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Paterson - Primary Education, 1840

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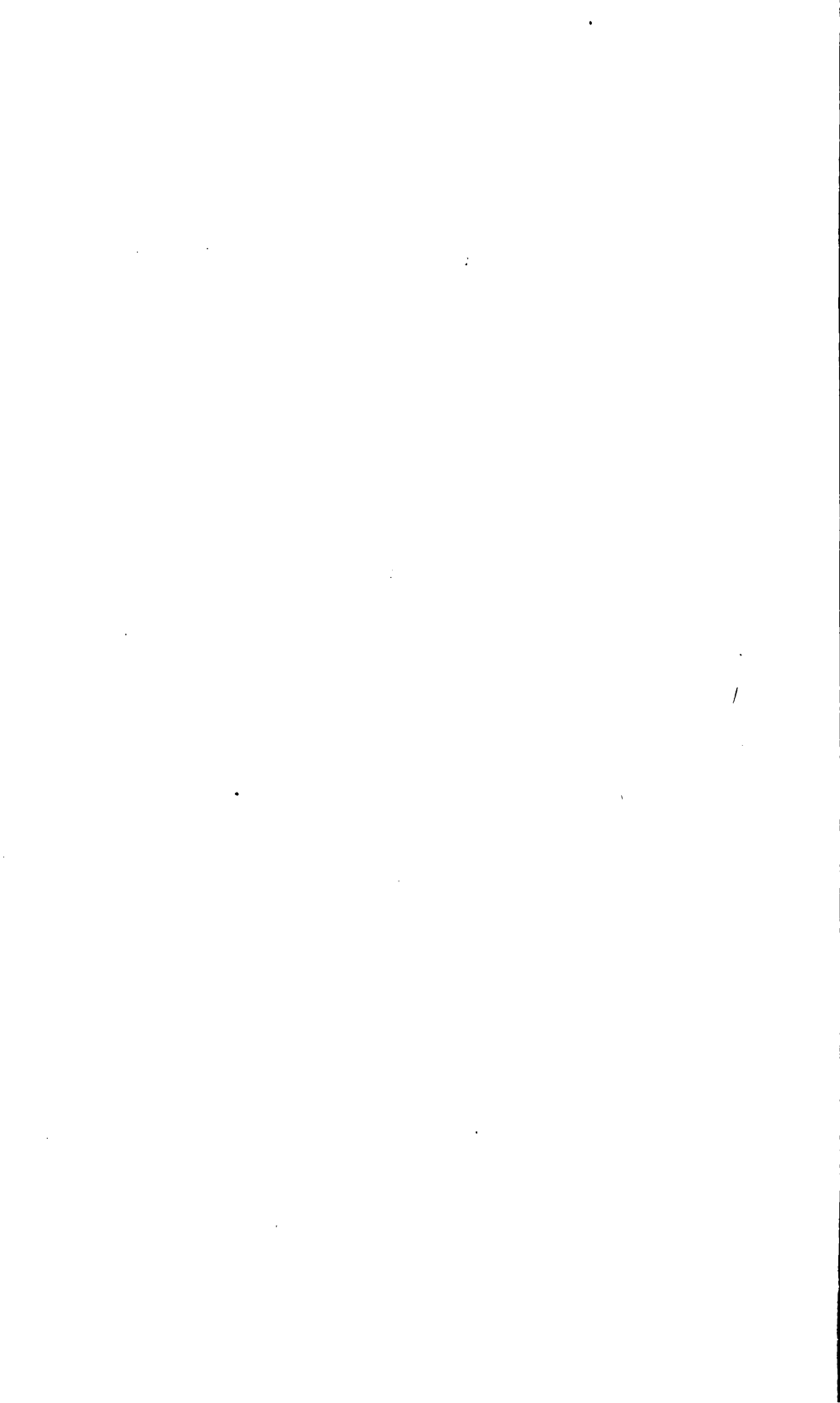


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*Wm. L. G. /
with the good fidelity of the
writer.*

AN
ADDRESS
ON /
PRIMARY EDUCATION,
DELIVERED
BY M. CHARLES PATERSON,
BEFORE THE
COLUMBIAN PEITHOLOGIAN SOCIETY,
IN THE CHAPEL OF
COLUMBIA COLLEGE,
JUNE 3, 1840.

WILEY AND PUTNAM,
BROADWAY, NEW-YORK,
AND
PATERNOSTER ROW, LONDON.
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1840.

LA337
.P27

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GRADUATE SCHOOL OF EDUCATION
MONROE C. GUTMAN LIBRARY

Published agreeably to a Resolution of the Columbian Peithologian
Society, passed June, 1840.

ADDRESS.

I APPEAR before you, fellow members of the Peithologian Society, at your request, to address you upon the recurrence of your annual festival, agreeably to the usage of our Society for many years. I confess that I accepted the invitation with which you honored me without hesitation, and without regard to the ultimate duty which that acceptance would impose; for it was grateful to me again to revisit this well known spot—this familiar and daily resort of by-gone years—these quiet retreats of classic lore—to wander beneath the shade of these ancient trees, and to look back upon the pursuits, the rivalries, and the thousand reminiscences of my early youth. It is good for us at times to retreat from the bustling, selfish, sordid world, and go back to

that period when hope was high and every aspiration generous—when the heart was buoyant, and the bosom's lord sat lightly on its throne—to meditate on those too fleeting moments which were devoted to the acquisition of knowledge, to the unsophisticated pleasures and disinterested friendships of collegiate life, and on all the subtle promptings of an early and undefined ambition. It is, too, not altogether useless at such a moment, though it may be painful, to see what results the advantages of a sound and liberal education, the instructions of faithful and enlightened teachers, and the congenial society of those engaged in similar pursuits, may have produced in the history of our career—to what point our earlier aspirations may have carried us—to mark how far hope has been blighted, and the eagle eye of young ambition obscured and darkened, by the want of persevering application, the defects of judgment, or the greater defects of want of moral principle and firmness.

