proceed directly to the punitive action, which would probably, have supervened a more favorable return from the ballot box. If any thing were to be accomplished, good policy required that the few should keep still, until the circumstances under which they were elected should fail to excite suspicion of their movements. Stratagem often supplies the lack of force. Nothing peculiar developed itself for months, in the transactions of the Committee. The old regime seemed unshaken in the steadiness of its estab-

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two instances, at least, the reply was, "We have heard Mr. —— (the person who first called on me) spoken of as a very good man for the office." I replied as I had previously, that *he* had been nominated by Dr. Howe, but *we* preferred the other gentleman. At the marking, however, I think the name of Mr. —— was not mentioned, but Charles Sumner, Esq., understood to be another friend of Dr. Howe, received the nomination. Though the meeting was unusually large, but little interest appeared to be felt in the nomination of candidates to any of the offices except that of School Committee; after that was made, a large portion of the persons present left the room.

After the meeting, some of the citizens of East Boston, connected with all the different political parties, consulted together, and agreed to run a candidate in opposition to Mr. Sumner, for two reasons:—1st. To maintain a right always conceded to East Boston, of having a representative in the School Committee; and 2d. To resist a supposed interference on the part of Dr. Howe. A candidate was agreed upon and elected.

lished practice, until a pioneer balloon was let off in the shape of an order requiring the public schoolmasters to keep a record of the corporal punishments inflicted in their schools. This was designed at once to try the way of the wind, and to enlist common favor. Most parents are so fondly weak, as to desire exemption from punishment for their children, at whatever sacrifice to their characters. This popular measure obtained the sanction of a majority of the School Committee, and became a Law. With all due deference to the wisdom of those gentlemen, I cannot but regard the requisition as one greatly to be regretted. It is a virtual endorsement of their system of social, civil, and religious licentiousness, who calling themselves "come-outers," (a name which promises what all good men wish them to be,) are now endeavoring to subvert all authorities and powers, on the vain hope that bad men, and undisciplined children can be guided by moral suasion. It is affixing a stigma to one of the acknowledged, necessary appliances of School keeping, which may hinder its administration, when it ought to be employed,—and abate from its wholesome influence, when its use cannot be avoided. Has it been any where proved by experiment, that a School of four or five hundred boys, gathered from all classes in society, and accustomed to every variety of management at home, can be governed without some mode of corporal punishment? And, if it be not yet demonstrated that corporal inflictions are not necessary means of authority over children as they are over men, why cast odium upon their use, more than upon any, and every other instrumentality, essential to the conduct of a School? Why not with equal propriety demand a record of every frown, every rebuking word, every punitive detention, every subtraction from the credit marks, which a master visits on a refractory or deficient pupil? Each master is now made afraid lest his record should bear evidence that punishment has been dealt in his school a little



more frequently, than in those of his brethren, and that he shall thereby acquire the reputation of a peculiarly severe and cruel man—and so, despite his conviction in one, and another instance, that the good of an offending child, and the maintenance of proper order in his school demand the use of the rod, he abstains from the fulfillment of conscientious duty. Each becomes emulous, not to secure the best discipline by all legitimate means, but to have gotten along in freedom from absolute anarchy, with the least resort to corporal punishment. Children too, get knowledge that the rod is a proscribed instrument, and the bad will naturally make experiment of how much a master will endure from them in the way of refractory conduct, before he will by resort to punishment incur the necessity of making a mark against himself.

As a further proof that the whole movement which we have thus far traced, was concocted by Mr. Mann, and pursued by those who were wedded to him and his plan of hostility to the “unlucky thirty-one,” observe his boast of having been instrumental in the adoption of this measure, published in his “Answer” to the “Rejoinder” of the masters. “I hope, however, and believe, that I shall hereafter find a compensation for all its privations and anxieties in that *reform* of the Boston Grammar, and Writing schools which *the controversy has already been the occasion of commencing*, and which wise and good men are now taking up, and *will carry forward to a glorious consummation.*” See in the words which we have emphasized, with what retrospective satisfaction, he looks upon this rule concerning corporal punishment, as the offspring of his own influence; (for this was the only advance which folly had then made,)—and see too what a light that triumph flings upon his anticipations for the future. This “Answer,” more virulent if possible, in its spirit, than his former “Reply,” was published, as that had been, at a juncture in which it might be expected to

exert an immediate influence, which they, against whom it was leveled, could not have time to parry. *It was contemporaneous with the annual examinations of the Public Schools, and just before the annual election of Masters;* designed (if this circumstance gives any clue to motives,) at once to cheer on the examining committees in their crusade against the reputation of the Schools, and to create at the *punctum instans* of election, an outcry against the "unlucky thirty-one."

The time at length arrived for the annual examination of the Schools. When it was conducted orally—the usual way, some Schools, which *theoretically* judged, should have been very bad, proved to be *practically* among the best in the city,—that is, some, whose masters had differed "*toto coelo*" from Mr. Mann, his friends on the Committee were constrained to report in the first rank, and, in conformity to advice, which one of them confessed that he had received, to "give the devil his due!" This result was brought out by the use of the common means. The text-books were made the basis of the examinations, the questions and answers were orally delivered, nothing was done to amaze or affright the children; and, as in previous years,—the Schools as a whole, made a good appearance.

The long deferred movement that was designed to accomplish the end for which effort had been made in vain to change the whole composition of the Board, was brought forward adroitly at the time for the annual examination of the Schools. Certain individuals procured nomination on the examining Committee. All men acquainted with the forms of proceeding in deliberative bodies, know how this is done. Individual members who wish to have the management of any item of business, bring it forward to notice, and make themselves conspicuous, in urging its importance, and suggesting how it should be done, and the Chairman, by a law of courtesy, not often transgressed, nominates them to the work about which they have shown

so much interest. And so it came to pass that Theophilus Parsons, and S. G. Howe, became the preponderating part of the Grammar School Committee, and William Brigham, and J. I. T. Coolidge of the Writing School Committee. I do not know that, as is frequently done, suggestive lists were not handed to the Chairman; but this I know, that if Thomas A. Davis, the late lamented Mayor, in the honest simplicity of his heart, and without leading influences of some sort, fell upon such a nomination, it was the most singular fortuity that ever occurred. The Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education would have made precisely the same.\* It will be seen in the course of this review that the remaining ingredient of the Grammar School Committee at least, was selected with happy reference to its facility of assimilation. Thus constituted the examining Committees as avengers of Mr. Mann, had but to concert politic measures in order to bring the Schools, and of course their masters in a very unenviable light before the public. Nothing is easier, if a man be so disposed, than to embarrass, and stultify the best Schools in the land, while yet the examiner confines himself to the sciences in which they have been taught. With my small resources, I could go into the Normal School, at West Newton, (Mr. Mann's own particular pet,) and make Master Pierce hang his head at the seeming ignorance which I could make his

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\* It has, since the writing of this part of the review, come to the knowledge of the writer, that the whole list was handed to the Mayor for his nomination, by an ex-officio member of the School Committee, who in other movements acted with the representatives of Mr. Mann. The same gentleman gave notice at the time of the nomination of these Committees (in May, and they did not make their Reports until August,) that he should move for the printing of ten thousand copies of their reports. One would think that the tenor of them was pretty confidently anticipated so long before the examinations were had, on which they should be predicated. This is a very curious item in their *ante-natal* history.

scholars develope. Any mode of expression to which a School is unaccustomed, adopted even undesignedly by an official visitor, is often enough to confuse the brain, and seal the lips of the most advanced pupil in it. The object of an examining Committee should be to elicit all that the scholars know, and not to approach them in a way to shut up all their actual acquirements, and expose all their ignorance. If judicious, and above sinister purpose, they will aim first to impress a School and its Teacher with the conviction that they visit it as friends,—they will seek to remove all cause of embarrassment, by accommodating their course of procedure to that which obtains in the daily recitations. What a contradiction, then, was it, for this notable Committee to pretend a desire to discover the actual state of the Schools; while, at the same time they came with a sort of necromantic mystery, and by the very protocol of their plan of operation, spread amazement and alarm through every School. They came wishing “to ascertain with certainty, what the Scholars did not know.” They gave written questions, and required written answers. Was there no simpler way of unfolding the true state of the Schools?—Has no previous examining Committee ever known whereof they affirmed?—Has the condition of the Schools been a profound secret, until the invention of written questions unlocked the whole?—If this was the true method for disclosing the truth, why did not these philanthropic discoverers ply their peculiar art at an earlier period in the incumbency of their office?—They were sub-committee men in charge of particular Schools; was it good faith in them to keep the key of knowledge in reserve through six or eight months of their service?—They should have illustrated in their own practice the preëminent faithfulness of this written mode of examination at the first prosecution of their duty as examiners, that so their associates might have had the benefit of their skill at an earlier date. But no,—a gradual

adaptation of the schools to this mode, would have rendered it no better than another. To its perfect efficacy, it was essential that the trap should be sprung in every school at the same time. Surprise was one of the prime elements of its excellency. There could be no discovery of the true state of the schools, unless inquiry burst upon them in some sudden and frightful shape. Read the account which the Committee for the Grammar department give of their plan of proceedings.

