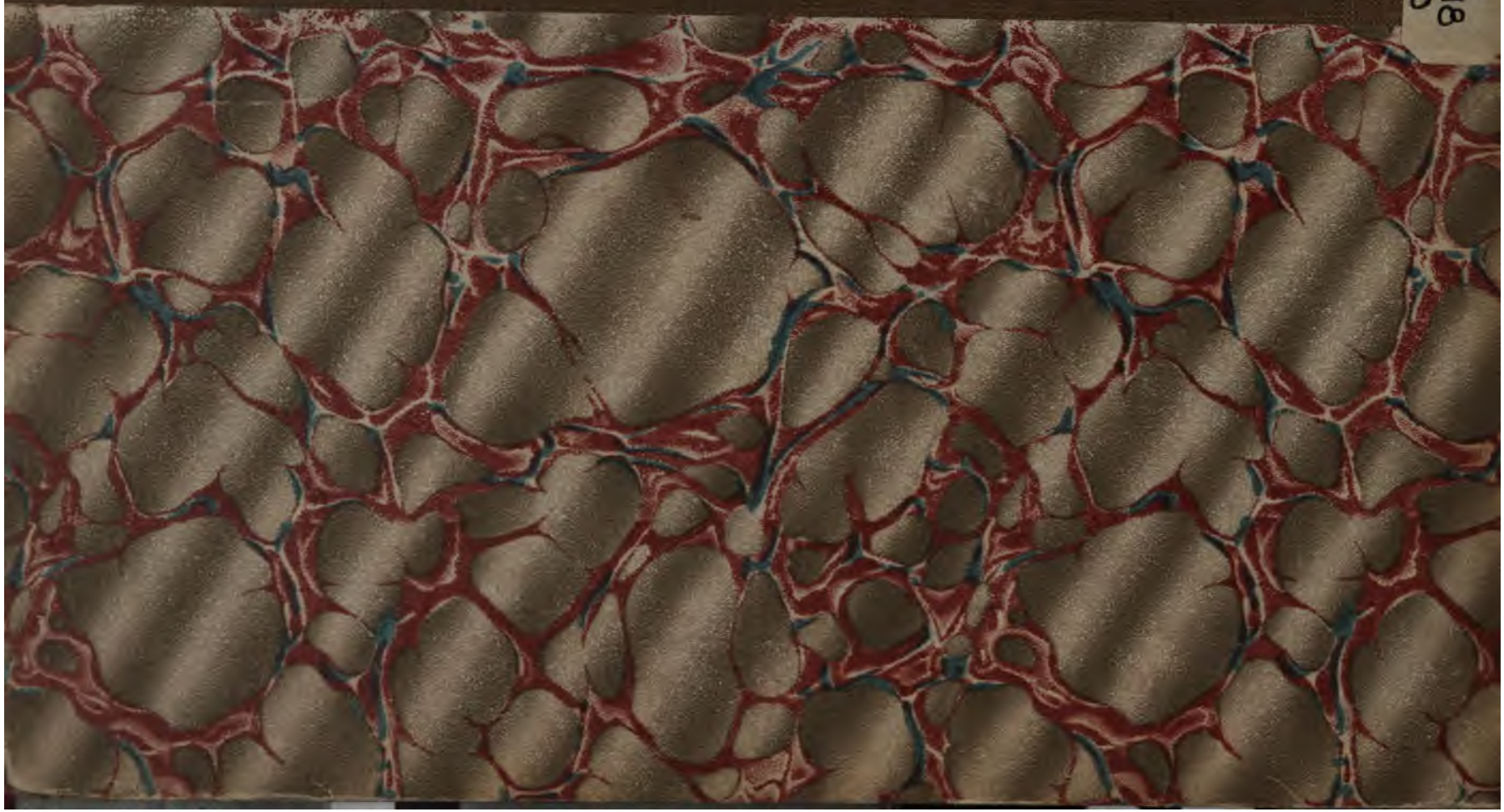

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THE

PUBLIC LIBRARY

AND

THE COMMON SCHOOLS:

THREE PAPERS ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

BY

CHARLES F. ADAMS, Jr.

I.—THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

II.—FICTION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES, AND EDUCATIONAL CATALOGUES.

III.—THE NEW DEPARTURE IN THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF QUINCY.

BOSTON:
ESTES AND LAURIAT, No. 301 WASHINGTON STREET.
1879.

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PREFACE.

As a rule anything worth publishing at all should, I think, explain itself, and stand in no need of a preface. In the present case, however, I feel that some apology is necessary for my — a mere amateur — offering to specialists these discussions of matters relating to their calling. I can only say that for quite a number of years now I have been actively concerned in the management of the Common Schools and Public Library of Quincy. Whether the observation and experience thus locally obtained are likely to prove of any general interest, I do not care to discuss; meanwhile, as I may now claim a speedy discharge from work of this description, on the ground of having done my full share, I prefer, for my own satisfaction, to put on file some evidence of my ten years' participation in it.

QUINCY, August 1, 1879.

THE PUBLIC LIBRARY AND THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

A PAPER PREPARED FOR THE TEACHERS OF THE PUBLIC SCHOOLS OF QUINCY, MASS., AND READ TO THEM ON THE 19TH OF MAY, 1876.

As the result of a conversation I some time since had with our School Superintendent, Mr. Parker, and at his suggestion, I propose this afternoon to say a few words to you about books and reading; on the use, to come directly to the point, which could be made of the Public Library of the town in connection with the school system in general, and more particularly with the High and upper-grade Grammar Schools. I say "*could* be made" intentionally, for I am very sure that use is not now made; and why it is not made is a question which, in my double capacity of a member of the School Committee and a trustee of the Public Library, I have during the last few years puzzled over a good deal.

You are all teachers in the common schools of the town of Quincy, and I very freely acknowledge that I think your course as such, especially of late, has been marked by a good deal of zeal, by a consciousness of progress, and a sincere desire to accomplish good results. I am disposed neither to find fault with you nor with our schools, — as schools go. I should like, however, to ask you this simple question: — Did it ever, after all, occur to you, what is the great end and object of all this common school system?—Why do we get all these children together, and labor over them so assiduously year after year? — Now, it may well be that it never suggested itself in that way to you, but I think it may safely be asserted that the one best possible result of a common-school education, — its great end and aim, — should be to prepare the children of the community for the far greater work of educating themselves.

Now, in education, as in almost everything else, there is a

strong tendency among those engaged in its routine work to mistake the means for the end. I am always struck with this in going into the average public school. It was especially the case in the schools of this town four years ago. Arithmetic, grammar, spelling, geography, and history were taught, as if to be able to answer the questions in the text-books was the great end of all education. It was instruction through a perpetual system of conundrums. The child was made to learn some queer definition in words, or some disagreeable puzzle in figures, as if it was in itself an acquisition of value, — something to be kept and hoarded like silver dollars, as being a handy thing to have in the house. The result was that the scholars acquired with immense difficulty something which they forgot with equal ease; and, when they left our grammar schools, they had what people are pleased to call the rudiments of education, and yet not one in twenty of them could sit down and write an ordinary letter, in a legible hand, with ideas clearly expressed, and in words correctly spelled; and the proportion of those who left school with either the ability or desire to further educate themselves was scarcely greater.

Perhaps you may think this an exaggeration on my part. If you do, I can only refer you to the examination papers of the candidates for admission during any year to our High School. I have had occasion to go over many sets of them, and I assure you they warrant the conclusion I have drawn.

Going a step further and following the scholar out into grown-up life, I fancy that a comparison of experiences would show that scarcely one out of twenty of those who leave our schools ever further educate themselves in any great degree, outside, of course, of any special trade or calling through which they earn a living. The reason of this, I would now suggest, is obvious enough; and it is not the fault of the scholar. It is the fault of a system which brings a community up in the idea that a poor knowledge of the rudiments of reading, writing, and arithmetic constitutes in itself an education. Now, on the contrary, it seems to me that the true object of all your labors as real teachers, if indeed you are such, — the great end of the common-school system, is something more than to teach children to read; it should, if it is to accomplish its full mission, also impart to them a love of reading.

A man or woman whom a whole childhood spent in the common schools has made able to stumble through a newspaper, or labor through a few trashy books, is scarcely better off than one who cannot read at all. Indeed, I doubt if he or she is as well off, for it has long been observed that a very small degree of book knowledge almost universally takes a depraved shape. The animal will come out. The man who can barely spell out his newspaper confines his spelling in nine cases out of ten to those highly seasoned portions of it which relate to acts of violence, and especially to murders. Among those who make a profession of journalism this is a perfectly well known fact; and any one who doubts it may satisfy himself on the subject almost any day by a few words of inquiry at a news-stand. Mr. Souther, in this town, I fancy, could impart to any of you, who happen to be curious, a considerable amount of information under this head. A little learning is proverbially a dangerous thing; and the less the learning the greater the danger.

Let us recur, then, to my cardinal proposition, that the great end of all school education is to make people able to educate themselves. You start them; that is all the best teacher can do. Whether he is called a professor and lectures to great classes of grown men at a university, or is a country school-master who hammers rudiments into children, he can do no more than this; but this every teacher, if he chooses, can do. How very few do it though! Not one out of ten; — scarcely one out of twenty. It is here our system fails.