You have incurred, my friends, in your present position as members of this ancient seat of learning, a deep responsibility, to your-

selves, your families and your country—the profound obligation of availing yourselves to the utmost, during the short period of your residence on this foundation, of the able, sound and philosophical instruction which is daily offered to you. When you shall leave these halls, and a few years shall have left their impress upon your characters, this obligation, instead of diminishing, will, as time wears on, like the clayey figure in Frankenstein, enlarge and dilate in all its lineaments and proportions, till it strikes the heart with a deep and unavailing sorrow for opportunities neglected and immunities despised. I often look back, with a cordial reverence, to the memory of the instructors who once occupied the seats of those around me, and recall their untiring zeal, their kindness, patience and perseverance. Even now I hear from the shadowy recesses of the past the tremulous voice of the amiable and excellent Bowden. I evoke from their dread abodes the spectral forms of Wilson, and Kemp, and Harris, and contemplate the noble proportions of the late Provost of this College, John Mitchell Mason.

I may be allowed, as having received his counsel and instruction in my boyhood, and having been here one of his earliest pupils, a passing but feeble tribute to his memory. He was a man of original genius, and like many other original minds, possessed many striking peculiarities, which too often marred the effect of that genius, and subjected his efforts and his conduct to great misconstruction, and too often to an unjust and illiberal opposition. Endowed with an ardent temperament, a ripe and accomplished scholar, he was a learned theologian, a close observer of passing events, and a fearless commentator on their character and tendency : acquainted with many of the great men of his time, he was the intimate associate and compeer of Hamilton : a sincere christian from conviction, he bent the whole powers of his intellect to the exposition of the Scriptures, and particularly to the Gospels and the epistles of Paul. It was here his whole soul seemed to expand with congenial sympathy—and those who remember the lofty flights of his inspiring eloquence, or the soul-subduing accents of his melting pathos, will

not hesitate to assign him a permanent place on the record of talent, and enrol him among those who have worthily illustrated this College, and stamped themselves among the eminent individuals of the time. Thus much to an early friend. I trust you will accord this imperfect tribute to his memory, and that I may use, with a slight change, the words of old Anchises, as he penetrated the depths of time, saw the virtues and the fate of one of the noblest names in Roman story, and exclaimed, with pious fervor,

Manibus date lilia plenis

Purpureos spargam flores, animam que sodalis

His saltem accumulem donis.

But turning from the past, let me express to you the pleasure I derive from again finding myself with you, and renewing associations intimately connected with some of the most agreeable portions of my life. I look around me and find many, very many of those with whom I was connected in my ordinary attendance upon our Society, during the brief period which has since elapsed, gone down to the grave—their early promise blighted and their

hopes unrealized. Others yet survive, devoting their lives to the dissemination of the pure and consoling precepts of christian truth, or reaping the solid fame, which eloquence, and talent, and principle, never fail to secure in the legislative councils of the country—we have just reason to be proud of them. To some of them you have listened on former occasions in this hall ; they have left me little to achieve. Most of the topics connected with literature, classical learning, the early history of this institution, the memory of its professors, have all received in turn due homage and discussion, and been adorned by the garlands of taste and feeling. It is therefore with most sincere diffidence that I enter upon a field in which the harvest has been reaped, and only a few neglected heads of grain are left to the toilsome labors of the gleaner.

But allow me, before I proceed farther, to congratulate you, gentlemen, on the condition and prospects of our Society. I consider all such institutions, when properly regulated and conducted, as an important element of collegiate instruction. They develope nascent

talent by mutual and friendly collision ; they give wider scope to the practice of composition ; they initiate by an honorable contest among comparatively equal minds, into habits of thinking and discussion, and thus qualify us subsequently, for an easy and forcible expression of opinion, whether in the arena of professional strife, or the not less important business of private life. It was in a society like ours that the elegant talent of Frere, and the caustic wit, the brilliant repartee, and the graceful elocution of Canning, were first noticed and admired ; it was within the walls of the University of Edinburgh, in the Speculative Society, that first dawned the clear comprehension of Horner, the satire and the reading of Jeffrey, and the lofty and varied talent of Brougham, who, since his first work on the Colonial policy, when yet almost a boy, has passed like a bright meteor over the fields of political economy, of natural philosophy, of education, of ethics and of law. Let us then wisely cherish these institutions, the hot beds of future usefulness, where the germs of intel-

lect are first warmed and animated into an active and positive existence.