“ In order to prevent the children of one School from having an advantage over those of another by ascertaining what the questions were to be, they were privately prepared and printed; then, without any previous notice, each member of the Committee commenced at eight o'clock in the morning with one school, and spread before the first division of the first class the printed questions in geography. The maps and books were put out of the way; the scholars were placed at a distance from each other, so as to prevent communication by whispers; they were told that they would have one hour to answer the questions, and that they should not lose time in trying to write handsomely, as the chirography would not be taken into account. Then they were set to work.

At the end of the hour, the Committee man gathered up his papers, and went as quickly as possible to the next school, remained there an hour, and then proceeded to a third. After the noon intermission, the Committee commenced again, and visited three more schools; thus each Committee-man finished the examination in geography of six schools, and the three finished all the schools in the City. The next day we took the questions on another subject, and thus finished the whole.”

And this is the mode in which they exercised their wish to “have as fair an examination as possible!” Which will you impugn, gentle reader, the common sense, or the sincerity of men who project such a scheme, avowing such a design? At a given moment three Committee-men flash into as many different schools, without previous notice, unfold their “privately prepared and printed questions,” banish all books, segregate the scholars, point them to the clock, announce the limit of their time, and bid them write for their lives! There are not many grown people who have sufficient self-possession to report with accuracy what they know, on any given subject, if put to the work under such circumstances. And to such an ordeal, timid children are subjected, by men appointed

to supervise their instruction, and to cheer them in their successes;—nor only so; the errors of every sort which confusion and fright cause them to commit, are “set in a note book,” carefully enumerated, and published to the world! Oh! the very scheme was an outrage upon the defenceless innocence, and sensitive feelings of childhood. That this is not the prejudiced opinion of an individual, I will proceed to demonstrate. One of the Committee for examining the Grammar schools, the Rev. R. H. Neale, was delegated to visit schools of the same class in several other cities, for the purpose of trying their rank and comparative proficiency, by the same test. He carried copies of the “privately prepared and printed questions,” (which, by the way, were so clandestinely digested that the same Rev. Gentleman declared in the hearing of two persons, that he did ‘not know who made the questions, nor why so unusual a method was pursued’) he carried these with him, on his tour, and proposed to submit them to schools in New York, Hartford, and New Haven. “In New York,” I use his own words, so far as the language of conversation can be remembered—“they wouldn’t let me propose the printed questions; said they never heard of such a thing; their children could not answer them, and they wouldn’t allow them to try. The same was said at Hartford and New Haven.” Mr. Lovell, teacher of a celebrated school at New Haven, “thought it a most ridiculous way to examine children, and at first refused to let me put the questions.” This was the judgment of Teachers abroad, who have nothing at stake, in this matter, to warp their opinions.

The children of the Lyman school at East Boston testified in public meeting, that “after Dr. Howe left, they gathered together, and concluded that Dr. Howe wanted *to put the school down*. Several of the parents stated that their children came home much excited after the examination, saying that Dr. Howe had not given them a fair

chance; that he had not examined them fairly, had tried to make them appear badly, wanted to put the school down, &c." This was the impression produced by this mode of examination upon the minds of the children.

What did the Committee themselves think of it? "Do you think," said a gentleman to the Rev. Mr. Neale, "that this method was pursued, to break down the schools?" His reply was, emphatically, "*I am afraid so!*"

This mode of examination,—pronounced unfair, and of suspicious character, by teachers abroad, by pupils at home, and by one of the Committee who pursued it,—should at least have been plied with all gentleness, and with careful uniformity of practice, by every member of the Committee. But Dr. Howe, we learn, in one school "accused the children of talking when they were not talking, was constantly watching them, and shaking his pencil at them." He exacted correct spelling, proper punctuation, and a right use of capital letters in the written answers; while the Rev. Mr. Neale, in several of the schools, bade the examined write as fast as they could, and give no special attention to spelling, chirography, or punctuation, nor return to correct their mistakes in these particulars. Yet the manuscripts prepared under this direction were gathered up, and the number of errors detected in them counted, and added to the great aggregate of blunders committed by the first classes in the Boston schools. This reverend gentleman, being one of the trio who popped simultaneously into as many different schools, and so pursued the work through the city, must have thrown one-third of the schools off their guard, by failing to insist on all possible correctness, in matters which were afterward to be brought into the account. Are these facts illustrative of the concurrent desire of the Grammar School Committee "to have as fair an examination as possible; to give the same advantages to all?" And is it to be inferred that the young are as ignorant of

punctuation, and the proper distribution of capitals, as their early exercises in writing their own thoughts would seem to indicate? Is punctuation so completely systematized, that scholars are all agreed as to where, what, and how many points should be used in every conceivable sentence? I would not presume to specify, nor would I receive from this or any other Committee a declaration of the number of commas omitted in "thirty-one thousand, one hundred and fifty-nine" answers. Nor can I altogether confide in their report of errors in spelling, when I know that the severest of them all, applying his own knowledge to a certain sheet conspicuous in banking-houses, thought he had discovered the *error* of some Boston school-boy, because there was not an "o" in the last syllable of what proved to be, in more than one sense, "a counterfeit detect-e-r." As the questions were so "privately prepared" that the Rev. Mr. Neale did not know who made them, it is not perhaps uncharitable to suspect, in consideration of the fact just mentioned, that some of the "typographical errors of spelling, punctuation, and grammar, which were discovered too late for correction, and which in many schools the scholars were directed to correct as a part of their exercise," were copied into the typography from the *manuscript*.

Let us now,—having referred to the impolicy and injustice of a test examination conducted, for the first time, by written questions and answers,—and having shown that this intrinsically objectionable mode was pursued in an unequal, and, in some cases, harsh manner,—let us now examine the questions themselves, and discover, if we can, whether more of them were designed to elicit "what the scholars did not know"—or "what they did know."

"One of the papers prepared," says the Grammar School Report, "was a list of words to be defined, all of them taken from the reading book used in the class; another was a set of questions upon Geography; another



upon Grammar ; one upon Civil History ; one upon Natural Philosophy ; one upon Astronomy ; one upon Whately's Rhetoric, and one upon Smellie's Philosophy." The last two are permitted, but not required studies. " All of the schools were examined in Geography, English Grammar, and Definitions." More or less of the whole number declined to be questioned on Astronomy, Natural Philosophy, and History. Let us here pause to remark on the folly of making these scholastic sciences the prominent subjects of examination in this grade of schools. In the City of Boston, all our readers know, there are three grades of public schools—the Primary, where young children are taught the first elements of reading, spelling, arithmetic, and geography—the Grammar, designed to complete instruction in the *substantial* branches of a *common* English education—and the Latin and English High schools, open to, and established for such as wish to be fitted for the University, or to attain the more advanced parts of a finished English course. Through the two lower grades the great mass of the youthful population of the City pass. We venture nothing in asserting, that a large majority of those who send their sons and daughters to the Grammar schools cannot afford to have them remain longer in them than is necessary to acquire a plain, practical education. Consequently we find, that although the Committees, at their annual examinations, make the proficiency of the schools in Astronomy and other advanced studies, the measure of their excellence,—and thus create all possible inducement for the masters to urge their pupils into these studies,—that out of the *seven thousand, five hundred and twenty-six children* present in the schools on the days of the late annual examination, only two hundred and seventy-nine were examined in Philosophy, and one hundred and four in Astronomy ; a little more than an average of fourteen in Philosophy, and five in Astronomy, to each of the nineteen Grammar schools, while there is an

average of three hundred and ninety-six scholars in attendance on each. This does not result from the backwardness of the masters to teach in those branches. It would require no more knowledge, and little more labor, to teach fifty children than five. It results from the inability of those who depend on the public schools for the education of their children, to afford them time for the pursuit of these sciences. Multitudes of children are constrained to leave the schools before they ever reach the first division of the first class, and to address themselves to the industrial pursuits of life. And yet, by the allowance and special encouragement of these studies, the masters are almost constrained to devote much of their time to the instruction of the *five* or *fourteen*, as the case may be, in the upper forms, while the hundreds below are suffering for their attention. These are common schools with a witness! Yet this Committee for 1845 complain that the instruction in these polite sciences is "too technical," too much in "the words of the text-books"—too much "by rote." What would they have? While hundreds of children are in waiting to be taught how they shall read and spell, shall the masters be expatiating for the benefit of a few, on the boundless theme of Universal History, or flitting from star to star, on wings of Astronomic research? Oral instruction, diversified with illustration, visible and descriptive, in Natural Philosophy, Astronomy and History, cannot be given without an immense expenditure of time, nor useful but to a very small portion of a Public Grammar school. And is this the purpose for which the large expenditures, so often adverted to in these reports, are made by the people,—that the masters may accomplish the *few* in that which is refined, to the neglect of the *many* in that which is indispensable? If it can be made to appear, from the showing of this (may I not say) packed and hostile Committee, that in branches of more universal interest, and which all pupils are concerned

to acquire, the schools have been thoroughly taught, the community will rather have occasion to applaud than to rebuke the masters, for the alledged deficiencies of the firstlings of their flocks in ornamental branches. It will suggest to the mind of the unprejudiced, that notwithstanding the bounty which these visionaries have affixed to acquirements in polite literature and liberal arts, the masters have hazarded the loss of their favor, for the sake of maintaining their fidelity to the young.