I do not know that what I am about to suggest has ever been attempted anywhere, but I feel great confidence that it would succeed; therefore, I would like to see it attempted in Quincy. Having started the child by means of what we call a common-school course, — having, as it were, learned it to walk, — the process of further self-education is to begin. The great means of self-education is through books — through much reading of books. But just here there is in our system of instruction a missing link. In our schools we teach children to read; — we do not teach them *how* to read. That, the one all-important thing, — the great connecting link between school-education and self-education, — between means and end, — that one link we make no effort to supply. As

long as we do not make an effort to supply it, our school system in its result is and will remain miserably deficient. For now, be it remembered, the child of the poorest man in Quincy — the offspring of our paupers even — has an access as free as the son of a millionnaire, or the student of Harvard College, to what is, for practical general use, a perfect library. The old days of intellectual famine for the masses are over, and plenty reigns. Yet, though the school and the library stand on our main street side by side, there is, so to speak, no bridge leading from the one to the other. As far as I can judge we teach our children the mechanical part of reading, and then we turn them loose to take their chances. If the child has naturally an inquiring or imaginative mind, it perchance may work its way unaided through the traps and pitfalls of literature; but the chances seem to me to be terribly against it. It is so very easy, and so very pleasant too, to read only books which lead to nothing, — light and interesting and exciting books, and the more exciting the better, — that it is almost as difficult to wean ourself from it as from the habit of chewing tobacco to excess, or of smoking the whole time, or of depending for stimulus on tea or coffee or spirits. Yet here, — on the threshold of this vast field, you might even call it this wilderness of general literature, full as it is of holes and bogs and pitfalls all covered over with poisonous plants, — here it is that our common-school system brings our children, and, having brought them there, it leaves them to go on or not, just as they please; or, if they do go on, they are to find their own way or to loose it, as it may chance.

I think this is all wrong. Our educational system stops just where its assistance might be made invaluable, — just where it passes out of the mechanical and touches the individual, — just where instruction ceases to be drudgery and becomes a source of pleasure. Now, I do not propose for myself any such task as an attempted radical reform of education. Each man has his own work to do, and that is not mine. What I do want to suggest to you Grammar School teachers is that it is in the power of each one of you to introduce a great spirit of improvement into your own schools, and at the same time the greatest pleasure and interest a true teacher can have into your own lives.

You know it is said that poets are born, not made; and the same

is true of teachers. For myself, I don't think I could teach; — if I had to take my choice I would rather break stones in the highway; and yet other and better men than I would rather teach than do anything else. There is Dr. Dimmock at the Academy, for instance. He found his place in life, and a great one too, only when he got behind the master's desk. He was born to teach boys, and, with much happiness to himself and them, he is fulfilling his destiny. But, though I never could teach myself, I can see clearly enough that the one thing which makes the true teacher and which distinguishes him from the mechanical pedagogue, which any man may become, is the faculty of interesting himself in the single pupil, — seeing, watching, aiding the development of the individual mind. I never tried it, but I know just what it must be from my own experience in other matters. I have a place here in town, for instance, upon which I live; and there I not only grow fields of corn and carrots, but also a great many trees. Now, my fields of corn or carrots are to me what a mechanical pedagogue's school is to him. I like to see them well ordered and planted in even rows, all growing exactly alike, and producing for each crop so many bushels of corn or carrots to the acre, one carrot being pretty nearly the same as another; — and then, when the Autumn comes and the farming term closes, I prepare my land, as the pedagogue does his school-room, for the next crop; — and the last is over and gone. It is not so, however, with my trees. They are to me just what his pupils are to the born school-master, — to Dr. Dimmock, for instance; in each one I take an individual interest. I watch them year after year, and see them grow and shoot out and develop. Now let me apply my simile. You are, all of you, I hope, and if you are not you at least believe yourselves to be, born teachers, and not mechanical pedagogues; so, of course, your schools ought to be to you, not mere fields in which you turn out regular crops of human cabbages and potatoes, but they should be plantations also in which you raise a few trees, at least, in the individual growth of which you take a master's interest. This feeling and this only it is which can make a teacher's life ennobling, — the finding out among his pupils those who have in them the material of superior men and women, and then nurturing them and aiding in their development, and making of them something which, but for their

teacher, they never would have been. These pupils are to their teacher what my oak trees are to me; — but for me those trees would have died in the acorn, probably, — at most they would have been mere scrub bushes; — but now through me, — wholly owing to my intervention and care, — they are growing and developing, and there are among them those which some day, a hundred years, perhaps, after my children are all dead of old age, will be noble oaks. Then no one will know that I ever lived, much less trouble himself to think that to me those trees owed their lives, — yet it is so none the less, and those are my trees no matter how much I am dead and forgotten. So of your scholars. If you, during your lives as teachers, can, among all your mass of pupils, find out and develop through your own personal contact only a few, — say half-a-dozen, — remarkable men and women, who but for you and your observation and watchfulness and guidance would have lived and died not knowing what they could do, then, if you do nothing more than this, you have done an immense work in life.

This dealing with the individual and not with the class, is, therefore, the one great pleasure of the true schoolteacher's life. It can only be done in one way, — you have to furnish the individual mind the nutriment it wants, and, at the same time, gently direct it in the way it should go. In other words, if the teacher is going to give himself the intense enjoyment and pleasure of doing this work, he cannot stop at the border of that wilderness of literature of which I was just now speaking, but he has got to take the pupil by the hand and enter into it with him; — he must be more than his pedagogue, he must be his guide, philosopher and friend. And so the teacher, with the scholar's hand in his, comes at last to the doors of the Public Library.

When he gets there, however, he will probably find himself almost as much in need of an instructor as his own pupils; and here at last I come to the immediate subject on which I want to talk to you. I wish to say something of the books and reading of children, — of the general introduction into literature which, if you choose, you are able to give your scholars, and which, if you do give it to them, is worth more than all the knowledge contained in all the text-books that ever were printed. To your whole schools, if you only want to, you can give an elementary training as

readers, and if in this matter you once set them going in the way they should go, you need not fear that they will ever depart from it.

Now, in the first place, let me suppose that you want to start your schools in general on certain courses of reading, — courses which would interest and improve you, probably, hardly less than your scholars, — how would you go about it? — Through individual scholars, of course. You would run your eye down your rows of desks and pick out the occupants of two or three, and with them you would start the flock. Human beings are always and everywhere like sheep, in that they will go where the bell-wether leads. Picking out the two or three, then, you turn to the shelves of the library. And now you yourselves are to be put to the test. You have dared to leave the safe, narrow rut in which the pedagogue travels, and you have ventured into the fields with your pupils behind you, — do you know the way here? — can you distinguish the firm ground from the boggy mire? — the good sound wood from the worthless parasite? — If you can, you are indeed fit to be teachers. I hope you all can, and in that case the suggestions I have to make will be little better than wasted; but if, as I suspect, we none of us know any too much, what I am about to say may be of some use. In the first place, then, in trying to inoculate children with a healthy love of good reading, — for this is what we are talking of, the inoculation of children with a taste for good, miscellaneous reading, — in attempting that, the first thing to be borne in mind is, that children are not grown people.

There are few things more melancholy than to reflect on the amount of useless labor which good, honest, conscientious men and women have incurred, and the amount of real suffering they have inflicted on poor little children through the disregard of this one obvious fact. When I was young, I remember, my father, from a conscientious feeling, I suppose, that he ought to do something positive for my mental and moral good and general æsthetic cultivation, made me learn Pope's Messiah by heart, and a number of other masterpieces of the same character. He might just as well have tried to feed a sucking baby on roast beef and Scotch ale! Without understanding a word of it, I learned the Messiah by rote, and I have hated it, and its author too, from that day to this, and

I hate them now. So, also, I remember well when I was a boy of from ten to fourteen, — for I was a considerable devourer of books, being incited to read Hume's History of England, and Robertson's Charles V., and Gibbon's Rome even, and I am not sure I might not add Mitford's Greece. I can't now say it was time thrown away; but it was almost that. The first thing in trying to stimulate a love of reading is to be careful not to create disgust by trying to do too much. The great masterpieces of human research, and eloquence, and fancy are to boys pure nuisances. They can't understand them; they can't appreciate them, if they do. When they have grown up to them and are ready for them, they will come to them of their own accord. Meanwhile you can't well begin too low down. The intellectual like the physical food of children can't well be too simple, provided only it is healthy and nourishing.

Not that I for a moment pretend that I could now suggest a successful course of grammar-school literature myself. The intellectual nutriment which children like those you have in charge are fitted to digest and assimilate must be found out through a long course of observation and experiment. I think I could tell you what a boy in the upper classes of the Academy would probably like; but if I were to undertake to lay out courses of reading for the scholars of our grammar schools, it would certainly soon become very clear that I did not know what I was talking about. I am very sure I should not give them the books they now read; but I am scarcely less sure they would not read the books I would give them. Nothing but actual trial, and a prolonged trial at that, will bring us any results worth having in this respect; and that trial is only possible through you.

But, in a very general way, let us suppose that we are beginning on the new system and that your school is studying history and geography, — we will take those two branches and see what we could do in connection with them to introduce your scholars into general literature. History opens up the whole broad field of historical works and also of biography, — it is closely connected with fiction too, and poetry; geography at once suggests the library of travels. Now, we find that of all forms of literature there is not one which in popularity can compare with fiction. From the cradle to the grave, men and women love story-telling.

What is more, it is well they do; a good novel is a good thing, and a love for good novels is a healthy taste; yet there is no striking episode in history which has not been made the basis of some good work of fiction. Only it is necessary for you to find that work out, and to put it in the hands of your scholars; they cannot find it out unaided.

Next in popularity to works of fiction are travels. A good, graphic book of travel and adventure captivates almost every one, no matter what the age. After travels comes biography; any girl will read the story of Mary, Queen of Scots; any boy the life of Paul Jones. Now, here is our starting-point, and these fundamental facts we cannot ignore and yet succeed; human beings have to be interested and amused, and they do not love to be bored, — and children least of all are an exception to the rule. If, then, we can instruct and improve them while we are interesting and amusing them, we are securing the result we want in the natural and easy way. There is no forcing. And this is exactly what any well-informed and older person can do for any child. They can, in the line of education, put it in the way of instruction through amusement.

Take for instance geography, and suppose your class is studying the map of Africa; — the whole great field of African exploration and adventure is at once opened up to you and your scholars. Turn to the catalogue of our Public Library and see what a field of interesting investigations is spread out, first for yourself and then for them. Here are a hundred volumes, and you want to look them all over to see which to put in the hands of your selected pupils, which are long and dull, and which are compact and stirring, — which are adapted to boys and which to girls, — and how you will get your scholars started in them. Once get them going, and the map will cease to be a map and become a picture full of life and adventure, not only to them, but to you. You will follow with them Livingstone and Stanley and Baker; and the Pyramids will become realities to them as they read of Moses and the Pharaohs, and of Cleopatra and Hannibal. The recitation then becomes a lecture in which the pupils tell all they have found out in the books they have read, and in which the teacher can suggest the reading of yet other books; while the mass of the scholars,

from merely listening to the few, are stimulated to themselves learn something of all these interesting things.