One of the most remarkable signs of the times, since the period of the French revolution, has been the gradual advancement of the mass of the people in almost all countries, in knowledge and intelligence. At the present moment, the best efforts of the most commanding minds are directed to enlightening the heads and ameliorating the condition of the working classes. The establishment of saving banks and libraries, the regulation of the period of labor in factories, and the slow but sure advancement of the cause of popular education, are amongst the most striking and consolatory events of the age in which we live. After that long, ferocious contest which drenched the fields of Europe with its best blood, from the frozen plains of Moscow to the vine clad hills of the farthest Mediterranean; from the fertile soil of industrious Holland, to the banks of the rushing Danube, and the classic shores of the beautiful and luxurious Parthenope; it seems as if in the providence of God, a long period of peace was

destined to secure for the great mass, in compensation for their sufferings and their condition, the blessings of more paternal government, and the advantages of elementary instruction. Prussia, despotic but enlightened, has secured by the most admirable system yet known this inestimable boon to her people. Austria, even after the well known reply of her emperor to the professors of Venice, has felt the influence of public opinion, and has established primary schools in her Italian dominions. France has called to a seat in her ministry, Cousin, the philosopher and philanthropist, to preside over that department of public instruction, which his wisdom and forecast introduced into his country in 1833. England has performed one salutary act of justice to that neighboring, beautiful and unhappy country, by founding and endowing the national schools of Ireland,—though I regret to say that its beneficial effects are likely to be retarded, by the bigotry of both the great religious parties, Protestant and Catholic, in that country, in refusing too often to allow her wretched children to attend these

schools, when taught by persons of an opposite religious faith. A similar attempt has been made to extend this great and beneficent measure to England herself, but has hitherto unhappily failed—not without the warm support of the present administration—but owing to the desire of many to incorporate peculiar religious instruction with that of the ordinary schools.

I have thus traced a rapid sketch of the movements made in Europe upon the interesting topic of popular education. I propose in the few moments which now remain, to ask your attention to its condition in this state. I make no apologies for entering upon it in these halls, devoted to the duties of high and liberal instruction ; for here, if any where, the sacred cause of primary education should find the most intense sympathy and its best and wisest friends. We have all too long forgotten our duty ; we have not calmly and solemnly viewed the profound importance and necessity of educating the people. If the affluent and the learned will bury themselves in their luxury and ease, or confine their labors to the more

attractive but not more valuable study of ancient literature, and neglect the intellectual condition of the great body of human beings who must always be dependant upon manual labor for their support, what right have they to complain if they shall hereafter see the popular suffrage, ignorant but honest, directed by the lying devices of designing demagogues, sapping and undermining the glorious fabric of our constitutional liberty, and removing one by one, the props and buttresses which our fathers built about it! What just title have they to object, when, in the course of events, the odium which too often attaches to wealth, the offensive pride which it engenders, and the selfish and sordid purposes to which it is too often applied, shall burst on the vision of an ignorant populace stimulated by every nefarious act—shall burst into open violence, and at once deprive them of all the means which has procured them their unprofitable leisure, their selfish enjoyment, or their heartless pleasures!

Bacon says that knowledge is power; but he might have said, with ten fold more truth,

had he not lived in an age when the *jure divino* right of kings was almost universally recognized, that knowledge is liberty. We live under a government based on virtue and intelligence, and resting for its every-day existence upon popular opinion. How important then must it be to us, and to those who come after us, that this opinion should be directed in the right path—should be under the guidance of just moral sentiments, and above all enlightened in its aims and perceptions! The constitution declares all men equal; but it announces it vain; it promulgates but a barren generality, unless an universal popular instruction is superadded, to enable the commonest laborer to comprehend his social position, his duty to his family, to his country—to enable him to develope and to use that mind which God has given to him, for the advancement of the great objects of civil society, his own interests as one of its members, and his future condition as an accountable being. General education is, I believe, under God, the only means of perpetuating that form of civil polity, under which we have

the happiness to live, and which thus far has done more for the amelioration of the condition of the mass, than any other system yet tried.)

This state contains at this time a population amounting nearly to 3,000,000. It is destined, before many I see before me shall have passed their meridian, to support on its broad and fertile surface more than double that amount. The provisions made for popular education do infinite honor to the wise forecast and beneficent intentions of our successive legislatures. The fund denominated the school fund, consists of unproductive land comprehending 423,729 acres, and a productive capital of \$1,932,421 99. To this sum is to be added a portion of the surplus revenue of the Union loaned to this state, and probably never to be returned—making together \$4,738,069 63 for its productive capital. In the year 1845 a further sum of \$256,850 13 will have been added, giving a total of \$4,994,919 76, which, increased from the sales of lands and other sources, will constitute an available fund of more than five millions of dollars. The sum of \$895,889 10

was actually expended, in the year 1838, for compensation to teachers ; and taking into view the interest on the money invested in school-houses, the expenses for books, fuel, repairs, &c., the total expense of maintaining the common schools of this state, was at least \$1,782,000.

The number of school districts, on the first day of January, 1839, was 10,127—it now probably reaches 11,000—and at these common schools there were instructed 557,229 children, exclusive of other public schools and academies. An annual sum of \$55,000 has been lately appropriated to the procuring of district libraries, but sufficient time has not elapsed to ascertain how far this plan has gone into operation, or what has been its result.

The earliest act of this state relating to common schools was passed in 1795. The efficient organization of the system must, however, be dated from 1805. The Colony of Massachusetts Bay, ever alive to the interests of learning and the welfare of her children, led the way in this peaceful and glorious career in the year 1647, nearly two

hundred years ago ; and now, by a more perfect arrangement, she is securing and consolidating her time-honored character for probity and intelligence. That we have been, however, steadily advancing, is evident from the fact, that in 1815 the whole number of children instructed was 140,106, and in the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight, 557,229 !