Let us first observe what this Committee say of the examination in Geography. "They could bound states and countries, name capitals, capes, and mountains; enumerate rivers, lakes, and bays; and answer a series of questions put by the master, of half an hour's duration: but questioned as to the drainage of countries, their capacities for commerce, the causes which direct streams, and determine the force of water—their want of comprehension of these, and similar subjects, showed plainly in almost every school, that they had learned geography as if it were only a catalogue of names," &c. And again: "Some of our scholars could commence with Maine, and name every river running into the ocean, without missing a navigable stream." We did not know before that Maine is a river running into the ocean. If the pupils in the Grammar schools of Boston can do what is here asserted, they cannot be matched by those of any other school in the world. But, perhaps, the Committee meant that some of the scholars could commence with [the rivers of] Maine, and name every river [in the United States] which runs into the ocean. Men who are hypercritical in noting the errors of boys, should express their own thoughts with decent exactness. But whatever construction they may have intended that readers should affix to this enigmatical sentence, I submit whether, in what I have quoted, there be not evidence that instruction in geography at the public schools of Boston is reasonably thorough; questions in the common

routine of geography—having reference to those items of knowledge which universal consent has pronounced most important to be known—children could answer with readiness; but strange subjects of inquiry, or those of seeming simplicity presented in strange language, and under confounding circumstances, afforded the Committee means to ascertain—their great desideratum—“what the children did not know.” Of the former class are these: “What is the cause of the rivers in these four States [North and South Carolina, Kentucky and Tennessee,] running in opposite directions?” and, “What do you understand by the line of perpetual snow?” Now who does not perceive that there are several ways of replying to the first of these queries, each of which would be correct? I suppose this Committee wished the children to reply, “Because a range of mountains intervenes their sources.” But who could gainsay the truth or propriety of one’s answer, who should have written, “Because the rivers of the two former States seek an outlet in the Atlantic ocean, while those of the two latter are tributaries of the Mississippi.” Nay, since they have not defined in their question whether they seek the *moral* or the natural “cause,” I contend that there was a pious simplicity, as well as correctness, in the answer of that child who wrote, “Because it was the will of God,” which should have protected her from the sneer of the Committee. Of the latter class, namely, questions of seeming simplicity, couched in strange language, observe this: “Write down the boundaries of Lake Erie.” Now it was not the recondite nature of this question, but its peculiar phraseology, which rendered it perplexing to so many. They could have told—I will answer for it—what country is contiguous to Lake Erie on the north, south, east or west; but to bound a lake was, as the Committee very well knew, a process entirely novel: and who, but they, ever required it to be done? And again: “On which bank of the Ohio

is Cincinnati, on the right or left?" That, of course, must depend on the supposed stand of the respondent. If descending the river, Cincinnati is on the one hand; if ascending, on the other. True, in some text-books of geography, a definition is given which would afford the thoughtful learner a clue to the proper meaning of their question; but whether it were the *intended* meaning of men who abjure so roundly what is "technical," may admit a doubt. However this may have been, it would be idle to cast a suspicion upon the knowledge of every member of every first class in every Grammar school in Boston, ("saving always," as the Committee say, "the Smith school,") that the State of Ohio is on the north side of the Ohio river, and that Cincinnati is one of her cities. The failure of any to reply aright to this question, resulted from its ambiguous terms. The reader may infer from the character of these questions, the method whereby this Committee, notwithstanding the favorable general report with which we commenced this notice of the examinations in geography, succeeded in faulting about two-thirds of all the answers. "Climatology," "Hydrography," and "the spheroidity of the earth," were found to be, under such imposing names, too occult for many of the children.

But we must hasten to remark upon the examinations in Grammar. This is their general certificate respecting that branch. "The Boston schools we think would be rated very high in comparison with the best schools in the world on the subject of technical parsing. It would seem impossible for a scholar to take up a stanza of Childe Harold, and parse the words correctly; to perceive, that is, the connection and relations of the words, and yet fail to feel the force of the metaphors, or to understand the sense of the whole stanza; nevertheless, this is done sometimes. Such is the power of drilling. Such is the effect of close attention to the mere osteology of language." I

esteem this high praise; so high that a great deal of nibbling criticism upon the recitations of scholars who deserved it, cannot work any sensible reduction. The Committee have put an ill aspect upon the tabular report of the examinations in Grammar, principally by plying their victims with such questions as these. "The difference between ordinal and numeral adjectives?" and "What is an allegory?"—Now, I confront this Committee with the assertion that there is not a *difference* between a numeral and an ordinal adjective. The very question assumes an untruth. An ordinal adjective is a numeral,—it is an integral part of its entity. If they can mark a *difference* between a numeral and an ordinal,—they can with equal ease, note one between a numeral and a cardinal, and when both cardinal and ordinal adjectives are shown to differ from numeral, it would require something more than *the osteology of language*, to describe the residuum. An allegory?—Does it pertain to the science of Grammar, to define an allegory?—I have before me Murray's large English Grammar; in the body of the work I find no definition of the figures of speech. But in an "Appendix, containing Rules and Observations, for assisting young persons to write with perspicuity and accuracy; to be studied *after they have acquired a competent knowledge of ENGLISH GRAMMAR,*" is an explanation of the word "*allegory.*" Rhetoric used to be a name for that science, which defines and teaches how to apply the ornaments of speech. But, perhaps, that is now obsolete. Surely one would think so, when a School Committee writing on the subject of Grammar, commit such violations of old rules as occur in the following passages. "It" [Grammar,] includes a *knowledge* of the formation of words from their elementary parts,—the mode in which one word is derived from another, as well as a clear and distinct *idea* of each and every word, according to the usage of the best authorities. It embraces also a *knowledge* of the classification,

arrangement, agreement, government, and mutual dependence of words when joined in construction. To attain *this object*, the pupils must be able not only to give the true relation of each word in a sentence, but must be able to supply ellipses, &c." I will not pause to complain of the gross redundancy of language in these sentences, and the consequent obscurity of their style. But just look at the words which I have italicised. "Knowledge" is a personal attribute, the apprehension which the human mind has of truth; it cannot be predicated of an abstract science. It is bad rhetoric to say, "Grammar includes a knowledge," it does not, it imparts it. So is an "idea," an image conceived in the mind; it cannot be said to inhere in the science of Grammar. But "the osteology" of the passage under review, is a little disjointed. Will the gentle reader do me and the Committee the favor to find to what attainment, described in the antecedent sentence, the Committee refer when they proceed to tell how "to attain *this object*."

"Technical parsing," on which the Committee believe that the Boston schools would compare very favorably *with the best in the world*, demands, if we understand the term, a thorough knowledge of the parts of speech; of the relations which they may severally bear one to another; of the proper components of a correct sentence; and an ability to unravel every species of involution, and to bring words and members into their natural order. With all due deference to the wiser judgment of these gentlemen, I consider a child who can do all this, a proficient in Grammar, though he be not able to define an allegory, or to tell wherein things differ which are identical. Grammar unfolds the mechanism of language, Rhetoric develops its graces.