So of our own country and its geography. The field of reading which would charm and interest any ordinary boy or girl in this connection is almost unlimited, but they cannot find it out. They need guidance. What active-minded boy, for instance, but would thoroughly enjoy portions at least of Parkman's Discovery of the Great West, or his Pioneers of France in the New World, or his California Trail? — And yet how many of you have ever glanced into one of those absorbing books yourselves? — Nor are they long either; in each case one moderate-sized volume tells the whole story.

Mark Twain, even, would here come in through his "Roughing It," and Ross Browne through his "Apache Country." Once entered upon, however, it would not be easy to exhaust the list. The story of Mexico and Peru, — Cortez and Pizarro, — the voyages of Columbus and the adventures of De Soto, — they have been told in fiction and in history, and it is to-day a terrible shame to us and to our whole school system that we teach American history, and yet don't know how to make the study of American history as interesting to our children as a novel.

But, after all, as I have already said, when you come to miscellaneous reading you cannot lay down general rules applicable to all cases; you have got to try experiments and watch them as they progress. To induce some of you to try these experiments has been my object in thus meeting you to-day. I believe you would find that so doing would lend a new life, a new interest, a new significance to your profession.

When the catalogue of the Public Library was published a year ago, I caused one copy of it to be specially bound for the use of each Grammar School. I was in hopes that the teachers would use them in connection with the studies in those schools, and would induce the scholars to use them too. As I have visited the schools since, I have usually taken occasion to ask for those catalogues, and I am sorry to say I have generally found them — there are two or three notable exceptions to this remark — locked away in some drawer of the master's desk, and looking on examination most suggestively fresh and clean. My hint had not been

taken. I now state the point more plainly. I want very much indeed to see our really admirable Town Library become a more living element than it now is in our school system, — its complement, in fact. Neither trustee nor librarian — no matter how faithful or zealous they may be — can make it so; for we cannot know enough of the individual scholars to give them that which they personally need, and which only they will take; — you cannot feed them until you know what they like; and that, we, in dealing with the mass, cannot get at. You teachers, however, can get at it, if you choose. To enable you to do this, the trustees of the library have adopted a new rule under which each of your schools may be made practically a branch library. The master can himself select and take from the library a number of volumes, and keep them on his desk for circulation among the scholars under his charge. He can study their tastes and ransack the library to gratify them. Nay more, if you will but find out what your scholars want, — what healthy books are in demand among them, — the trustees of the library will see to it that you do not want material. You shall have all the books you will call for. When, indeed, you begin to call, we shall know exactly what to buy; and then, at last, we could arrange in printed bulletins the courses of reading which your experience would point out as best, so that every book would be accessible. From that time both schools and library would begin to do their full work together, and the last would become what it ought to be, the natural complement of the first, — the People's College.

FICTION IN PUBLIC LIBRARIES, AND EDUCATIONAL CATALOGUES.

A Paper read at the Third General Meeting of the American Library Association, at Boston, July 1, 1879.

In the course of a now somewhat prolonged connection, as trustee, with the Public Library of the town of Quincy, my attention has more and more been called, especially of late, to certain features in the management of our Public Library system, if such it may be called, which it seems to me ought to be pretty carefully discussed by both trustees and librarians, with a view to arriving at some commonly accepted, as well as better considered results. Before submitting what I have to say, I ought to premise that my experience, somewhat amateurish at best, has been confined to a purely Public Library of the average size and character, supported on the educational principle by the annual appropriation of a town in no respect different from the mass of other towns. My remarks, therefore, have no bearing on the great endowed libraries, or the libraries connected with our institutions of learning. Speaking therefore, as one coming directly from such a town library as I have described, it is my purpose, drawing directly on my own experience, to call attention to two matters, one of which is connected with the duties of the trustees of those institutions, and the other with the needs of those using them; — the former being the present indiscriminate purchase of works of fiction for such libraries, and the latter the art of cataloguing their contents for popular educational purposes.

In the first place as respects the purchase of fiction. Inasmuch as every one who has paid any attention to the statistics of library reading is well aware of the fact, it is unnecessary to say that fiction constitutes, on a rough average, two-thirds of the whole of that reading. That it does so, and in spite of anything which can be done to alter the fact will continue to do so, I am not at all dis-

posed to lament. I look upon the appetite as a healthy and natural one, and the average as no more than fair. The lives of the mass of no community are over and above gay; and when those long hours of labor, the price of existence with the majority, are over, the healthy nature craves amusement. Long before Homer and Herodotus, the bard and the story-teller were the authors in most eager request; and it is juvenile fiction, and not philosophy, which the children cry for now-a-days. I do not know any more innocent way of getting this amusement which human nature has ever craved than by losing one's-self in a novel. I am glad, therefore, that other people do it as much as they do, and am sorry that I do not myself do it more.

The single doubt which is forcing itself on my mind in this regard is, whether furnishing any sort of amusement and relaxation of the character referred to, — for education it is not, — is a proper function of the government. At present, so far as I am advised, all trustees of Public Libraries do it. The demand on us for literature of this kind is very great; and, for some time past, the current of loose public opinion has set strongly in favor of the supposed educational tendency of undirected and indiscriminate reading. Every readable book which comes out, therefore, so it be of a not immoral character, is at once forwarded to the Public Library and placed within the reach of every one. I am, however, more and more inclined to doubt whether this wholesale purchase by us of trashy and ephemeral literature is justifiable. We do not use the public money to supply every one with theatre, or concert, or even lecture tickets. — Why then should we give them all the new novels of the day? — Would not the more proper rule for the guidance of us trustees be, that we would put upon the library shelves, and bring within the reach of all, whether rich or poor, every standard work, fiction or anything else, within our means to purchase; but, so far as the passing publications of the day are concerned, — the trashy and sensational novel in particular, — while we sympathize entirely in the desire to read them, yet those who wish to do so should be willing to pay for them, as they do for their theatres, their lectures, their concerts. Accordingly they must seek them at the counters of the circulating libraries, where, at a very moderate cost, they will be always sure of finding them. The

Public Library has a sphere of its own within the general line of education; the circulating library has a sphere of its own within the general line of amusement. Following after false theories, perhaps — possibly led on by a not unnatural desire to increase the figures of our circulation, — to magnify our business, if you please, — it seems to me that we trustees are rapidly causing the Public Library to invade the sphere of the circulating library; and, in so doing, not only are we removing a very desirable as well as natural check on an excessive indulgence in one form of amusement, but we are doing it through a misapplication of public money.

My remedy for this evil would be a simple one, and I long since suggested it in Quincy. The Public Library and the circulating library should come to an understanding, so that they could work together and not in competition. As trustees we should agree with any person, desiring to keep a circulating library, upon a list of books and of authors into which we would not go and he should; and whoever wanted those books, or the works of those authors, should be referred by us to him. These persons could then pay for what they wanted, or they could go without; but they could not have it at the public cost. The demand for the sentimental and more highly seasoned literature of the day, — the Southworths, the Ouidas, the Optics, and the Kingstons, — would then be measured and limited, as it should be, by the willingness to pay something for it, and not stimulated by a free distribution, on something which seems very like the *panem-et-circenses* principle. Such a method of division would, I think, reduce the circulation of our Public Libraries nearly one-third; — but the two-thirds that were left would be worth more than the whole is now, for it would all be really educational. As things are now going, say what we will, this sensational and sentimental trash-gratis business is at best a dangerous experiment, especially for boys and girls; and I fear the Public Libraries are, by degrees, approaching somewhat near to what it is not using too strong a term to call pandering.

Passing from this topic to my other one, I wish to suggest that, for the highest form of ordinary Public Library use, a perfect sys-

tem of cataloguing it yet to be devised. Some years ago I tried my 'prentice hand on a catalogue, and, though my work was most kindly received by those better able than I to judge of its relative merit, I have since concluded that, so far as it was my work and not that of a peculiarly competent coadjutor, it was, except in the excellence of its intention, all wrong, and must be done over again upon a wholly different plan.

We need, it would appear, three distinct kinds of catalogue, and the attempt now is to combine the three in one. First, there is the general reader's catalogue; second, the specialist's catalogue; and, third, the educational or Public Library catalogue. As respects the first two, here at least, I have nothing to say. I doubt if any improvement can be made on the general reader's catalogue, as exemplified in those specimens of the highest recent type with which I am acquainted, — the catalogues of the Boston Athenæum, of the Boston Public Library, and of the Brooklyn Mercantile Library. These also, in their subject catalogues, provide to a certain, though sadly limited extent, for the needs of the specialist; and the Boston Public Library and the Harvard College Library have recently shown what could be done, if the work were not so well-nigh unlimited, in a series of what may be called monographic catalogues. How much more may have been elsewhere done in these directions I cannot say. I do not for a moment pretend to have kept up with this new science in all its ramifications, and I am here only to speak of the single educational point to which I have referred; and as respects that even, I fear much may have been done or now be doing with which I am not familiar.

So far as I know, however, not a single step in the right direction has as yet been taken towards the Public Library catalogue for educational uses.[1] A number of years ago the

[1] At the time this paper was prepared I was not aware of the very valuable work in the direction indicated which Mr. S. S. Green, of the Worcester Public Library, now has in hand. Without being even yet fully acquainted with Mr. Green's plan, I have no doubt that it will prove a great step in advance. This will especially be the case if it is so arranged in detail as to permit of his work being made the common property of Public Libraries. The immense cost of doing the same copy and press work over and over again seems at present to be the chief obstacle in the way of all educational catalogues. It is an obstacle which would seem, also, to require very little ingenuity to overcome; there is, moreover, money to be made by some one in overcoming it.