One cardinal feature in our system, which gives us great superiority over that of Connecticut, is the provision obliging each district to raise by tax a sum equal to that granted by the state ; whereas, in Connecticut, where the fund is ample, the whole cost of instruction is defrayed by the public Treasury. This regulation insures the attention of our citizens to the application of their own money, begets a direct interest and participation in the business of elementary education, and to a certain point constitutes them the guardians and directors of their own domestic schools.

I have thus pointed out, at the risk perhaps of being wearisome, the prominent features of that glorious system of elementary instruc-

tion, of that munificent endowment which supports it, and of the results it has already produced. It presents a most consolatory and animating spectacle, worthy a great state, and free men, guarding with patriotic anxiety that only guarantee of order and liberty, the only conservative principle of republicanism, the universal elementary education of the people. But while we may feel a just pride as citizens of New-York, in this noble monument of enlightened patriotism, let us not forget the tribute which is due to its early friends and supporters. Connecticut pays its homage to Oliver Wolcott, one of her illustrious sons, worthy of the best times of the republic, while we remember the patriotic efforts of Gideon Granger in the same cause, and the subsequent devotion and attachment to it of Dewitt Clinton, one of the alumni of this college. He thus not only manifested his warm interest in popular institutions, but by his wise forecast and bold decision in the cause of internal improvement, has indissolubly connected his name with all that belongs to the prosperity and grandeur of his native state. The epitaph

on the stone which covers the remains of Sir Christopher Wren, might with infinitely more justice be transferred to his, (if his countrymen had vouchsafed to give him one.)

"Si quæris monumentum, circumspice."

Turning from the labors of those who have gone before, it is a most grateful task to call your attention to one yet among us, who, after many years devoted to the public service, is worthily presiding over the destinies of this college. It is to the enlightened efforts of William A. Duer that we owe, in my judgment, the most important provision of the existing law in regard to the common schools. By the act of 1811, it was entirely optional with the inhabitants of each district to accept or refuse the bounty of the state, and thus neglecting the interests of their children, to absolve themselves from the necessity of raising an equivalent sum by tax. Mr. Duer was elected a member of the assembly of this state in 1814. He had had a practical demonstration of the radical defect of the law, and he bent all his energies to apply a suitable remedy. After a very animated opposition from the oldest and

most influential members in both houses, his motion to render the school system compulsory and universal, instead of being, as it then was, optional and partial, was finally carried, and has ever since formed its most important and distinguishing feature. The name of Mr. Duer is thus most honorably connected with the history of our common schools, and he is justly entitled to the enlightened homage of every friend of primary education.*

* Mr. Duer was elected for the county of Dutchess, and then resided in the town of Rhinebeck, a large town since subdivided into several others. It contained many wealthy families, and many more in narrow circumstances. For two successive years a large majority of that town declined to receive any portion of the school money if they were obliged to raise an equal sum by tax—the affluent believing that they were to derive no immediate benefit to their families, and the poor being unwilling to pay for the education of their children! It is understood that Mr. Duer accepted a nomination to the assembly, with the hope of being able to make the school system more effective. Early in the session of 1814, Mr. Duer procured the appointment of a new standing committee on “colleges, academies and common schools,” and to it he finally moved, the reference of the annual report of the superintendent of common schools, and of that part of the annual report of the comptroller which related to the school fund. The committee entertaining sentiments similar to those of Mr. Duer, that gentleman prepared and reported a bill, revising the system, and containing the compulsory clause as it now stands on the statute book.

But cheering as all this must be to every good man, I must now invite you to contemplate the picture from another point of view: indeed this has been the principal object of these remarks. The organization of our common schools is radically defective, not in the accuracy of reports, not in the harmony of its parts, not in the responsibility of its agents, but in this vital particular, that it does not carry into the school-house that amount and kind of instruction which is needful, which is indeed essential to the people. This arises directly from the fact of the general incompetency of the teachers, but mediately from the indifference, the ignorance, or the parsimony of parents. I have known many instances where a farmer's son, possessing only a very ordinary acquaintance with reading, writing and arithmetic, and totally ignorant of the method of teaching (an art resting on the profoundest principles of philosophy) has sought to wear out the tedium of winter, received his license from the inspectors, passed three or four months in the school-room, then retired with his pittance in his pocket, and

fancied he had been instructing the little creatures confided to his care. If we seek to make the bounty of the state produce its legitimate result, the character and social position of the school-master must first be elevated; for the maxim of Prussian pedagogy is true, as is the school-master so is the school. To induce men of proper temper and acquisitions to enter upon that most honorable and important office, the instructor of youth, they must be suitably paid, and with us the salary of the common school teacher is deplorably low. It will be hardly credited, except among those acquainted with this subject, that the average wages of one of these teachers is \$16 60 per month, about the price of a good decent sober footman! This is much less, considering the time they teach, than the amount paid for similar services in either France or Germany, where it is well known living is about one half cheaper than with us. This is a great reproach to us as a mere matter of justice: but when the result is witnessed, in a wretched negative course of pretended instruction, self-interest, if nothing else,

calls loudly for reform. This reform can only be reached by enlightening the public sentiment, and presenting to the community in a strong and convincing point of view, the folly of throwing away the money now appropriated upon a few loose, idle, ineffective recitations, and calling them by the name of instruction—upon the duty which they owe the country, and the paramount interest they ought to feel in the intelligence and welfare of their children.