But the most curious paper, "privately prepared and printed," was, "a list of words to be defined." The lexicographer who prepared this vocabulary, will find it for his reputation to keep the secret of his authorship to the

day of his death. Examine the list, ye who have received but a good English education, suppose yourselves seated before a blank sheet of paper, beyond reach of a dictionary, under the eye of a waiting Committee, and required to expound each of the twenty-eight words in two minutes; how many could you define? This is the list. "Monotony, Convocation, Bifurcation, Panegyric, Vicegerent, Esplanade, Preternatural, Forum, Importunate, Evanescence, Infatuated, Kirk, Connoisseur, Dormant, Aerial, Sphinx, Rosemary, Thanatopsis, Monody, Anthology, Pother, Misnomer, Zoonomia, Hallucination, Machiavelli, Madrigals, Hades." Be aware, that it is a very different thing to apprehend the meaning of a word, when seen in its connection, from defining it with precision when presented alone. Remember that though the Committee selected this list from the reading-book used in the Boston schools,—the children were not permitted to refer to the places in which these words occur, to refresh their apprehension of the meaning of them. They received them as they are given here—stripped of all association which might help remembrance of their use. I mean no disparagement to the Boston School Committee, when I say that they cannot define a list of words, corresponding in difficulty with that before us, so as to afford a greater number of correct interpretations than were given by the scholars, on the list submitted to them. There might be more discretion to deter them from attempting an answer, when they were consciously ignorant; but a larger proportion of intelligent, and approximate definitions could not be expected from a promiscuous Committee of twenty well educated men? I am surprised that these gentlemen should have attempted to cast reproach upon the mass of definitions which they have reported. After spreading such a complicated net, they must have been disappointed that so many escaped without being trapped. The words were selected from "the reading-book used in the class."



What then? Is it supposable that they read it through with sufficient frequency to gain, by repeated explanations, precise knowledge of the meaning of all the outlandish words which it contains? The book has two hundred and nine lessons, on four hundred and eighty closely printed pages. However faithful teachers may be in requiring, and when necessary, supplying definitions, no man who has the least practical knowledge of school-keeping, will expect to find all transcribed on the child's memory, and ready to be produced, under circumstances never so untoward. I say "outlandish words." There is but one in the whole list of *Saxon derivation*, and that is in use only where the Scotch dialect prevails. All the rest are of Greek, Latin, Italian or French origin; some from the latter language scarcely yet adopted into our tongue. "Thanatopsis," from the Greek, is not so common, and yet not so obscure as another more at hand from the same dead language. Why did they not pose the whole circuit by tasking them with "Theophilus?" The children would have found in it a hidden sense immensely difficult to define. Is any man so simple as to believe, that this selection of foreign and classical words was unintentional? Every scholar knows that derivative words cannot be defined with precision by those who have not studied the languages from which they spring. The bastard-English words therefore, which with singularly successful search this Committee have collected for definition, was well adapted to ascertain from children who had visited no college but the Grammar school, "*what they did not know!*" No scholastic exercise is more difficult than to write definitions. To have well defined a much simpler class of words, would have entitled the examined to high commendation. The Committee forefended the necessity of rendering it, by setting forth a list, which they themselves could not have translated throughout, without the aid of a dictionary. There are

very few scholars in the high places of literature, who, "without previous notice," could sit down, and write out the signification of each and every word in this notable list. The reader will find, therefore, no cause for mortification, in the report of this Committee, that of the Boston public schools, composed mostly of children, whose literary opportunities in the social circle, are but ordinary, "the Eliot school (the highest,) gives fifty-five per cent of correct answers;"—that is, in one school more than half of all the definitions rendered, are pronounced correct by the Board of Censors; and if they approve, surely none would condemn.

But, we have yet another branch in which all the schools were examined, on which to elicit the reluctant praise of the Committee. "Of all the branches taught in our schools," say they, "reading seems to receive the greatest attention on the part of the masters. The attainments of the pupils in this branch are incomparably higher than in any other. Your Committee apprehend indeed, that in some schools too high value is attached to it, and that time and labor are spent upon it to the neglect of other studies." Alas, for the "unlucky thirty-one;"—how can they please a Committee that find fault alike with the excellencies, as with the imperfections of their schools?—The art of reading receives "the greatest attention, on the part of the masters!" Are they to be blamed for this? Is it monstrous to make good reading the prominent feature in a common English education? What is the key of knowledge, to an American youth, if it be not skill to read with facility and correctness the books and papers which are scattered broad-cast over the land? What other item of school instruction gives access to so much that is valuable, and interesting? All seminaries of learning, from the infant school to the University, do but furnish the germs of education. They teach men how to learn and supply them with the instruments. That is the most useful branch of school learning, which opens to youth

the widest field of acquirement, and qualifies them to reap it. In this view, what but the place of preëminence shall we give to the art of reading? In some Boston schools the Committee apprehend it is over valued, and time and labor are spent upon it, *to the neglect of other studies*. Pray, what other studies? Not Geography; for “they could bound states and countries, name capitals, capes, and mountains; enumerate rivers, lakes, and bays; and answer a series of questions put by the master of half an hour’s duration;” “yea, name every river running into the ocean, without missing a navigable stream.” Not Grammar, for “the Boston schools, we (the Committee,) think would be rated very high in comparison with the best schools in the world, on the subject of technical parsing.” By “the power of drilling, and close attention to the mere osteology of language, they have accomplished that which it would seem impossible for a scholar to do.” However unsatisfactory, the amount and kind of knowledge which the schools have acquired in these branches, and how important soever, “hydrography,” and “climatology” may be, in comparison with the boundaries of states and countries, &c., and the definition of “allegory” in Grammar, compared with “technical parsing,” yet even these are not taught without time and labor,—the studies to which they belong have not been neglected, where they are attained. What “*other studies* then has reading superseded?” Why—the permitted studies—Whately’s Logic, and Smellie’s Philosophy of Natural History, altogether; and Astronomy, Natural Philosophy, and History in part. A branch of education which *all* who attend the public schools are most deeply interested to acquire “receives the greatest attention on the part of the masters:”—“time and labor are spent upon it, to the neglect of” those advanced studies, which only a *few* desire to pursue, and to which they could attend with more propriety and advantage at the English High School. The

community will not rebuke the teachers for their partiality to the art of reading. The Committee seem to deride the satisfaction of the masters in the attainments of their pupils in this branch. "Every casual visitor of a school," say they, "must hear a reading lesson, \* \* \* every Committee must hear the class read." Yes, and it has been so for many years;—the Boston teachers have felt an honest pride in the success of their efforts to communicate the art of reading with correctness, and taste. Their fame in this behalf has spread far and wide. The reading exercise has always lent a peculiar grace to the annual exhibitions of the schools. The hard hand of the artisan has often dashed a tear from his eye, on these occasions, when his daughter's voice, charged with the poetry of some master of English verse, has sent a thrill to his heart. May it be ever thus,—let no sneer of the captious deter the public teachers from their laudable practice of thorough instruction in the art of reading. Let no future Committee venture on the hazardous experiment of flinging ridicule upon their complacency, who by "labor," and "time," and "greatest attention," have made their pupils creditable evidence of their skill in teaching, at once the first element, and the highest ornament of an English education.

Of the questions on History, Astronomy, and Natural Philosophy, we have space to say but little. Only seventeen schools were examined in History, four in Astronomy, and eleven in Natural Philosophy. We will not make each of these branches, a distinct subject of remark, but will throw together in one paragraph some incidental notices of them all. Among the questions on History, we find the following,—“About what period was the embargo laid by President Jefferson, and non-intercourse substituted for it?” Here the reader may observe *two* occurrences are spoken of, which transpired at a distance of two years, the one from the other,—yet only *one* “period” is

asked for! It is in fact two questions clumsily compounded in one. Perplexed by this ungrammatical medley, some replied to one branch of the inquiry, and some to the other. No answer was, or could be correct. The impropriety of the question, precluded the possibility of a response, which would be both true to fact, and true to the structure of the query. On Astronomy the Committee ask, "which circle contains the greater number of degrees, the equator, or arctic circle?"—Now to some, an objection to this question on the score of the falsehood which it assumes, may seem cynical. But who does not know, that a truthful, artless girl would be confused, and perhaps, misled, by this almost assertion of her superiors, that one circle exceeds another in the number of its degrees. To impose upon the simple veracity of childhood, is a trick of very questionable propriety. Again, "why is it that we see only one side of the moon?"—What a variety of answers may be returned with equal fitness to this vague problem! Those given by the children were accredited as correct probably, which corresponded to the Committees' own conception of the import of their question. We see only one side of the moon, as we see but one side of any opaque body. Light travels in straight lines, and that which is reflected from *the other side of the moon*, does not bend its course to visit us. Pat killed the quails around a hay-stack, by bending his gun;—we shall never be able to see more than one side of the moon, until the rays of vision shall receive a similar curvature. The Committee perhaps meant to ascertain, whether the pupil knew, why the moon, whenever visible to us, always presents to us the same phase?—Indefinite questions can call forth none but indefinite answers. The more shrewd scholars will always decline to reply, when not interrogated in precise terms. In one of the four schools examined on Astronomy, the master explicitly stated to the Committee, at their coming, that