Boston Public Library incorporated into its catalogue a number of elaborate notes, historical and otherwise, for popular use. It was a first step towards realizing a great conception; and, as such first steps always are, it was necessarily tentative. More recently, when preparing the Quincy catalogue, I freely imitated those notes, and in some respects elaborated the system. I have since, as I have already intimated, come to the conclusion that, for the purposes at least for which I designed them, the notes of the Quincy catalogue were almost wholly useless. I came to this conclusion very reluctantly, and I now have no time in which to carry out my more recent ideas. I therefore submit them here for what they are worth, in the hope that others may see something in them, and do what I cannot do.

The difficulty with the notes of the Quincy catalogue, and, as I should suppose, with those of the Boston Public Library catalogue, was that, as educational notes they were prepared on a preconceived theory as to the capacity and acquirements of those for whose use they were intended, — a theory that street children are the same as professors' children, — that they can understand the same instructions, and assimilate the same mental nutriment. But they are not. They are, on the contrary, as distinct from them as two things which nature made alike can become when exposed all their lives to different influences and conditions. The difference will average the same as that between plants grown in sheltered places and cared for, and those left to struggle up from crevices in the north face of rocky exposures. Not to recognize it is to ignore or deny the efficacy of home education, and to insist that the few hours passed in the school-room contribute alone to the child's moral and mental make-up; — but, if this is indeed so, then the whole talk of the responsibility incurred by superior advantages becomes senseless cackle. In point of fact, however, and theory apart, the intellectual atmospheres which the laborer's son and the professor's son breathe from the cradle up, have almost nothing in common; and this fact the Public Library, officered as it necessarily is by professors, must recognize, if it is ever to begin even to fulfil its educational functions. But in preparing the notes in the catalogues I have referred to, the professors had only their own children, and highly precocious children at that, in

their minds. Those notes were, accordingly, "caviare to the general." Now, if there is one thing about a Public Library more instructive than another it is the realizing sense it gives any educated and observing man connected with it of the size of that intellectual world in which we live. This, too, is in Tennyson's language, "a boundless universe," and within it there "is boundless better, boundless worse." Take, for instance, the educational, intellectual, and literary strata; I have come to the conclusion that we of the so-called educated classes know absolutely nothing about them; we live in an acquired atmosphere of our own, and we cannot go out of it, except on excursions of discovery,— from which, like our friend Professor Sumner the other day, we are apt to return in a very dishevelled and panicky condition. I have consequently found that, taking the mass of those who use the Public Library, and especially the children in our public schools who are born and bred in the habitations of labor, — those offspring of the dollar and the dollar and a half a day people whom we especially wish to reach, — these cannot and will not read what, as a rule, I am willing to recommend. What I like is to them incomprehensible; and what they like is to me simply unendurable. They are in the Sunday police-paper and dime-novel stage. It is only when you become thoroughly conscious of the existence and extent of this class that you understand the why and the wherefore of the make-up of the daily journals of our Western cities, with their long sensational headings of murders, robberies, and deeds of violence. But when, from actual observation, I did get a realizing sense both of the magnitude and the torpid, uninformed condition of this stratum, I am free to say that a strong sense of the humor of the thing overcame me when I thought of my somewhat elaborate notes in the Quincy catalogue, intended for popular use, on the books relating to French and English history. So far as accomplishing the purpose I had in view was concerned, I might as well have directed the librarian to hand to each applicant a copy of Kant's Critique of Pure Reason in the original. The difficulty was simply here: those competent by education to use and profit by my notes, could, as a rule, be safely left to do without them; while for those — and they constitute the majority — who really need assistance, a wholly different assistance was necessary. I did the work subjectively, — it

should have been done objectively. In other words the professor, out of his inner self-consciousness, knows nothing whatever about the street child, and if he means to get hold of him he has first got to study him.

Neither is the study a difficult one. On the contrary it is very simple, if it is only begun in the true missionary spirit and with an entire absence of any fixed notions of how things ought to be, instead of how they really are. The first thing to be gotten rid of, however, is that idea which is the bane of our present common-school system, — the idea that information, knowledge, if you please, is in itself a good thing, and that people in general, and especially children, are a species of automatons or india-rubber bags, into which we must stuff as much as we can of that good thing in as many of its different forms as possible. But we may stuff and stuff, and in our Public Libraries it will be just as it has been and now is in our common schools, even those who are forced or coaxed into receiving it, will be unable to assimilate it. Intellectually, as physically, if you mean to impart nourishment you must adapt the food to the digestive powers. In the matter of reading, where those powers are naturally considerable, or have been properly developed, the ordinary catalogue will supply all the needful aid in the search for new food; but with only a small portion of those who come to our Public Libraries is this the case. The difficulty, moreover, is vastly increased by the fact that the great field of work at the Public Library is among the children. As respects reading, and self-education through reading, it is to be remembered that the habits of life are acquired at a very early age, and once fixed cannot be changed. In this matter adults may be dropped out of consideration; for better or for worse they are — what they are. There is, indeed, probably no human faculty which depends so much for its development on early habit and training as the faculty of acquiring information out of books. As the phrase goes, you have got to catch them young; and if you do not catch them young, certainly in their "teens," you will never catch them at all.

The question simply is, then, how far the Public Library can be so organized and equipped with appliances as to enable it to leaven with its contents this inchoate mass while it is yet in the

formative condition. Thus far we have only got to the point of thrusting a complicated list of great collections of books into people's hands, and telling them to find out what they want, and take as much of it as they please. They naturally took fiction, and the weakest forms of fiction; and then in due time followed the comically absurd theory of mental evolution through indiscriminate story-books gratis. Now, that insipid or sensational fiction amuses I freely admit, but that it educates or leads to anything beyond itself, either in this world or the next, I utterly deny. On the contrary, it simply and certainly emasculates and destroys the intelligent reading power. It is to that what an excessive use of tobacco, tea, coffee, or any other stimulant is to the nervous system.

In this vast field of public instruction, then, in which, more than anywhere else, direction is all important, no direction at all is given. But the mass cannot do without it. Consequently nothing in my observation of our library at Quincy has astonished me more than the utter aimlessness of the reading done from it, — that, and the lack of capacity for any sustained effort in reading. Few, indeed, of those who come there have the courage to begin any work in several volumes; and of those few hardly any get beyond the first. This is true of all authors except a few writers of novels. The number of those who have not the strength of literary appetite to take up any volume, but want an illustrated magazine or some book of short stories or papers, to turn over of a Sunday or in the evening before going to bed, is enormously large. So much have I been impressed by this, that, studying the subject objectively and from the educational point of view, — seeking to provide that which, taken altogether, will be of the most service to the largest number, — I long ago concluded that, if I could have but one work for a Public Library, I would select a complete set of Harper's Monthly.

Having said this I cannot resist the temptation of making a little historical digression. If the world is not yet perfect, it certainly does move, as I now propose to show. To plant one's standard on Harper's Monthly as the most valuable work for public library uses

in existence, is taking, as many of you may think, a tolerably advanced stand in the long struggle between liberalism and conservatism in library management. When we go back and see where our fathers stood, this certainly seems to be the case. Could they examine our modern shelves of books they would indeed rub their eyes and gasp! — In illustration of all this I propose at this point to contribute a rather amusing page to the history of American Public Libraries, — a page, too, which, unless I contribute it here and now, will probably be overlooked and forever lost.

I doubt if the best informed of those who have devoted their lives to Public Libraries have ever heard of Stephen Burroughs as being one of their founders; — he, once known as "the notorious Stephen Burroughs," — a gentleman who in the course of his life was fated to repeatedly come in somewhat violent contact with the laws of his country, and who has left behind him an autobiography which is almost as amusing a specimen of impudent mendacity as that of Benvenuto Cellini. It is full of queer glimpses of New England life just subsequent to the War of Independence. The Quincy library boasts a copy of the book — a waif from some house-clearing dispensation — and there, while cataloguing, I stumbled over it, and read it with great delight. Burroughs was the son of a New Hampshire Presbyterian clergyman, who sent him to Dartmouth College, from which institution he suffered an early and deserved expulsion. Subsequently he became a preacher, a counterfeiter, a jail-breaker, a schoolmaster, and, in consequence of his misdeeds in this last capacity, he did not escape the whipping-post at Worcester in the year 1790. Always a rogue, he was also a philosopher, and two of his aphorisms have lived, at least until recently, in the memory of the New England pedagogue; for I myself have often heard the late Dr. Gardner, of the Latin School, hurl them, always with their author's name attached, at the head of his boys when caught in the act. Those aphorisms, more worldly wise than good, were thus expressed: the first, "Never tell a lie when you know the truth will be found out;" and the second, "Never tell a lie when the truth will serve your purpose equally well." But here let me add that the man who has not read Stephen Burroughs' extemporaneous sermon on the text "Old shoes and clouted

on their feet" (Joshua ix., 5), has yet to complete his acquaintance with pulpit eloquence.

In addition, however, to being a rogue, philosopher, and preacher, Stephen Burroughs was also the founder of a Public Library; and it is in that capacity, and as throwing a queer glance of light on what was looked upon as popular reading about the year 1791, that I take the liberty of introducing him here. Having fled from the Worcester whipping-post in 1790, Burroughs, in 1791, set up as a school-master in a town on Long Island; and presently he goes on to say: —

> The people on this island were very illiterate, making but a small calculation for information, further than the narrow circle of their own business extended. They were almost entirely destitute of books of any kind except school-books and bibles; hence, those who had a taste for reading, had not the opportunity. I found a number of those young people who had attended my evening school, possessing bright abilities, and a strong thirst for information, which would lead to rapid improvement had they the opportunity. Therefore, under circumstances like these, I felt very desirous to devise some method to remove the evil. . . . I finally thought of using my endeavors to persuade the people into the expediency of raising money for the purpose of collecting a number of books for the use of the young people of the district.