In Prussia, the pay of the schoolmaster, as well as the amount of the instruction, vary with circumstances: the same instruction not being afforded in a remote, secluded and thickly-peopled district, and in a populous and active region, or among thriving villages. It is not desirable, even if it were possible, that any such distinction should be made here; the spirit of our institutions is totally opposed to it. I may remark, however, in connection with this point, that from some slight inspection of some primary schools in the Rhenish provinces of Prussia, they did not appear to me in any way superior to our own, however

admirable the plan may appear on paper, though I doubt not others are infinitely beyond us.

This great defect of our school system will not, however, be remedied by a mere raising of the salary of the masters. There are more than 10,000 of them annually employed, and a large number are required every year. To supply this demand, seminaries for their instruction are requisite ; without such establishments, I apprehend the beneficent results we have anticipated will never be realized. To teach, it is not only requisite to possess the absolute knowledge, but to have the power of communicating it to others. Now these are not correlative terms ; they often exist separately ; and the method of teaching is as much an art to be acquired, as the subject matter itself which is to be taught. In both the German, French and Irish systems, those schools which have acquired the name of Normal schools, are justly considered as forming the very foundation of an efficient and sound system of popular instruction. In Prussia there are more than forty of them ; and both

there and in France the pupils enjoy certain immunities ; in the latter country they are free from the conscription. Something similar might with great advantage be done here, and thus afford encouragement to a valuable class of men.

There were no schools for the education of teachers in this state until the middle of the year 1835—such is the slow progress which even things of the clearest necessity and importance make in a country professing to exercise great sagacity and intelligence. The regents of the University in that year established, in obedience to law, a department with this view, in one of the organized academies in each senate district of this state. By the act of 1837 the number was increased, by making it obligatory upon all academies receiving a certain sum from the state, to maintain a department for the instruction of common school teachers. Perhaps this experiment has not yet been fairly tried, and it would be unjust to charge it with having, in a great degree, failed—particularly as the superintendent of common schools, Mr. Spencer,

states in his last report that he is about to introduce various improvements in their management, and that he thinks favorably of the plan. I incline strongly to the opinion that schools exclusively devoted to this matter, together with laws which shall grant certain exemptions from ordinary burdens, and appropriate rewards to the teacher, are the only means of procuring that sound instruction which we desire for the people. This opinion, formed a year and a half since, has received confirmation here from various quarters—and among others, from Dr. Whitehouse, President of the Board of Education of Monroe county, who says, in his report, that the educating “teachers in certain academies is attended with no adequate beneficial results, and should be considered as having failed to attain its expected ends.” To consider the expense incurred in establishing these Normal schools, appears to me inconsistent with a comprehensive, statesmanlike view of the question. If the suitable education of teachers be the very soul of the system—if without it, its operations are paralyzed, and that the whole organization

becomes comparatively inert and dead—then no ordinary expense, where such mighty interests are to be consulted, and such important ends to be attained, can possibly be too great for a state that has already devoted five millions to that purpose.

It is objected that the pupils upon the expiration of their term at the Normal school, may refuse to teach in the common schools. I see no reason why the obligation which applies at West Point, that each cadet on graduating shall serve a year at least in the army, should not extend in its spirit to them ; especially if it were accompanied by a law obliging the school districts to employ such teachers on certain terms, on pain of being excluded from their participation in the school money. These general views receive support from the fact, that in 16 academies engaged in 1839, in instructing teachers, 489 pupils were received, and that only 28 of these remained more than one year ! It is not necessary for me to ask, the bare statement of the fact clearly indicates, how far the study of these 28 young men, during a period of a whole year, qualified them

for the responsible office to which they had devoted themselves. In Prussia, the period of the candidate's stay at the Normal school is three, in France two years. My convictions, perhaps, have been strengthened by more than one visit to the model school of Dublin. The pupils, besides receiving an appropriate education, are employed some portion of every day in teaching just such children (and this is not the case in our academies) as they are afterwards to control, and this in the presence of their professors and the gentlemen of the board of education. The simplicity, the kindness, the clear comprehension, and the directness of the instruction, were equally remarkable. They are there aware of the supreme importance of a body of well educated instructors ; indeed, one has only to visit the national schools of the remote portions of the south and west of Ireland, as well as those in some parts of our state, to be painfully convinced of the soundness of the views entertained by the Irish Board. It gives me great satisfaction to state, that I am not alone in my convictions on this cardinal point, and practice here at least

has followed principle. Mr. Albert Cary, of the county of Genesee, has, with noble munificence, given lately \$10,000, and the town in which he lives, and the adjoining one, have given an equal sum to found a Normal school for the 8th Senatorial District.

There are many other considerations connected with this subject, but I purposely omit them, wishing only to place before you, the more prominent and striking features which this question presents.