the class were not prepared for examination, that they were not pursuing that study. "Oh, let them try," said Dr. H., "they shall have credit for all their correct answers." He did not add, 'and they shall have detraction for all their imperfect ones.' The master, flattered by the hope of getting credit from one whom he feared was not often in a mood to accord it to him, allowed the examination to proceed, and, for his pains, finds his school blazoned in the sixth table appended to this report, as number three of the four examined in Astronomy. Under the head of Natural Philosophy, the Committee propose such questions as these, "What is the difference between Natural History and Natural Philosophy?"—"What is the difference between Zoology and Geology?"—Let me ask, in return, how can a person state the difference between two matters, *with only one of which he is conversant?*—One of that Committee is honorably acquainted with Greece; can he define the difference between Greece and Patagonia?—A lad comes up to be examined on Latin. The professor may be very learned, but very unwise, if he commences by asking him, 'What is the difference between Latin and Chinese?' The classes in the Boston Grammar schools, presented for examination on that science, could probably define Natural Philosophy; but they must be also able to define Natural History, before they can designate wherein they differ. "Zoology" and "Geology" are both *foreign to the branch under examination*. They, in common with Natural Philosophy, are comprised in that great vinculum of Natural sciences, called Natural History. For what earthly purpose were the classes in Natural Philosophy, met in the very outset of their examination, with these strange, inapposite, and vexatious questions? Can it be, that these were placed in fraternity of mischief, at the very head of the list, to confound and dishearten the scholars, in their subsequent attempts to answer questions more pertinent to the subject?

It is not a little amusing that in the Committee's attempt to give a tabular view of the comparative standing of all the schools, the records of examinations on these two last-named branches, Astronomy, and Natural Philosophy, are thrown out of the general account, as being only on the "allowed studies," whereas *they are both in fact, "required studies!"* Of course, this egregious blunder vitiates the whole account; for whatever number of correct and incorrect answers, eleven schools made on Natural Philosophy, should have been added to the reckoning in the table "of the relative rank of all the schools, in each of the required studies." This would have changed their numerical position in the list of schools, and by consequence have elevated or depressed their rank. The public must give what credit they please to the whole calculation, when eleven of the nineteen schools are thus proved to be out of place! In further illustration of the wide inaccuracies of these Tables, let me mention that in one school, where *nineteen* girls were examined on Philosophy, the Fifth Table reports but *fourteen*, and the whole decimal calculation for the rank of that school is predicated on that false number. How do we know that the answers which have gone to the receptacle of things lost upon earth, were not those of the five best scholars in the class? The Committee remark that they "are not aware of any tabularization like this having been attempted." The Community will, doubtless, concur with me in the hope that *any thing* like this may never be attempted in future! This is probably the first attempt to coin that interminable word "tabularization;" if found in any respectable dictionary, it must be in the "*Index Vitandarum.*"

Reader, we will pursue no further the details of this memorable examination of the Grammar schools. Review the class of questions which have been submitted to your notice; consider the novelty of the

whole mode of procedure, and say whether you do not sympathize with the Rev. Mr. Neale, in his fear, that it was adopted with a view "*to break the schools down:*" say, whether the children were unreasonable in their complaints that the Committee "*tried to make them appear badly:*" say, whether the eminent teacher at New Haven was not correct, in his opinion that it is a "*most ridiculous way to examine children!*"\* This last reference brings to mind another singular fact connected with the history of this Report. It will be remembered that the Rev. Mr. Neale, one of the Examining Committee, visited New York, Hartford, and New Haven, for the purpose of ascertaining how the Grammar schools in those cities would compare with our own. On what page of the Report shall the Citizens of Boston, read the result of his investigations? Where shall they find with shame, the black record of the inferiority of our schools? Not one word of that interesting visit has found place in this unique document. Since I have betrayed the fact that such a visit was made, I must gratify the very natural curiosity of the reader to know what discoveries presented themselves to the observation of the Rev. R. H. Neale on his tour of scholastic inquiry. Meeting one of the Boston Masters in Court street, the Rev. Gentleman accosted him as follows: "Well Sir, your schools have nothing to fear, for I have just returned from a tour to New York, and there is no comparison between their schools and ours." "Well, that's good," replied the Master. Mr. Neale proceeded, "I went into the schools in New York, and Hartford, and

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\* It may not be unworthy of remark, that although these same gentlemen, who esteem written questions and answers so indispensable to a fair development of the condition of the schools, were on the Committees for examining the Latin and English High Schools, yet those institutions were tried by the old method—oral examination! Perhaps the fact that their masters were not of the "*unlucky thirty-one,*" induced a little variation of the needle from the pole star of fixed propriety.



New Haven, and the Boston schools are *infinitely*, INFINITELY before them all." The introduction of this language, or even of less extravagant expressions certifying the excellency of our schools, would indeed have been discordant with the general tone of the Report. But it was due to truth and righteousness, that something of the result of that tour of observation should have been given to the public. The fact which it brought to the knowledge of the Committee, should at least have modified the scope of their remark;—"We cannot but believe, for we see, that other schools are better than most of ours!" It is not to be believed that the Rev. delegate of the Committee who persecuted our Teachers "even unto strange cities," withheld from his associates the bootless issue of his errand. His profession, and his personal standing forbid the thought that he abstained to deposit his honest tribute on the congeries of facts, out of which the Report should be made. The non-appearance of what he contributed, may find an equivocal apology in his declaration made after the Report of the Examining Committee was presented to the Board, to one whose written certificate is before me, that he "*had not read it!*"—though his name is subscribed as one of its authors.

Another curious fact of the same nature with the above-mentioned, is entitled to a passing remark. The Committee inform the public that they "extended their examination to some of the schools in the neighboring towns." But they have made report of the comparative proficiency of only one from the whole number, namely, "the Dudley school, in the town of Roxbury." True, they say they "consider that school a *fair* specimen of the *best* schools in our neighborhood." Probably they use the word "*fair*" in the sense of, beautiful, rather than, just: for common rumor assigns that school a very high rank. How was it with the statistics which the Committee gathered in the schools of Charlestown, and other towns? Were they so "*fair*" as to cast into the *shade* the schools of

Boston? If they had been, though there was no place found for the report from New York, a "table" could have been provided on which they might be served. But *when* did they extend their examination into the schools of the neighborhood? Before, or during, or after the inquisition of the city? They report for themselves, that, upon commencing the work in their own sphere, they pursued it without intermission until they had completed it. So that there is every reason to believe that the neighboring towns were visited *after* the examination of the city schools was concluded—for how could they "extend" a transaction until its original compass was fulfilled? Now these gentlemen thought it very important to examine all the city schools on each branch in one day—not to let a night intervene—lest "an unfair advantage might be obtained, by any knowledge of the nature of the questions." But, *all* the city schools were examined in *all* the studies, *through a succession of days*, before they extended their investigations into the schools of the neighborhood. What should prevent a knowledge of the nature of the questions overstepping the boundary line of an adjacent town, whose public school-houses are no more remote from some of the city schools, than they are from each other? The Committee declare themselves "*certain*" that in the Dudley school, "neither master nor scholars knew any thing beforehand of their questions." Less evidence will at times make men *certain* of some alleged facts, than of others more credible. Are they *certain* that there were not three girls examined at the Dudley school, who had completed their course there, and departed, yet, by solicitation, returned for that occasion?—and is it *certain* that they, not being members of the school, "knew nothing beforehand of the questions?" Nothing but a special Providence could have kept strictly within the municipal limits, through a whole week, intelligence which it there baffled every possible human effort

to hold in check for a single day! Let me not by the most remote implication disparage the Dudley school in Roxbury. I am willing to believe the general voice which proclaims it an excellent school. But its reputation must rest, and does rest, on something more reliable than the testimony of this "Report." If it can be magnified but by the reduction of sister institutions around it, its elevation is only apparent, and its precedence not to be coveted. If it must be pitted against the schools of the city, let the conflict be equal in all its terms. Let the day of its visitation be the same with theirs. Let it be summoned to trial with the same abruptness, and let the same jealousy of its master, and precautions against the dishonesty of its pupils, be manifested by the Committee. When all this shall be done, we may approximate to some notion of its comparative ability to withstand an effort "to break it down"—but, until it shall be dealt with *exactly* as its rivals are, and brought to trial under predetermined condemnation, its excellence may be positive, but it cannot be superlative.