He then communicated his plan to the Rev. Mr. Woolworth, the clergyman of the village, of whom he tells us "his genius was brilliant; his mind was active and full of enterprise. As a reasoner, he was close and metaphysical, but as a declaimer, he was bungling and weak." Mr. Woolworth, however, gave Burroughs no encouragement, remarking that he had himself attempted something of the sort but had failed, and the people "had no idea of the benefit of books, or of a good education." A Mr. Halsey, to whom he next submitted his plan, and who, he tells us, "was a man of shrewd discernment and excellent judgment," took a different view of the subject and intimated that the cause of Mr. Woolworth's failure was to be found in the fact "that people are afraid they shall not be gratified in such books as they want, so long as he has the lead of the business. They generally expect the library will consist of books in divinity, and dry metaphysical writings; whereas, should they be assured that histories and books of infor-

mation would be procured, I have no doubt they might be prevailed upon to raise money sufficient for such a purpose."

On this hint Burroughs went to work, and soon raised the necessary funds. What followed can only be described in his own language: —

I immediately advertised the proprietors of the library to hold a meeting for the purpose of selecting a catalogue of books, and to make rules for the government of a library, etc. At the day appointed we all met. After we had entered into some desultory conversation upon the business, it was proposed and agreed to choose a committee of five, to make choice of books. Mr. Woolworth, myself, Deacon Cook, Doctor Rose, and one Mathews, were chosen a committee for this purpose. Immediately after we had entered upon business, Mr. Woolworth produced a catalogue of his own selection, and told the meeting that he had consulted all the catalogues of the bookstores in New York, and had chosen the best out of them all for this library; and called for a vote upon his motion. . . . I requested the favor of Mr. Woolworth to see the catalogue he had selected. After running it through, I perceived that the conjectures of the people had not been ill-founded respecting the choice he would make for them. His catalogue consisted wholly of books upon the subject of ethics; and did not contain a single history, or anything of the kind.

Then —

I made a selection from a number of catalogues of such books as appeared to me suitable to the first design of this institution.

No conclusion was reached at this meeting, but the number of the committee was increased, and an adjournment had for a week.

During the time of adjournment the clamor still increased against the books which I had offered for the library. Mr. Woolworth and Judge Hurlbut were in a state of great activity on this subject, and their perpetual cry was, "that I was endeavoring to overthrow all religion, morality and order in the place; was introducing corrupt books into the library, and adopting the most fatal measures to overthrow all the *good old establishments*."

At the next meeting, the different members of the committee had selected a catalogue of books, peculiar to their own taste. Deacon Hedges brought forward "Essays on the Divine authority for Infant Baptism," Terms of Church Communion," "The Careful Watchman," "Age of Grace," etc., all

pamphlets. — Deacon Cook's collection was, "History of Martyrs," "Rights of Conscience," "Modern Pharisees," Defence of Separates," etc. — Mr. Woolworth exhibited "Edwards against Chauncey," "History of Redemption," "Jenning's View," etc. Judge Hurlbut concurred in the same. Doctor Rose exhibited "Gay's Fables," "Pleasing Companion," "Turkish Spy;" while I, for the third time, recommended "Hume's History," "Voltaire's Histories," "Rollins' Ancient History," "Plutarch's Lives," etc.

Then followed a tumult of objections, but finally, after much bickering and hard feeling, a compromise list was agreed upon, the books were purchased, and, as Burroughs expresses it, "matters seemed to subside into a sullen calm." The calm, however, did not last long. One day the "History of Charles Wenthworth" was purchased by the committee from the collection of Judge Hurlbut, and speedily Burroughs got hold of a "deistical treatise" in those volumes, and thereupon he, so to speak, proceeded to make it uncommonly warm for the judge and his friend the Rev. Mr. Woolworth. A battle royal ensued over this "so monstrous a production," in which "the holy religion of their ancestors [was] vilified thus by a vile caitiff," and not only the committee but the whole parish was convulsed. At last, after a fierce debate in a sort of general convocation, Burroughs concludes with this deliciously instructive paragraph: —

It was then motioned to have some of the obnoxious passages read before the meeting, but this was overruled by Mr. Woolworth, Judge Hurlbut, Capt. Post, and Dr. Rose. It was then put to vote, whether the book in dispute should be excluded from the library, and the negative was obtained by a large majority. The truth was this: there had been so much said respecting the book, that each individual was anxious to gratify his curiosity by seeing this phenomenon; and each one who had read it, was more afraid for others than for himself, therefore it was determined that the book should remain a member of the library, in order for each one to be gratified by the perusal

Could anything better mark the advance which has of late years been made in a correct understanding of that intellectual food which the popular taste demands. From "Edwards against Chauncey," and "Rollin's Ancient History" to Harper's Monthly! What giants they must have been, or else what husks they subsisted on

in those days! I fancy, however, that the children cried for bread and they gave them stones then, and very few of them; now, without waiting for them to cry for it, we are giving them any quantity of mild poison. Meanwhile the publisher of to-day, I think, understands the popular appetite almost perfectly well. With him it is a purely business operation. He studies the market, and not his own inner consciousness; the result is that he publishes what the market will take, and not what he himself may fancy, or think it ought to take. He does this at his peril, too, for mistakes in judgment mean bankruptcy. The result with us is Harper's Monthly; not great, not original, not intended for the highly educated few; but always varied, always good, always improving, and always reflecting with the utmost skill the better average popular demand.

Meanwhile, the position of the librarian and cataloguer has been wholly different from that of the publisher. He has not worked for a constituency whose tastes and desires he has been compelled to study as the price of success. Consequently he has built upon a plan of his own, and has catalogued for himself and a few others who know all about books and authors; and it is only recently that an idea of the educational catalogue has suggested itself to him. But what we need is a catalogue which in its conception and execution shall be as different from the standard catalogue as Harper's Monthly is different from Rollin's Ancient History or Plutarch's Lives. To produce this the librarian has got to cut loose from models and theories, and begin by patiently observing those who come to his desk calling for books. In other words, he has got to begin at the beginning; — but has not Pope told us that "the proper study of mankind is man?" — The first duty of the Public Library cataloguer just at present is, therefore, to make himself human. As compared with the publisher, he is in his study of mankind still back in that earlier stage which Burroughs happened upon.

When the librarian does thus go back and begin his new work from the beginning and objectively, he will, unless I am quite mistaken, find and by degrees map out certain wide, deep currents of popular taste, — and only when he fixes clearly the limits of these currents, as affected by sex, by temperament, by age, by nationality, and by education, — only then will he be able to furnish each with

that nutriment it needs, and which only it can properly assimilate. The world is not a Do-the-boy's Hall, and it is no use trying to serve out brimstone and treacle to all from the same wooden spoon. That one man's food is another man's poison is true in the matter of books, perhaps, more than in anything else; but is it not strange that while the field of search is so large and the searchers so ignorant, more pains have not yet been taken in the erection of finger-boards? The fact would seem to be that, since the days of long-continued famine suddenly came to a close, some fifteen years ago, we have been passing through a period of indiscriminate indulgence. We have been abusing our plenty. We are now just beginning to doubt whether this excess of liberty does not verge on license. Presently we will conclude that it does, and then a reaction will set in. The world always moves in this way. To reduce the reading of fiction among children, — for I care nothing about the adults, — you have got to guide them to a substitute for fiction which they will accept. The finding this substitute and the best means of guidance to it I take to be the Public Library problems of this reactionary period. The comparison of notes here about fiction, its use and abuse by the young, is of no worldly use that I can see, except as it leads to this practical result.

To come, however, immediately to the point, what is wanted at Quincy I know; and, if it is wanted there, I presume it is wanted elsewhere. With the means and time at my disposal it is evident that I cannot provide it for Quincy; but, if the same need does indeed exist elsewhere, there is no better way for me to get it provided for than by stating it as clearly as I can here. What we need at Quincy to fully develop our Public Library as an active influence in our educational system, is a regular, scientifically prepared series of annotated horn-book catalogues of popular reading. They should be prepared for both sexes, or for either sex, as the case might be; they should be graded according to the ages of readers, and should cover fiction, biography, history, travels, and science, each by itself; they should be annotated in short, simple, attractive language; they should be unpretentious and compact, and, above all else, they should be *human*. Four pages should be the limit of size, for four pages cover a library of 250 volumes. A single page, if well selected, would do better work

among children than four pages. These catalogues should be sold at a nominal price, or, if possible, distributed by the teachers in our public schools. Were they once prepared they could be used indiscriminately by libraries, for no works but standard works would be thus catalogued, and, the titles being kept permanently set up, it would merely be necessary to reset the shelf-numbers to adapt the pages to any library. A combined action in the matter is especially desirable, for through it a great saving, both of labor and money, could be effected. If, through such a combined action, the result I have endeavored to outline could be brought about, I feel so strong an assurance of the fact, in the light of my own practical experience both in connection with schools and libraries, that I do not hesitate to express the confident belief that the Public Library would very speedily become a far more important and valuable factor in popular education than that whole high-school system, which now costs us so much, and, in my opinion, accomplishes so little.

THE NEW DEPARTURE IN THE COMMON SCHOOLS OF QUINCY.

A PAPER PREPARED FOR THE ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL COMMITTEES AND SUPERINTENDENTS OF NORFOLK COUNTY AT ITS SPRING MEETING OF 1879.

The more than local interest which has of late been evinced in certain changes and, so to speak, experiments, which during the last four years have been made in the common-school course in the town of Quincy, would seem at this time to justify a more particular statement in regard to them. They are not without a general value, as the condition of affairs which preceded and led to them was by no means peculiar to Quincy, and the results reached there, if of value, are easily attainable anywhere. It may perhaps be best to concisely state the object of these changes and experiments in the first place: — it was to secure, if possible, a thoroughly good common-school education at a not unreasonable cost. The two points of excellence and economy were to be kept clearly in view, and neither was to be subordinated to the other.

In presenting to the town their annual report on the condition of its schools in 1873, the Quincy committee took occasion to refer to the state of what they termed "immobility" at which those schools had then arrived. They used the following language: —

> A retrospect of ten years will discover no very remarkable results. Ten years ago, so far as we remember, the children read and wrote and spelled about as well as they do to-day; and the fundamental rules of arithmetic were as thoroughly taught then as now. And at present, as in the past, most of the pupils who have finished the grammar course neither speak nor spell their own language very perfectly, nor read and write it with that elegance which is desirable. This immobility seems to show that a point has been reached which is near the natural term of such force as our present system of schooling is calculated to exert.