The application of our common school system is not uniform, and this appears to me an evil of great magnitude. Under the interpretation of the law, the late superintendent, and I believe the present, did not officially prescribe or recommend any course of study, or the books to be used in carrying it out, and nominally this power rests in the local inspectors and trustees of the schools, but virtually in the school-master himself. It is easy to see what must be the results depending on the caprices or even judgments of 10,000 individuals in every part of the state, and how uncertain and inefficient must be the general

characteristic of the instruction afforded under such circumstances. The great variety of text books in every common school, the necessity of purchasing new ones with every new master, increase the expenses of education, while they render comparatively nugatory the labors of the school-master, and retard the progress of the pupil in the acquisition of knowledge. The performance of this duty is without doubt a matter of great delicacy as well as high responsibility ; but neither affords an argument against its exercise. I believe the state has already granted this power to the superintendent ; but if not, it ought to be done at once. Is it possible that the legislature can entertain the opinion, that after having provided most munificently for elementary education, their duties have ceased, and that it is not their imperative business to prescribe what that education shall be, what shall constitute its subjects, and by what books and other means it shall be carried into effect ? The right of pointing out the instruction to be given must reside somewhere—should it not rather rest upon every principle

of public policy and expediency, in the representatives of the people, or the delegated authority of the superintendent, rather than in the mere local representatives of each town? It is, I conceive, impossible that any such administration of the law concerning common schools can advance solidly the sacred cause of popular instruction. This reproach ought to be promptly removed—and a regular, well digested uniform course of study prosecuted by a selection of uniform books and other aids, take the place of a pye-bald, vague, uncertain and unequal system. Perhaps, with this view, a temporary board might be established to mature a final measure of such vast importance; but I think the sole responsibility ought to rest with the secretary of state, who is, by virtue of his office, superintendent of the common schools.

One indispensable feature of any system of legalized instruction, is a constant and intelligent visitation of the schools. This is rigidly enforced in Germany by a rather complicated arrangement, and in France by the appointment of 80 government inspectors for the 86

departments into which she is divided. With us it is confided to six individuals elected by each town—the trustees and inspectors of the common schools. There are many objections to this plan; the school-master is too often the friend, neighbor or relation of some of these parties, and in general their qualifications to examine and direct the business of instruction are limited and insufficient. Indeed, this primary duty has been deplorably neglected by these guardians of popular education. In the year one thousand eight hundred and thirty-eight, 5279 district schools; more than half of the whole number, were not visited at all by these official persons—a melancholy instance of neglect of duty, and of treasonable disregard to the interests of the youth of this state—conduct impairing deeply the value of these seminaries, and calculated to depreciate their infinite importance in the minds of the people.

At the late session of the legislature, Mr. John A. King, from the committee on colleges, academies and common schools, amongst other matters, made an able and

well-reasoned report on this subject, and brought in a bill for abolishing the office of inspectors, and giving power to the superintendent to appoint deputies in each county, charging them with the duty of inspecting, superintending and reporting the condition of the schools, and giving a small compensation for these services. The evil was thus directly struck at, and the measure was one of undoubted utility; but it is to be regretted that it did not receive the favorable action of the senate, after having passed the assembly. We may hope that time, and more just views, will ultimately lead to the adoption of the wise suggestions contained in that report.

There is one question so intimately connected with the organization of primary schools, that I trust you will bear with me a few minutes longer, while I briefly allude to it. This subject, pregnant with difficulty, has raised a fierce contention here and elsewhere. How far are the doctrines of religion to be introduced into these schools? In England, the claim of the established clergy to superintend the education of youth, and to instil into their

minds the principles of the Anglican church; has hitherto prevented a systematic and uniform mode of instruction.* In the Irish schools, parts of the scriptures are used, containing those great rules of morals in which all men agree. But even parties are divided on this point; and while we find the Catholic

* In a letter on National Education, written last year by Lord Brougham to the Duke of Bedford, after alluding to the duty of instructing the people, he says: "Dare we delay so very long as it would take to bring round either the church to the views of the dissenters, or the dissenters to the views of the church, upon the point which is alone in controversy between them, namely, How far there shall be clerical interference with the process of instruction." Lord Brougham has always been in favor of a scheme of national education, which should be open to all, and wound no religious prejudices or sentiments; but he considers the matter now settled, and that there is to be "no national education at all," or a "church school bill." This cannot be doubted, after the overwhelming majority of last year, of 111 in the Lords, on the Archbishop of Canterbury's motion, and the very slight one which the ministers had in the lower house. That body voted a sum of money for schools, and the ministry proposed to devote it to the training of teachers, under certain regulations contained in a minute of Council. The vote of the Lords repudiated the regulations, and virtually declared an opposition to any plan of education in which the established church should not be consulted; that is to say, should not have some deference paid to its claims beyond those of different sects—some superiority assigned to it above the level on which all sects are to be kept.

prelates of the east and north of Ireland warmly cherishing the National schools, a prelate of the west has issued his interdict, and the schools taught under the superintendence of the Board of National Education are almost deserted, and the children left to the conjoint influences of ignorance, idleness, and bad example. Prussia considers that every elementary school necessarily comprehends religious instruction, as a means of forming the moral character of children according to the truths of christianity. "But masters and inspectors must most carefully avoid every kind of constraint, or annoyance to the children on account of their particular creed. Private masters of their own creed shall be charged with the religious instruction, where it is possible." I quote from the Prussian regulations.