We lay aside the Report of the Grammar School Committee, that a few moments may be devoted to its trail-bearer, the Report of the Committee on the Writing Schools. A remarkable unity of design characterizes both. Yet, however similar in general conception, minds of unequal capacity, and still greater disparity of rhetorical furniture, committed them respectively to paper. The first sentence of the Report on the Grammar schools contains indeed a palpable inaccuracy, and there are occasional lapses from correct English throughout the production,—but its style and construction are, on the whole, pure and scholar-like. The Report on the Writing schools is, in some parts, truly a rare specimen of composition. It seems impossible that one hand can have written such a motley production. While much of it is correctly, though not vigorously written, certain paragraphs are compact of

innumerable blunders. Errors therein are so rife, that wrong seems to have been the author's rule; and right, the exception. One is reminded of the Duke of Grafton's administration, as described by Junius: "It is not that you do wrong by design, but that you never do right by mistake." Let us take four consecutive sentences out of the midst of the Report, [page 166,] and scrutinize their construction. "Some may avail themselves of the study of Algebra, Geometry and Book-keeping, but they are few, and are confined to the most advanced pupils. One half of the time is given by all the rest to Writing and Arithmetic, and this without any regard to sex, age, or acquirements. The girl at seven and sixteen gives the same time to these studies. From one half to an hour in each day is devoted to writing, so that two hours, or two hours and a half, are set apart for arithmetic during the seven or nine years that the pupils may remain in school." Let us apply a little "technical parsing" to these sentences, and,—overlooking what the writer meant, let us translate what he has *expressed*. "Some may avail themselves of the study of Algebra, Grammar and Book-keeping, but they (who may do so) are few, and (they) are confined (whether by chains or handcuffs we are not told) to the most advanced pupils. One half of the time (which the reader will please to limit at his discretion) is given by all the rest to Writing and Arithmetic, and this (they do, reckless children,) without any regard to sex, age, or acquirements. The girl at seven and sixteen (the name of this backward young woman of twenty-three is not reported,) gives the same time to these studies. From one half (—hiatus, gaping for a noun) to an hour in each day is devoted to Writing, so that (the acute reader will apprehend the sequitur) two hours or two hours and a half are set apart for Arithmetic during the seven or nine years that the pupils may remain in school."—(Were ever children so restricted?—and how little knowledge of Arithmetic

could be imparted to even the readiest minds, in less than half a day out of the whole period of their school career!) Now if this be not a just representation of the grammatical structure of these sentences, I will submit to any advanced pupil in the Boston schools, which, "on the subject of technical parsing, would be rated very high in comparison with the best schools in the world."

But we must refrain from further comment on the slovenly manner of this Report, and proceed to notice its matter. The quotations given above are so far intelligible, that the reader may gather from them, that the principal duty of this Committee was to examine the schools on Writing and Arithmetic. They have occupied but short space with their account of the examination on Writing. They neither condemn nor praise. But, having given a schedule of the relative proficiency of the schools in this art, they subjoin, "So far as relates to the Writing in the schools, the Committee have no suggestions to make." The examination on Arithmetic was conducted on this wise :

"The Committee prepared ten questions for solution, *on a variety of subjects*, and caused them to be *printed on a single sheet*, leaving between each [!] a sufficient blank space to enable the pupils to record the process of solution. The same questions were submitted to all the schools, and the pupils were required to lay aside their books and slates, and *work out the process on the paper itself*. One hour and ten minutes were allowed them, at the expiration of which, all the papers were returned to the Committee, whether the questions were solved or not. *It was not expected that any considerable number could work out all the sums in so short a time*, but it was thought expedient to propose such questions that even those who had made the greatest advancement, might find employment during the allotted period."

I have caused some clauses in this paragraph to be printed in italics, to fasten the reader's attention upon those items in the plan of proceeding, which, I think, are open to grave objection. Ten questions were printed on a single sheet of paper, spaces being left between every two, in which to record the operation whereby the respective answers might be obtained. Now, to say nothing of the

confusion which children would experience on being required to cipher upon *paper* instead of *slates*, think how inconvenient to elaborate an involved arithmetical process upon a surface which retains, without the possibility of erasure, every mark inscribed upon it! The very fear of recording an indelible error, were enough so to distract the mind while computing numbers, as to occasion many mistakes. The Committee say they left "*sufficient* blank-space for the record of the process of solution." We can all estimate the space which would remain unoccupied after ten questions, filling an entire page in an octavo pamphlet, had been printed upon a letter sheet. It might be sufficient to *record* the process of solution, but not to admit also of unsuccessful experiments. None are so adept in the use of figures, as never to commit a manual error, which requires a repetition of the process. What shall a poor child do, who, by a lapsus of this sort, has filled up unsuccessfully the space allotted for a certain solution? He has detected his error,—it was merely in the manipulation of his problem,—the process was right,—he could soon rectify his mistake if he had space for his figures, but the blank is filled. Shall he sit stationary, or rise and ask for more? Not a word of inquiry or request may pass his lips. An Egyptian task-master renews the old exaction, "Fulfil your work!" But some apologist may recur to the statement of the Committee: "It was not expected that any considerable number could work out all the sums [problems] in so short a time." That suggests no excuse for withholding the necessary conveniences, wherewith to work out as many as they were competent to solve. That statement is very unfit to be preferred as an apology for these restricted utensils, on another account. It is an explicit confession that the time (no less than the paper) was insufficient for the completion of the task proposed. If so short that no considerable number of pupils could be expected to solve all the questions, why did they not

extend the time or reduce the stint? And if they did not *expect* the children, in any considerable number, to accomplish the whole work, because the demand would be consciously exorbitant, why do they report that superfluity of failures, for which, by their own showing, not the children, but themselves, are responsible?

But without further preface, let me proceed to examine the "QUESTIONS," whereby the Committee proposed to test the knowledge of Arithmetic acquired in the Boston schools. They are the most ingenious portion of the whole Report:—one would think they were "privately prepared," by the same hand which had shown so much adroitness in contriving puzzles for the Grammar Schools; and that practice had perfected its skill to make things perplexing. I would not have my compliment on the ingenuity of these problems misunderstood. I do not applaud their singular adaptation to elicit either what the children "*did* or *did not* know;"—but,—*to conceal the meaning of the Committee.* Witness question, numbered "4—A stationer sold quills at 10s 6d per thousand, by which he cleared  $\frac{1}{3}$  of the price," &c. What "*price*," that at which he bought, or—sold?—Again, question—"8—A merchant in New York, *where interest is 7 per cent*, gives his note, dated at Boston, where the interest is 6 per cent, for \$5,000 payable at the Merchant's Bank, Boston, on demand," &c. For what purpose was the rate of interest in New York recited in this statement? It is entirely foreign to the question. The note was *given* in Boston, and made *payable* in Boston. The fact that the merchant lived in New York, and that interest there is 7 per cent,—both irrelevant items, were introduced for no other conceivable purpose but to embarrass the question, and lead the children astray. Again, question—"10. The City of Boston has one hundred and twenty thousand inhabitants, half males, and its property liable to taxation is one hundred millions. It levies a poll tax of  $\frac{2}{3}$  of a dollar each on one half of its male popula-

tion. *It taxes income to the amount of \$50,000, and its whole tax is \$770,000. What should a man pay whose taxable property amounts to \$100,000?*—Is “income” “property,” or not? If it be, then is it comprised in the “one hundred millions liable to taxation;”—if it be not, what is it?—Further, “It [the City] taxes income to the amount of \$50,000”—what is this “\$50,000;” the aggregate of income, on which the tax is levied? or, the sum, accruing to the City from that department of its whole tax? To some mature minds these ambiguities of expression, may be easy of interpretation. General business information may help *men* to a ready perception of the true terms of these questions. But children know nothing of “income tax;” it is not spoken of in *text books*:—nothing but the merest accident could ever have made such an out-of-the-way subject, the theme of a teacher’s *oral instructions*. And if they knew the *terms*, they have no conception of the amount of income taxable in the City of Boston. Now, is it uncharitable, honest reader, to utter the suspicion that these *three “questions,”* were couched in such equivocal language, for the express purpose of making them unintelligible? and to hinder the scholars from applying themselves to those arithmetical processes, by which the solution should be brought out?—Was it just, or manly to mystify what was addressed to children by such artifices—to “darken counsel by words?” and to render the meaning of their questions quite as problematical, as the way for their solution?—These gentlemen did not by such means, contribute to elevate the tone of morals, in the Schools, about which their *col-leagues* for the other department, discourse so much, and so feelingly. It is a dangerous lesson for young Scholars, when the guardians of their education, deceive them with vain words, and show them how to use language with a double meaning. I would rather my child should detect fifty lies, told among his playmates, than be made the victim of one deception from



his superiors. The 100th of the Enigmas of Symposius would have been in good keeping with the "questions" to which I have adverted, and might have been fitly added as No. 11.

Nunc mihi jam credes, fieri, quod posse negatur.  
 Octo tenes manibus ; sed, me monstrante magistro,  
 Sublatis septem, reliqui tibi sex remanebunt.