In stating their conclusions in this way the committee certainly used the mildest possible language which the circumstances permitted. The Quincy schools at that time were neither better nor worse than those of the surrounding towns; they were, indeed, fairly to be classed among those of the higher order, such as are usually looked for in the more populous and well-to-do communities in the immediate vicinity of Boston. As such they had gone along year after year, and stood not unsuccessfully the test of the formal committee examinations to which they were annually subjected. Those examinations were a study for the humorist. A day was publicly assigned for each school, and on that day the children were present in their best clothes; the benches were crowded, and a tolerable representation of parents and friends occupied the vacant spaces of the room. The committee sat upon the platform in dignified silence, and the teacher conducted the exercises over safe and familiar ground to a triumphant conclusion in some peculiarly unnatural bit of childish declamation. Then the chairman and other members of the committee were asked to gratify the children with a few remarks, which it is unnecessary to say were always of a highly commendatory character. The whole thing was a sham. After it was over the committee knew nothing more about the school than they did before it began; and, as for tests, there were none.

In 1873, however, a change was introduced. The examinations assumed a wholly new character. A special branch of studies was assigned to each member of the committee, and, during the examinations, the schools were taken wholly out of the hands of the instructors. The result was deplorable. The schools went to pieces. Among other things, for instance, it was found that the A and B grammar scholars throughout the town could parse and construe sentences, and point out the various parts of speech with great facility, repeating correctly and with readiness the rules of grammar applicable in each case; yet when called upon to write an ordinary letter they were utterly unable to apply the rules and principles they had so painfully learned, or to form single sentences, or to follow any rule of composition. So, also, as respects reading. Rote reading, so to speak, that is the practised reading of certain familiar pieces in given Readers, had been brought to a point of

very considerable perfection. If the examination was not carried too far, the classes could be shown off to great advantage. Where the severer test of sight-reading, that is the reading of an ordinary book which the scholar had never seen before it was put by the examiner into his hands, — when this test was applied, the result was simply bewildering. The greater part of the scholars could merely stammer and bungle along, much as a better educated person does when reading a book in some language with which he is only imperfectly acquainted. In other words, it appeared, as the result of eight years' school-teaching, that the children, as a whole, could neither write with facility nor read fluently.

Brought face to face with such a condition of affairs as this, the committee certainly were not guilty of a too strong use of terms when they said in the extract from their report of 1873 which has been quoted, that the pupils of the schools could "neither speak nor spell their own language very perfectly, nor read and write it with that ease and elegance which is desirable." The fact was that the examinations had shown that in far too many cases they could neither read nor write it at all. To the majority of the committee the reason of this state of things was apparent. The school system had fallen into a rut. A great multiplicity of studies had in one way and another been introduced, and each was taught by itself. The ever-present object in the teacher's mind was to pass a creditable examination; and, to insure this, he unconsciously turned his scholars into parrots, and made a meaningless farce of education. Certain motions had to be gone through with; for real results he cared nothing. It was, in a word, all smatter, veneering and cram. So far as the Quincy committee of 1873 was concerned, its members having reached their conclusions, it was a simple question whether they would leave things as they found them or attempt a wholly new departure. There was no middle course open. As affairs stood, it was plain that a great waste of the public money was steadily going on; — that is, the statistics did not show that the town was spending an undue amount on its schools, but of the amount it was spending not fifty cents out of each dollar were effectively spent. This waste could only be remedied in one way. The cost of the schools could not be reduced, but their quality could be improved. It was absolutely

useless, however, to look for any steady improvement through the efforts of individual members of the committee. They were busy men, and they were not specialists in education. Committees elected by popular vote are entirely unequal to any sustained effort; and only through a sustained effort can the spirit necessary to any permanent improvement be infused into teachers, and a steady direction given to it.

It was determined, therefore, to ask the town to employ a superintendent of schools, and to put the working-out of the new system in his hands. This was done, and in the Spring of 1875 the necessary authority was obtained. And now the first serious difficulty presented itself in the practical selection of a superintendent; for it is a noticeable fact that, large and costly as the common-school system of this country is and greatly as it stands in need of intelligent direction, not a single step has yet been taken towards giving it such a direction through an educated superintendency. Accordingly, very much as Bentham defined a judge as "an advocate run to seed," the ordinary superintendent is apt to be a grammar school teacher in a similar condition. Where he is not this, he is usually some retired clergyman or local politician out of a job, who has no more idea of the processes of mental development or the science of training than the average schoolmaster has of the object of teaching English grammar. The blind are thus made to lead the blind, and naturally both plunge deeper into the mire. That this should be so is certainly most singular, for the idea of managing a school system as complicated as that of any populous New England town has now become, without the assistance of some trained specialist, is manifestly as absurd as it would be to try to manage a college without a president. Yet the superintendency is not yet recognized as a distinct profession, and, accordingly, trained men not being supplied for it, it has actually fallen into a sort of discredit through the wretched substitutes for trained men to whom towns have in their need been compelled to have recourse.

All this the members of the school committee of Quincy did but dimly appreciate when they determined to try their experiment. They had a definite object in view, in accomplishing which everything depended on their selection of an agent. Their object was

to improve the schools while not increasing their cost; — to get one hundred cents worth of value for every dollar of the town's money. According to their own admission in the extract from the report of 1873, which has been quoted, there had been no perceptible improvement during the ten preceding years. Yet during those years the annual cost to the town of educating each child in the public schools had increased from six dollars to fifteen dollars. To secure the services of a better grade of teachers, those qualified to give a direction of their own to their instruction, — men and women of ideas, of individuality, as it is termed, — would have necessitated a general rise of salaries which would have increased the annual cost from fifteen dollars to at least thirty. This was out of the question. The burden on the tax-payer was already heavy enough. Even education can be paid for at too high a price, and it is useless to have model schools if no one but the tax-gatherer can afford to live in the town which supports them. The only other way to improve the system was to concentrate the directing individuality in one man, and trust to him to infuse his spirit into the others. One man the town could afford to pay; twenty men it could not afford to pay. The thing was, with the means at their command, — the salary of an assistant college professor, — to secure the services of that one man.

In this all-important matter, the Quincy committee were as a whole most fortunate. After some desultory discussion of candidates, they chanced across one who had not only himself taught, but in teaching had become possessed with the idea that it was a science, and that he did not understand it. Accordingly he had gone abroad in search of that training which he was unable to get in America, and at a comparatively mature age had made himself master of the modern German theories of common-school education. A self-educated and self-made man, with all the defects as well as the virtues of men of that class, he was now eagerly looking about for an opportunity to put his theories in practice. That opportunity was offered him in Quincy, and under circumstances peculiarly favorable to success. In the first place he found a committee strong in the confidence of the town and holding office with a degree of permanence most unusual, the members of which were in a singularly disgusted and dissatisfied frame of mind. They had

reached the conclusion that the whole existing system was wrong, — a system from which the life was gone out. Acting on this conclusion, they had gone to work to remedy matters; but, as usually happens in such cases, they had succeeded only in destroying the old system without developing a new one. They had bitterly attacked the unintelligent instruction they found going on, and they had made school after school go hopelessly to pieces by calling on overgrown children to practically make use of the knowledge they had been so painfully acquiring. When it came, however, to substituting a better method of instruction for that which they condemned, they had their own affairs to attend to, and a few spasmodic, half-matured suggestions of something they did not have time to think out, was all they could do for the discouraged and bewildered teachers. It gradually, therefore, had begun to dawn upon them that they had taken a larger contract on their hands than they had at all intended. A little too much of the innovating, questioning spirit had, in fact, broken down something besides the school system of the town; — it had broken down the committee system as well.

Realizing this, — conscious of the fact that they themselves were unequal to the work before them, — the members of the committee were also sensible enough to know that an agent to be successful must have a chance. He must not be continually hampered and thwarted by unnecessary interference. They were not, as under similar circumstances is too frequently the case, jealous of their little authority. They had no fear of losing their power, and no consequent desire to make a mere huckster of their superintendent by degrading him into a purchasing agent. They listened to his plans as he submitted them, and gave them the best consideration they could; then, once those plans were approved, he had a free field in which to carry them out, with the understanding that by the results, and the results alone, would he be judged.

Meanwhile the members of the committee had ideas of their own, as well as the superintendent. Most fortunately, — for it was a single chance in a hundred that it should so happen, and yet it did so happen, — Mr. Parker, while he brought radical theories of his own to the work in hand, fully entered into and sympathized with the less clearly defined ideas of the committee. There was no con-

flict. His specialty was primary instruction; the later methods and practical outcome of the system were what they most severely criticised. The result, naturally, was a gradual but complete revolution, than which it may well be questioned whether the common school system of Massachusetts has of late years furnished a more interesting or instructive study.

The essence of the new system was that there was no system about it; — it was marked throughout by intense individuality. The programme found no place anywhere in it; on the contrary, the last new theory, so curiously amplified in some of our larger cities, that vast numbers of children should be taught as trains on railroads are run, on a time-table principle, — that they are here now, that they will be at such another point to-morrow, and at their terminus at such a date; — while a general superintendent sits in his central office and pricks off each step in the advance of the whole line on a chart before him, — this whole theory was emphatically dismissed. In place of it the tentative principle was adopted. Experiments were to be cautiously tried and results from time to time noted. The revolution, however, was all-pervading. Nothing escaped its influence; it began with the alphabet and extended into the last effort of the grammar school course.

The most noticeable change, however, and that which has excited the most general interest was at the very beginning, — in the primaries. The old "dame school" disappeared at once. In place of it appeared something as different as light from darkness. The alphabet itself was no longer taught. In place of the old, lymphatic, listless "school-marm," pressing into the minds of tired and listless children the mystic significance of certain hieroglyphics by mere force of over-laying, as it were, — instead of this time-honored machine-process, young women, full of life and nervous energy, found themselves surrounded at the blackboard with groups of little ones who were learning how to read almost without knowing it; — learning how to read, in a word, exactly as they had before learned how to speak, not by rule and rote and by piecemeal, but altogether and by practice. The hours of school were kept diversified; the fact was recognized that little children were, after all, little children still, and that long confinement was irksome to them. A play-table and toys were furnished them, and

from time to time the exercises were stopped that all might join in physical movement. That this system was harder for the teachers, — calling upon them at all times to actively throw themselves into the instruction of their classes, to interest them and to keep the school-room, as it were, in motion, — all this, goes without saying. But, on the other hand, while more exhausting, it was also far more inspiriting. The drudgery of the alphabet was gone, — so was the listless, drawling instruction; — there was a sense of constant activity in the occupation, which gave to the teacher a consciousness of individuality and a perceptible pride of calling. She felt, in fact, that she was doing something in a new way, and doing it uncommonly well.