Our state has carefully avoided entering into this matter at all, and scrupulously refrains from any direction or interference with it. This decision appears both wise and politic, and entirely conformable to that sentiment of general liberty which we entertain. But I am

very far from believing that any system which cultivates merely the intellectual powers, and neglects the affections of the heart, or leaves to chance the moral sentiments, can be either enlightened or useful. We are too much in the habit of referring all education to the head, and with a cold philosophy rejecting the culture of all those high moralities and noble sentiments which are of far greater importance than mere learning or any acquired knowledge—which constitute the foundation upon which the dignity of man rests, and the whole order and prosperity of civil society immediately repose. But to do this, it is unnecessary to instruct youth in any of those dogmas which have torn asunder the great body of the Christian church. There is an ample space upon which all may meet; the relation between man and his Maker; his accountability to the Deity for his actions; the omniscience, justice, and mercy of God; the duty we owe to our parents, to our neighbor; the obligations of patriotism, the immortality of the soul, and finally those short and beautiful precepts which constitute the

basis of universal morality. No education can be worth much that does not include these points ; indeed, it is without them worse than incomplete, for it arms the youth with weapons fatal to his own peace and that of society, unless it teaches him to use them under the benign guidance of a high and spiritualized morality. No religious sect can object to such an education, while the pastor or the parent is called to add to it, any other instruction which he deems necessary for instilling the peculiar traits of his own belief. Such I trust will ever be the outline of that education which is afforded at our common schools, and which is destined to secure to generations yet unborn, the rich harvest of knowledge, combined with christian virtue and morality.*

Fearful that I have already laid too heavy a

* Since this address was delivered, I have met with a notice of " A Sketch of the state of Popular Education in Holland, Prussia, Belgium and France, by the Rev. Thaddeus O'Malley." This gentleman is a Catholic priest, full of intelligence, kindness and moderation ; and it is singular that he prefers the system of Protestant Holland to all others, and considers its practical efficiency to be equally eminent. I may be permitted, I trust, the gratification of quoting the following passage—for it is written in a truly catholic spirit, (I use the term

tax on your attention, I dismiss other topics of equal interest, and now finish my remarks on

in its broad and legitimate sense,) worthy of imitation by those belonging to every sect.

"But what is the end and aim of all this superintendence and control and diligent training? It is the more effectually to secure that every child in the land shall be *educated* in the truest sense, 'to the exercise—to use the words of the lawgiver—of all the social and christian virtues.' The Dutch method, however, proposes to attain this end in a manner peculiar to itself, so far as *religion* is concerned. It objects to any thing like a catechetical or dogmatic moral or religious instruction being given in the schools. But yet the very air of these schools is pregnant with the purest moral and religious influences. It mixes up a moral with every lesson it teaches, and not the moral merely of a reasoned ethics, but the holier moral of revealed religion. Yet this morality is of all religions, as this religion is of all sects. It is general certainly, but it is not, therefore, indistinct. The commandments of God in the old law, the divine precepts of our Redeemer in the new, constitute together by far the most important part of the christian code of *morals*, and what difference of opinion is there about these amongst the christian sects? Piety toward God, and a cordial charity toward all our fellow-men, make up no small portion of the *religion* of those sects, and by inculcating it thus far upon the children of all, you meddle not, surely, with the special tenets of any. Nor do I see how this general inculcation in the school could in the least indispose those children for the more special inculcation of their respective pastors, in their respective churches, on the Lord's day. The one seems to me, on the contrary, the legitimate foundation of the other. This teaching of the moral and religious truths, about which all sects agree, which is what the Dutch system does by its moral and pious histories of the Old and New Testaments, seems to

our system of primary education. Other subjects might perhaps have been more suited to

some to lead to an indifference as to the truths about which they differ. This is an opinion, however, or rather a delicate apprehension, which I do not at all understand; and cannot, therefore, in the least participate, and which it is enough to barely point to Holland, to dissipate and refute. But, instead of leading to an indifference about the truths upon which they differ, it leads to a far happier result, a mutual toleration of the difference itself. The men who as children have prayed together to their common Father, and sung together hymns to his praise, will be slow to denounce each other as heretics or idolaters."

As affording a practical exemplification of the working of the Dutch system, we have the testimony of Mr. Chambers, alluded to in a recent number of the *Westminster Review*. It is a conversation between him and the master of an intermediate school in Holland.

"Where are your pupils taught the doctrines and other essential matters in religion?—'All are taught these things by the clergymen to whose congregation their parents belong.'—How is this managed?—'Two hours a week are allowed for their attendance at the clergymen's houses or churches, but I don't interfere in the matter, and leave parents to manage these affairs with their priests.'—'Do you know how the children in the school are divided into sects; that is, how many in each?'—'Oh, no; I never inquired of what religion a child is when it is sent to me; indeed, I cannot help feeling surprised how you should ask such a strange question. I told him that I was governed by no idle curiosity in asking these questions; that I was much gratified in observing the fervent piety and orderly manners of the Dutch, and therefore was interested in the manner of their religious education; that if he had no objections, I should like to be permitted to ask the children, one after the other, to what religious