But, I should do great injustice to this series of problems were I to pass it over with particular notice of only *three* of the ten which it embraces. No. "5," to which (the Committee say,) no child gave a correct answer, is without a parallel in any text-books ever used in the Schools. Yet, if I am not in error, one hundred and twenty-six gave such an answer as would be pronounced correct in every Counting-House in Boston!—No. "6," requires for its solution, the extraction of the Square root. No. "9," is a direct inquest for the Square root of an involved fraction. Either one of these problems would in the process of solution require all the "blank space" left by the Committee on their "single sheet." An accomplished Arithmetician may find it necessary in such a process to make several experiments, in which numerous figures are employed, before he can fix upon that master-number, which will unlock every barrier, and open to him the object of his search. No. "8," involves a legal point, which lawyers are at a loss how to decide. This was introduced probably, to verify the avowal of the Committee that their ten questions are "on a variety of subjects!" What sum shall remain due at the end of two years on a note for \$5,000 payable at a Bank on demand, when "thirty days after the date of the note demand is made," unsuccessfully, implies a question which must first be determined in Court Square, before the children in our Public Schools can venture to answer with mathematical certainty.

What a set of questions is this ! Six of the ten obnox-

ious to just criticism ! Three distinguished for “ Machiavellian ” ambiguity :—two requiring the use of more figures than the given spaces would receive :—and one, involved beyond computation in the *glorious uncertainty of the Law !*

Forgive, reader, my prolixity on this branch of the examination. I have been constrained to linger by reason of the multiform depravity by which it is characterized. Had the Committee been less versatile in their ingenuity, I had been at less trouble to expose its devices. We now take leave of “ the Committee appointed to make the Annual examination of the Writing Schools,” feeling—an uncertain pity, as we see them “ non passibus aequis ” following in the track of the Superior Committee like little Iulus striving to keep pace with “ pius Aeneas,”—feeling, that the subordination of their labors to those of the other Committee acquits us of the necessity of attributing an independence to their suggestions, which they themselves have not had the manliness to maintain ;—feeling too, regret that the Rev. Mr. Graves did not refuse to sign a Report which, (it is notorious) he did not approve.

This “ City document ” embracing the Reports of both the Grammar and Writing School Committees was made public in September. In the succeeding month it began to reappear in Sections in “ THE COMMON SCHOOL JOURNAL,” edited by the Hon. Horace Mann ; and, in subsequent numbers of that Semi-monthly was made the subject of prolonged remark, and *unqualified approbation*. No man will be surprised at this, who has traced with us the “ ante-natal history ” of these Reports. So near a relative might well be expected to embalm the honored relics ; and by his tender assiduities supply some facts for incorporation into their post-mortem history. He has in his possession some mementos of the departed, which few have ever seen. Minutes of the examinations have been at Mr. Mann’s disposal, which were no part of the Reports of the

Visiting Committees, to the Board. My remarks upon the "definitions" rendered by the Scholars, were predicated on those which were printed in the Appendix to the Grammar School Report, and not upon that "Comedy of Errors" which Mr. Mann has with irrepressible satisfaction welcomed to the pages of his Journal. How came these private minutes, which were not even presented to the Board, in the hands of a stranger? Who had any authority to procure the publication of these extra-official Reports?—The Board gave a reluctant consent to the circulation of the Reports which were rendered to them, but they never were asked if individual members, might distribute the manuscript notes, out of which those Reports were concocted, to hungry journalists. The fact, that devoid of any license, and in opposition to the implied will of the Board, the minutes of the examining Committees were so promptly rendered into the hands of the Hon. Horace Mann, gives a significancy to their remark, "they (the Masters,) seem to fear a secret power which may govern them, and the Committee too," which few will fail to apprehend; and constitutes an occasion for that "*fear*," which none will gainsay or rebuke.

A combination, if not a conspiracy seems to be betrayed by this quick communion of congenial minds, and interchange of private papers which calls freshly to our recollection, the unfortunate conflict of the Boston masters, with the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education,—and strengthens, almost to certainty, the suspicion that but for the denunciations which that Honorable functionary uttered in his first onset upon the "unlucky thirty-one," these subsidiary Reports had never been conceived, or rendered. Mr. Mann, in his "Common School Journal" holds up his private minutes of examination *in terrorem*: "Let teachers, *everywhere*, take warning from this exposure;" which means, perhaps, as far as it means any thing, Let all future dissentients from me learn to repress the expres-

sion of their heterodox opinions. And, in the closing paragraph of his commentaries on the Reports, he indulges in the following felicitations. "As to the schools which have been the subject of this examination and report, we are sure that a better fortune awaits them. The day of improvement has dawned—has already arisen. \* \* \* \* If a reform is effected, then let the past be forgotten." Perhaps, the auspices of that day promised more than has been, or is now likely to be realized. The School Committee for 1846 has upon it but one individual of all those who, last year, kept the community in such a ferment by their new measures. Probably, the Editor of the School Journal is now ready to take up the lament of Cato: "The dawn's o'ercast, the morning lours." The reform, on which forgetfulness of the past, is in his proposals made contingent,—is not likely to be effected. The people have declared that they prefer those measures which have the sanction of experience, and those servants whose fidelity has been proved. And we have therefore, to apprehend that "*the past*," replete with threatenings which the present has not fully executed, and the future promises to default, will *not* "be forgotten." A large proportion of the unlucky thirty-one, are still preserved from official "annihilation." REFORM had less *power*, than *enterprize*!

The Annual examination of the schools was immediately succeeded by the election of masters. There was one of them, whom in the beginning of the contest Mr. Mann had banished to the "opposite side of the moral universe;" At the annual election prodigious effort was made to set this moral exile free from any official restraints which might hinder his personal departure on the same mission *in partibus infidelium*. Alleged unfitness for the charge of a *girls'* school first procured his transfer to one for *boys*. Vague, unproven allegations are the most damning of all possible calumnies. "*Omne ignotum pro magnifico est.*" The constituents of the boys' school, of course, objected.

Friends and foes all had sagacity enough to foresee that they would. The victim of this adroit manœuvre, was then suspended until an investigation should be had. Great desire was expressed to render him justice. Superfluous protestations fell from those who had placed a teacher, who for the last twenty years has been a blameless servant of the City, in this painful position, that they earnestly desired to vote for his restoration, if only these unhappy imputations could be cleared up. A Committee was appointed to investigate. These *reluctant* opponents were represented on that Committee. In due time the Committee reported *unanimously* that the accused was entirely innocent, that “nothing had appeared to show Mr. F., to be unfit for the office of Grammar master of the Franklin School ! !” — And yet when the question recurred on his election — every one of those men, who had subjected him to this cruel process, *voted against him ! ! !* — Guilty, or innocent, his place had been assigned on the opposite side of the universe by the dreaded “secret power,” and thither, its willing instruments, would speed him on his way. No incident in the history of school proceedings during the last year indicates more plainly the true origin of that gantlope through which the schools and their masters have been condemned to run.

If the community regard the whole plan, and conduct of these examinations, which we have now passed under review, as we do, and believe that all was conceived, and pursued for the purpose of bringing the present school system, and the men by whom it is wrought, into disrepute ; — (in the words to which Mr. Neale emphatically assented,) “*to break the school down ;*” then it will not be slow to believe that the *measures* which the Committee recommend in the close of their Report, look to the same end. Let us very briefly advert to them.

They first recommend the appointment of a Superintendent of Public Schools, — a sort of petty Secretary of a

Board of Education. If this could be effected, the whole contest which is now waged on the election of School Committees, by the partizans of Mr. Mann, would be brought into a more convenient compass. Some amateur professor of "high motive powers," would be found ready for such an appointment; and, could he be elected, would promote *reform* with a high hand. They propose to give the city council a concurrent voice in the election of such an officer. This might prove convenient, if a decided majority of the School Committee were bent upon the choice of one, who would pursue a conservative policy. They wish to add to the present arrangements for school supervision, an element of "permanence,"—and yet propose that this new functionary, in whom that element may subsist, shall be "chosen annually." The scheme is objectionable. It puts a mediator between the Committee and the schools, who may, or may not keep them fairly acquainted with each other. It creates a virtual substitute for the men whom the people appoint to take the oversight of their schools. It transfers the management of school concerns in part to the city council, who are chosen, and qualified for another department of the Public business. It creates a single officer, on whose individual fitness the educational interests of the whole city are too precious to be staked. It opens a way for the accomplishment of private ends, which the malignant, and designing, will contrive to occupy. God forbid, that such a measure should ever go into effect!