The effect produced by this changed school atmosphere on the children was, however, the point of interest. It showed itself in the way least possible to mistake: — going to school ceased to be a home-sick tribulation. That this should be so seems opposed both to child-nature and to all human experience; and yet that it was so admitted of no denial. The children actually went to school without being dragged there. Yet the reason of this was not far to seek. The simple fact was, that they were happier and more amused and better contented at school than at home. The drudgery of the impossible primer no longer made infant life miserable. The alphabet was robbed of its terrors, and stole upon them unawares; while the most confounding thing to the members of the committee was, that in hearing the primaries read not a child among them could repeat its letters, or even knew their names; unless, perchance, to the teacher's increased trouble, they had been taught them at home.

So daring an experiment as this can, however, be tested in but one way: — by its practical results, as proven by the experience of a number of years, and testified to by parents and teachers as well as observed in children. The method has now been four years in use in the schools of Quincy and has ceased to be an experiment; its advantages are questioned by none, least of all by teachers and parents. Among the teachers are those who, having for many years taught class after class in the old way, found themselves called upon to attempt with deep misgiving the new and to them mysterious process. They now join their testimony to the others and

confess that, to human beings, even though they be children, the ways of nature are the easier ways. After all the lesson is not a very profound one, and it is strange indeed that it took so long to find it out. A child learns to talk and to walk — the two most difficult things it is called on to learn in its whole life — without any instruction and by simple practice; the process of learning is not painful to it or wearisome to others; on the contrary, it is an amusement to both. Why the same process should not have been pursued in other and less difficult branches of education is not apparent. One thing only is clear: it was not pursued. In place of it an arbitrary system of names and sounds, having no significance in themselves, and of rules and formulas absolutely unintelligible except to the mature intellect, was adopted; and with these, generation after generation of children have been tortured. Only now do we deign in imparting knowledge to give any attention to natural processes, which have forever been going on before our eyes and in our families, and yet we profess to think that there is no science in primary education, and that all that there is to it can be learned in a few hours. The simple fact is, however, that within these few years it required a man of absolute genius to discover how to teach the alphabet.

The new departure, therefore, started with the Quincy primaries, and it left little in them that had not undergone a change. The reorganization was complete. This, however, was entirely the work of Superintendent Parker; the committee simply gave him a free field to experiment in, and the result fully justified them in so doing. Ascending into the several grades of grammar schools the case was somewhat different. The committee there had their own views, and those views were little else than an emphatic protest against the whole present tendency of the educational system of Massachusetts, whether school, academic, or university. If there is one thing which may be considered more characteristic of that system of late years than another, it is its tendency to multiply branches of study. The school year has become one long period of diffusion and cram, the object of which is to successfully pass a stated series of examinations. This leads directly to superficiality. Smatter is the order of the day. To enter college the boy of seventeen must know a little of everything; but it is not

necessary for him to know anything well, — not even how to write his own language. From this the vicious system has gone up through the professional, and down through the high, to the very lowest grade of grammar school. No matter whether it can understand it or not, the child must be taught a little of everything; at any rate enough of it to pass an examination. Against this whole theory and system the Quincy school committee resolutely set their faces. They did not believe in it; they would have nothing to do with it. Instead of being multiplied, the number of studies should, they insisted, be reduced. It was impossible to teach everything in a grammar-school course, and for the vast majority of children a thorough grounding in the elements of knowledge was all that could be given. The attempt to give more simply resulted in not giving that. In proof of this the examination papers for admission to high schools were appealed to. These showed the acquirements of the more proficient scholars; for as a rule it is they who go to the high schools. Judging by these papers the graduates of the grammar schools were very far from being proficient in either writing, spelling or grammar. Now, these are things which the common schools can and should give all children, no matter what else is sacrificed. They are not given, however, for the simple reason that to give them requires practice, and the multiplicity of studies forbids practice in any one study. The results of the old system in Quincy, as brought to light through the earlier examinations, have already been referred to; the ridiculous knowledge, for instance, of parts of speech and abstract rules of grammar, acquired in order to be able to parse complicated sentences, but combined with an utter inability to correctly write or decently spell the words of the most ordinary letter.

Under these circumstances the general policy outlined by the committee was sufficiently radical. Its execution was entrusted wholly to the superintendent. Education was to recur to first principles. Not much was to be attempted; but whatever was attempted was to be thoroughly done, and to be tested by its practical results, and not by its theoretical importance. Above all, the simple comprehensible processes of nature were to be observed. Children were to learn to read and write and cypher as

they learned to swim, or to skate, or to play ball. The rule by which the thing was done was nothing; the fact that it was done well was everything. As early as 1873 the committee had, in the report already quoted from, expressed the opinion that, "as now taught in our schools, English grammar is a singularly unprofitable branch of instruction." It was now immediately hustled out of them; and the reader was sent after the grammar; and the spelling-book after the reader; and the copy-book after the speller. Then the process of simplification began. Reading at sight, and writing off-hand were to constitute the basis of the new system. The faculty of doing either the one or the other of these could, however, be acquired only in one way, — by constant practice. Practice took time, and neither school days nor school hours were endless. Economy of time, therefore, was above all else necessary; and economy of time was wholly incompatible with multiplicity of studies. Under the old system, everything had been taught separately. The reading lesson, the writing lesson, the spelling lesson had, in regular order, followed the lesson in grammar, and in arithmetic, and in geography, and in history. Two afternoon half-hours a week, for instance, would be devoted to the copy-books, a blotted pile of which on the master's desk testified unmistakably to the inadequate results reached. The children then could glibly tell what a peninsula was, but they did not know one when they lived on it; they could stand up and spell in a spelling-bee, but put a pen in their hands and the havoc they made with orthography was wonderful. Seven studies have been enumerated; all considered elementary. Instead of adding yet others to these, the direction of the committee was that they should be reduced to three, — "the three R's," — reading, writing, and arithmetic.

The process by which this was to be brought about was simple enough. Reading and writing were to be regarded as elementary; as such they were to be taught in the primary schools. They were to be taught there also by incessant practice, book and pencil in hand; and no scholar who could not read at sight and write with comparative ease could be considered ready for promotion. Then, in the grammar grades, concentration was reduced to a system. Instruction in reading, writing, grammar, spelling, and,

to a very considerable degree, in history and geography were combined in two exercises, — reading and writing. The old reader having disappeared, the teacher was at liberty to put in the hands of the class geographies, or histories, or magazine articles, and, having read them first, the scholars might write of them afterwards to show that they understood them. Their attention was thus secured, and the pen being continually in the hand, they wrote as readily as they spoke, and spelling came with practice. Under this system the absurdity of ever having expected any adequate results from the old one became apparent. How even the poor results which had been obtained, were obtained, was matter of surprise. To illustrate this, it is but necessary to revert to some of the other branches of education, and, realizing the method in which they are acquired, to then compare it with the methods adopted in the schools for imparting branches scarcely less difficult. Take, for instance, walking and talking again, the examples already referred to. Every child acquires these perfectly; he is wholly at home on his feet and talks with absolute facility. He acquires them thus perfectly by constant practice. He never in his life would learn to walk firmly or to talk fluently if he were shut up in a sitting posture, and, after being elaborately instructed in the principles of equilibrium and articulation, were practised in actual walking and talking for half an hour a day each. Yet this was exactly what was done under the old system of the Quincy schools as respects reading and writing. The grammar and the copy-book effectually put a stop to all chance of facility in either; for children are slow to learn, and the time given to the study of formulas is time lost in practice.

In arithmetic no great changes or improvement in the methods of instruction as yet seem possible. The faculty of dealing readily with figures is given to some people and is withheld from others; that with sufficient attention and labor almost any one can acquire a tolerable degree of proficiency with them is of course undeniable; but that it can be acquired except by a strict regard to formulas patiently learned, is, at least, doubtful. As respects geography it is by no means so, and in no study has the new departure in the Quincy schools been more marked than in this. The old method all are familiar with, for there are few indeed who have ever been

into a regulation school who have not heard child after child glibly chatter out the boundaries and capitals, and principal towns and rivers of States and nations, and enumerate the waters you would pass through and the ports you would make in a voyage from Boston to Calcutta, or New York to St. Petersburg. What it all amounted to is another matter. It approached terribly near the old rote methods. Go, to-day, into the Quincy schools and in a few moments two or three young children, standing about an earth board and handling a little heap of moistened clay, will shape out for you a continent, with its mountains, rivers, depressions, and coast indentations, designating upon it the principal cities, and giving a general idea of its geographical peculiarities. I do not know whether, so far as utility is concerned, the result obtained under this method is very different from that obtained under the other. Geography is not like reading, writing, or arithmetic. In the practical work of ordinary life a knowledge of it is an accomplishment rather than a thing of necessary daily use. But there is this difference between the two methods: the study under the new method becomes full of life and interest; while under the old it was as tedious and as much like arithmetic and grammar as it could be made.

Such was the theory, and obviously in that its aim was thoroughness, — which it sought to secure by attempting little, — it was a complete negation of the whole present common-school system, founded on a faith in the infinite capacity of children to know at an early age a little of everything. By its results only could this also be judged, and opinions seem to differ as to what is after all the end and aim of a common-school education. On this point, however, the Quincy committee had early defined their position. In their report of 1873 they had laid down utility as the one and only end which should always be kept in view. They had then said, — "The studies pursued in our common-school course should be so pursued that they may result in something of direct use in the ordinary lives of New England men and women." This being the object they had in view, the success or failure of their new departure was to be measured by what it actually accomplished in that way, and by nothing else. The faculty of easily writing an ordinary letter on a business topic, correctly spelled and properly expressed, is a valuable faculty to have of every-day utility. A knowledge of the

rules of grammar may be useful to critics and scholars, but in the lives of ordinary men and women it can be regarded only as a useless accomplishment. The complete expulsion of the grammar from the schools seemed to take away the breath of the old-time masters. It had been taught from the beginning; it was a tradition; it could not be but in ordinary life there was utility in the study.