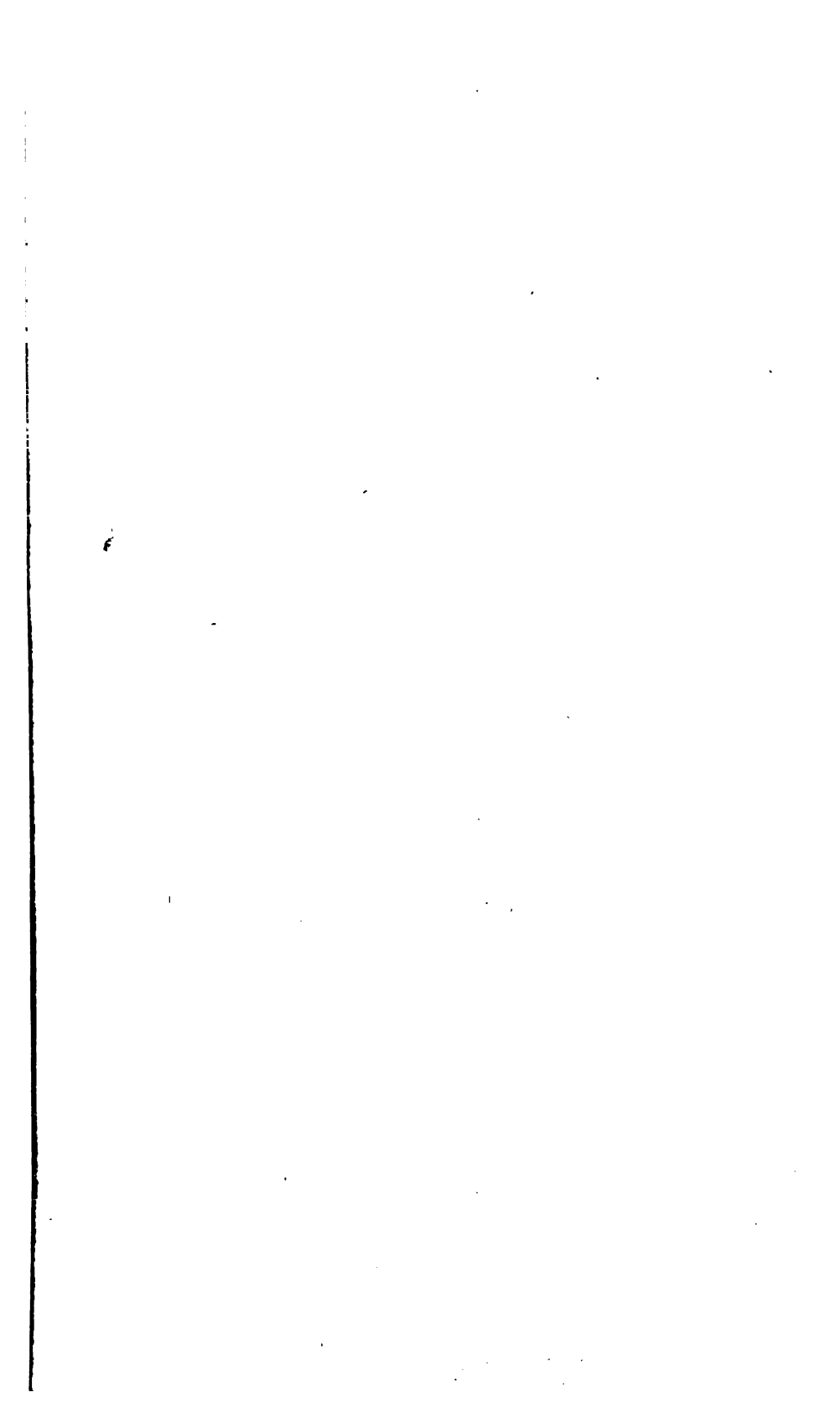
this occasion, and would certainly have been more easily surrounded by that interest and those attractive graces which are sought for in a popular address ; but I shall be more than compensated for any personal sacrifice I may have made in this selection, if I shall have been able to direct the attention of any of you to the advancement of this cause, after you exchange the quiet pursuits of literature for the active business of the world. Every consideration of patriotism, every generous impulse, calls on you to do so. This primary instruction is the heritage of the poor man—at once his right and his pride—while it deve-

party they belonged. This was good-humoredly agreed to. Selecting the first from in front, he began at the topmost boy, and bidding him stand up, asked him in a kindly way what religion he was of. The child uttered the word 'Romisch,' the next said 'Reformaire,' and so did the third; the fourth was a Jew; and then followed Mennonite (Baptist,) and Lutheran, and so on; there was a mixture of all sects as far as we went. 'I am now perfectly satisfied; I see that there is a thorough mixture of all sects in the school. But, may I ask, if they ever taunt or abuse each other on account of their religion?'—'No,' replied the teacher; they never to my knowledge do such a thing; in all my experience I never heard of such a thing! This closed the conversation, and we retired."

develops his faculties, regulates his principles, and controls and modifies his passions ; it forms the only capital he has with which to enter upon the important duties of life. It is an imperative obligation on us all to see, that it be as perfect as possible.

More than nineteen-twentieths of all the youth of this state are brought up in the common schools ; they are ultimately to be your legislators and your judges, and to perform the functions of every administrative office ; it is in these schools that character is formed and principles instilled ; and it is there we are to look for the safeguard of our free institutions, and for their support and perpetuity. This government is founded on the opinion of the people ; to them are committed the interests of truth, freedom, and humanity ; let us prepare the youth by a proper education for that high destiny which gives to them the guardianship and maintenance of these interests. When we contemplate this subject in all its vast and complicated bearings, the responsibility is fearful ; for, upon the intelligence of

this people, stand or fall, the whole fabric of our social institutions, the interests of religion, and that glorious form of government which forms the boast and blessing of us all,



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