They next recommend, and urge with great prolixity of argument, the obliteration of the Writing Department, which is now under the charge of independent masters. This would, of course, answer one immediate end. It would *annihilate* at once, several of the *unlucky*. Against this project, it is only necessary to array the long experience of the city. This Committee aim to give the impression, that there is something monstrous in the existing

arrangement,—calling it for reproach sake, the “double-headed system.” Now it is no more double-headed than this same Committee was triple-headed in the performance of their official work. They each took a separate school for examination. They divided the work to be done,—and wrought each in his individual capacity, till it was accomplished. They were not triple-headed, but *triple* throughout. So of the departments in our public schools, they are not an united body with two heads, but are altogether separate, except in the accident that they are both kept in one building. The system is no more monstrous, than that pursued in the education of almost every young lady, where resort is had to one teacher for Music, to another for Drawing, and to a third for French. By whatever odious name the system may be called, it has been in practice in this city for many years, and has been found efficient, and useful. In the long array of faults which this Committee allege against it, every one is leveled at the *theory*, while no *fact* is produced out of the long history of its actual operation, to sustain their *ideal* objections. Something more substantial than “paper bullets of the brain” will be needed, to drive the people from the support, and defence of institutions, from which they have experienced nothing but good.

On the subject of corporal punishment, the Committee descant with almost exhaustless profusion of language. The material which they have presented on this theme, is attenuated in exact proportion to the length to which they have drawn it. After not a little luffing and bearing away, which perplexes the reader as to their real destination, they come out with the honest avowal that they are bound nowhere, in the following language: “We shall not suggest any method to be adopted, but content ourselves with making a few further remarks upon the present, or rather the passing system.” Now, when one system of government is said to be “passing,” it would

seem almost time for them, who have wrought the fancied revolution, to be ready to "suggest some other method to be adopted." But it ever happens thus: the turbulent spirits who have the boldness to pull down what is old, rarely have the sagacity to construct the necessary substitutes. We have only space to notice one view of this topic, which, the Committee say, *has great weight* with them. "It is that which regards corporal punishment as peculiarly unsuited to our own schools, and to a system of education for this country." They thus state the political rights to which an American citizen is born: "He is free; free, for good or for evil. He sends his neighbor, or goes himself, to make all the laws which bind him; and, if he does not like them, it is right for him to say so, and to use proper means to effect their change or repeal." \* \* \* And then they subjoin the inquiry, "What must be the condition of him who comes into such a life as this, with no habit and no idea of self-government, beyond that which he could derive from corporal punishment?" In what we have quoted, the reader may learn the drift of their argument. What hinders its application to the management of the household, nay, of the nursery itself? Because, when children ripen into manhood, they are never to "hear the word *master* again," therefore, by this Utopian logic, it should not be whispered to them in their infantile years! Hopeful material they must be for a republic, who have grown up without any idea of subordination. Education does not begin in the school; it commences in the mother's arms,—and if, to the training of a freeman, it be necessary that subjection shall never have been known,—the child should be "free,—free for good or for *evil*" from its birth. But does not the American citizen find that when he transgresses the law of his country, he certainly encounters punishment; usually *corporal* punishment,—that is, such as applies to the body? The boy in school experiences no more than this. He suffers no punishment



when he breaks no law ; and the great majority of children do cultivate in the schools such a "habit," and acquire such "an idea of self-government," as enables them to avoid the infraction of law, and the consequent incurring of its penalty :—just as the majority of citizens in the republic, so govern themselves that its penal laws are not felt by them in the severity of their sanctions. The only respect in which the boy in school, and the man in the republic essentially differ, is that the one does not, and the other does partake in the making of the laws by which he is governed.

On this very point, the argument of the Committee reaches too far. If to an American education it be needful, that the economy of the school shall be analogous to the Constitution of the State, then the little urchins should assemble in grand committee, appoint their own rulers, and devise and enact their own laws. Forsooth,—a view of the subject of corporal punishment, which opens directly upon such issues as this, "has great weight" with the Committee!! If this be one of their *weightiest* objections to the use of corporal punishment, of what gossamer substance must those be made, which they account less grave! We leave them to float away on the wings of their own folly. Let the restraints of law, imposed by mature, and judicious minds, and sanctioned, if need be, by prompt and efficient punishment, prevail in our schools, until fair experiment has somewhere shown, or witty invention can at least "suggest" a more excellent way.

Our examination of this "City document—No 26," (not less entitled to notoriety than the "unlucky number")—is now closed. We submit it to the candor of the people, counseling them, if they can recover copies of those "Reports," from the heaps of rubbish and waste paper to which they have been consigned, to re-examine them in the light of this Review. Certain papers of the City will probably teem with abusive notices of our poor labors,

into which a line of rejoinder can in no wise be admitted. We could name them with prophetic accuracy, and tell the public some reasons of "great weight." But they are entitled to a new experiment of their honesty, and impartiality. Far be it from me to preclude their amendment by untimely exposure.

Citizens of Boston, who have received your education at the Public Schools.—One who has watched with more than a spectator's interest, this tragical assault upon the men who have taught many of you, and upon the institutions in which you have all been reared, laments with "keen regret—that the children who have now left the Boston schools have gone out so ignorant."\* His monody was called forth by the "exposures" of these Reports. You are the subjects of this pungent grief. It appeals to your own consciousness,—demands of your benevolent memories, that you should well consider whether you can rightfully receive so much sympathy. Have you "gone out so ignorant of the first principles of Geography," and other substantial branches, as to fill the magi of education with "keen regret?" Have you found the instruction which you received at the Public schools insufficient for the purposes of life? You know something of the condition of these institutions, something of the character, qualifications, and fidelity of their masters. which you learnt before those Reports were published. Your knowledge is the fruit of experience and observation; you may be confident of its correctness. Are the Reports fair presentations of the schools, and teachers?—It belongs to you, in your several spheres of influence to express, and enact your convictions, respecting the truth or falsehood of these pretended "exposures." If there be any debt of gratitude credited to the schools and their masters, on the ledger of your hearts, pay it, in vindication of their envied fame! Let filial duty prompt you to repel with generous indigna-

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\* Common School Journal, vol. VII, p. 356.

tion, every unjust assault, whether made with weapons of hostility, or in the disguise of friendship, on the schools and the men, that have reared you. And guard for your children's sake those provisions for common education, which your fathers, and yourselves have proved to be correct in principle, and efficient in practice. Let no reforming zealots cobble,—till there shall be nothing left fit for their acceptance,—the children's heritage—a good public school system.

I might well appeal to the parents of those scholars, who, at the last annual examination, were put to the torture, that the Committee might elicit from them "what they did not know," and obfuscate what they did. But there might be some mingling of wounded paternal pride, in the response which their judgments would accord were I to ask them, if their children are deficient in all the attainments which befit their age,—if they cannot read intelligently,—compute numbers with skill and exactness,—and give such accounts of the earth, and the divisions which mark its surface, as to manifest a competent knowledge of the science of Geography. I forbear, scorning to invoke any other expression, than such as may come from an unwarped judgment.

There are men, unprejudiced, high in character, accomplished in education, venerable for years, as for virtues, who can speak knowingly of the established character of the Boston Schools, and of the tried fidelity of most of the teachers. Other Committees, in whom the public have some confidence had visited them before 1845. Their testimony is on record. And, not only so—many of them live to repeat it with their tongues. Speak out, ye whose knowledge, and position clothe your words with authority. Vindicate the truth of your commendatory Reports, or acknowledge that your examinations were, as one of your successors has intimated "a mere farce." Have you willfully or carelessly kept the City ignorant that "other

schools are better than the most of ours ;” so your successors of 1845 have recorded the evidence of *their* senses. Such a state of things as presented itself to *their perceptions*, could not have grown to maturity in a single year. The same system, and, in many schools the same masters have presided for fifteen or twenty years. Why were not their gross deficiencies discovered before?—Quincy and Shaw, Gould and Savage, Young and Winslow, Parker and Eliot, Chairmen of Examining Committees in former years, how shall we account for the praises of Boston schools—and teachers, which we find subscribed with your names?—Were you, and all your predecessors confederates, and successors, A. U. C., deceiving or being deceived, until they of 1845, by keener sagacity, or loftier integrity elicited, and proclaimed the unwelcome truth, “ that the Grammar Schools of Boston have not the excellence and usefulness they should possess? ”—Have you—the *many*, or they—the *few*—transcribed for posterity the true record of our common scholastic advantages?—Recurring to the list of grave, and reverend men who in other days have honored the schools with their supervision and approval, we cannot but deprecate that the mantle of their office should fall in later times, on the visionary, and the pert. The Seal of the City may well be adopted as the prayer of her inhabitants; when it is found enstamped on such a “ Document,” as we have now reviewed.—“ SICUT PATRIUS SIT DEUS NOBIS.”

SCHOLIAST.







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