> "Ah, but traditions, inventions,
> "(Said they, and made up a visage)
> "So many men with such various intentions
> "Down the past ages must know more than this age!
> "Leave the web all its dimensions!"

But the web came down none the less. And what were the practical results? — When, after three years, a class brought up under the new system was put to the test, the examiner expressed a "doubt if one scholar in ten knew what a noun, a pronoun, or an adjective was, or could have parsed a sentence, or explained the difference between its subject and its predicate. They could, however, put their ideas into sentences on paper with correctness and facility; and, though they could not define what they were, they showed that they could use nouns, pronouns and adjectives, in writing, just as well as they could in speech." Out of 500 grammar-school children, taken promiscuously from all the schools, no less than 400 showed results which were either excellent or satisfactory.

That the scholars could read at sight, without bungling and stumbling over every unusual word the moment they left the familiar page of their Readers, — that they could write a simple letter without being painfully conscious of an unaccustomed labor, — these, though very considerable, were by no means the only or even the most noticeable results of the new departure. In the upper grammar as well as the lowest primary there was an entire change of spirit, and going to school was no longer what it had been. This was recognized by the parents quite as much as by the teachers. Not only was there a marked improvement in attendance, but the attendance was cheerful. The "whining school-boy" was no longer seen "wending like snail unwillingly to school;" and, remembering what had been, it was certainly most pleasant to go into

the rooms and feel the atmosphere of cheerfulness, activity and interest which prevaded them. Not that the children liked their vacations less, but they had ceased to dislike their school-rooms; and to those who remember as vividly as most persons over thirty do, the wholly unattractive, not to say repulsive character both of the old-time school teaching and the old-time school discipline, this change is one for which those who enjoy the advantage of it may well be grateful.

The improvement of the schools under the new departure, while freely admitted by teachers, parents and committee, was made even more clearly apparent by the general interest the experiment excited, and the number of those from all parts who came to see for themselves what was being done. Before 1875 no visitor ever entered the schools of Quincy, except some parent now and then, or an occasional acquaintance of a teacher. In 1878 the number of those coming to observe the new system, especially teachers and specialists in education, was so great that it threatened seriously to interfere with instruction, and the committee found themselves obliged to take measures towards regulating it. The teacher of the lowest primary of the Coddington, the school under my more particular charge, reported, for instance, 385 visitors during the five months, February to June, and 113 in April alone.

But while the improvement was apparent enough, and did not need to be pointed out, the all-important questions remained, — At what money cost was it bought? — If it involved a heavy addition to taxes, no matter how great the improvement, it was none the less a failure. The common-school system of Massachusetts was, in view of the committee, in very great danger of crushing the community it was meant to protect. The average annual cost of educating a child in Quincy had increased five-fold in thirty years, and the experience of Quincy in this respect was not exceptional. It has already been suggested that there is such a thing as taxing a community to death, and it is quite apparent that the recent ratio of increase in taxation for school purposes, will, if it goes on, soon afford in the case of Massachusetts a practical illustration of the process. The effort in Quincy had therefore been to so economize expenditure by better and more intelligent direction that the town should get in value received one hundred cents for each dollar spent,

instead of fifty or perhaps only forty cents as had before been the case. On this economical calculation the whole action of the committee was based. The money question was kept steadily in view, and never for a moment did they allow the superintendent's zeal in his work to hide it. The whole thing was a failure unless at least twice the educacational results were obtained for the same money. On this point the figures of their annual reports told the whole story, and it was a plain and unmistakable story. In 1875, when the new departure was made, the annual cost of educating each child was $19.24; three years later, in 1878, it was $15.68. While the quality of the instruction given had been immeasurably improved, its cost had been reduced one-fifth.

So far as the cost of educating children in the public schools is concerned, the computations of the State Board of Education include apparently only the amounts appropriated by the various cities and towns for salaries of teachers and the heating and care of school-rooms, and the important and constantly growing item of incidentals is omitted from them. The basis is, however, presumably the same in all cases, and, accepting it for the purposes of comparison, the accompanying table is not without interest. It covers through a period of twenty years the annual cost of public school education per scholar in Quincy and twenty of the principal cities and towns, selected at haphazard, from all sections of the State. It will be noticed that not only throughout the whole period, but during the last three years of change, and in the year 1878, of all the twenty-one cities and towns named, Quincy came most nearly to the average of the whole Commonwealth. Both in the earlier period, during which its schools were of the usual description, and during the later period of their reform, the cost of educating each scholar in them was about 54 per cent. that of educating each scholar in the schools of Brookline, Milton, Newton and Boston taken together. It is exactly 55 per cent. of it now. The simple question is, and it is a most interesting question not only for the other sixteen towns specified in the table but for the whole State, are the results arrived at in the schools of Brookline, Milton, Newton and Boston within a mere fraction of twice as good as those arrived at in the schools of Quincy? — Are they any better at all?

Annual Appropria 1878; and Annual Average and Total

YEAR.	Rank of Quincy among Towns of Commonwealth.	Quincy.		Springfield.	Taunton.	Worcester.	Average of Commonwealth.	Amount raised by taxes for the support of Public Schools, including only wages, board, fuel, care of fires and school-rooms.
1859	42	**$6 54**	$1	$6 78	$5 00	$7 27	**$6 34**	$1,390,382 34
1860	53	**6 18**	3	7 24	4 77	7 50	**6 42**	1,428,476 02
1861	55	**6 37**	8	7 53	4 71	6 60	**6 41**	1,475,948 76
1862	58	**6 33**	1	6 74	5 66	7 90	**6 44**	1,500,501 13
1863	35	**6 70**	2	5 67	4 48	7 83	**6 04**	1,434,015 20
1864	43	**6 46**	7	6 02	5 28	7 90	**6 38**	1,536,314 31
1865	45	**7 24**	6	7 36	5 05	8 82	**7 23**	1,782,624 62
1866	42	**7 98**	8	9 75	5 39	8 09	**7 82**	1,993,177 39
1867	35	**9 92**	7	11 19	5 99	10 67	**9 02**	2,355,505 96
1868	35	**10 70**	6	13 18	7 31	13 81	**9 89**	2,635,774 06
1869	49	**10 01**	4	15 10	7 96	13 46	**10 84**	2,923,708 70
1870	50	**10 91**	1	15 30	8 43	13 21	**11 56**	3,125,053 09
1871	51	**11 43**	5	16 00	8 66	12 85	**11 78**	3,272,335 33
1872	27	**15 36**	5	18 01	11 24	12 57	**12 86**	3,594,686 38
1873	42	**14 16**	5	20 15	11 38	14 09	**13 65**	3,889,053 80
1874	42	**15 43**	4	23 64	11 75	17 58	**14 70**	4,253,211 17
1875	36	**16 81**	7	22 71	11 17	14 31	**14 96**	4,358,523 59
1876	49	**14 48**	5	20 47	11 44	12 93	**14 81**	4,400,898 59
1877	46	**14 97**	8	19 97	11 71	14 38	**14 81**	4,331,675 85
1878	52	**13 94**	2	16 46	13 34	13 69	**14 30**	4,191,510 77
Aver'ge 1859–78	44	**10 55**	3	13 46	8 03	11 27	**10 31**	. . . . .
Aver'ge 1876–8	49	**14 46**	3	18 96	12 16	13 66	**14 64**	. . . . .

er of cities and
cified during
period.

	1859–78.	1876–8.	1878.
.	13	17	16
.	4	4	4
.	1	1	1
.	6	5	5
.	20	19	20
.	15	9	10
.	16	20	19
.	8	10	11
.	14	13	14
.	3	3	3
.	7	7	6
t	18	18	18
.	2	2	3
.	17	16	17
.	21	21	21
.	10	12	8
.	11	11	12
.	12	8	9
.	5	6	7
.	19	15	15
.	9	14	13

The price paid by the citizens of Quincy is the average price paid throughout the Commonwealth. During sixteen years of instruction of the ordinary badness it was a trifle more than the average; during four years of exceptionally good instruction it has been a trifle less. The Quincy committee, therefore, now confidently claim that they have demonstrated the second, and, from a practical point of view, by far the most important of their two propositions. That a good common-school education could be had at some cost, no one ever doubted; they claim that they have shown it could be had at a reasonable and average cost. Under other circumstances, also, they insist that a much better showing ought to be made; for in Quincy the number of children in the several schools is not sufficiently large to admit of that perfect grading through which only the best educational results can be combined with the utmost economy. For example, in one school of that town the salary of the teacher alone averages $50 a year to each scholar taught, while if the school was full it would average but $20. Taking results as they are, however, under conditions not peculiarly favorable to good results, the conclusion of general interest to be drawn from all this is, as the Quincy committee submits, that the present average school appropriation of Massachusetts is ample to sustain the common schools of the State at the highest point of excellence anywhere known to them. To do this, however, it must be intelligently applied and not ignorantly muddled away. Honesty and good intentions are not enough; some science is here necessary. At present, among other things, well-meaning stupidity, greediness of petty authority and jealousy of superior knowledge on the part of local school committees are proving terribly expensive luxuries to our towns. Studied in the light of the recent experience of Quincy, the statistics of the Board of Education show clearly enough that under a moderate computation an annual waste of some two millions a year is now regularly going on in Massachusetts from the lack of a pervading and intelligent direction of expenditures for school purposes. A sufficiently good education, an incomparably better education than is now given, can and should be given at an annual cost not exceeding $17 per scholar at the utmost and including everything except new buildings, and no good reason exists why that amount should ever

or anywhere, except under some peculiar and temporary exigency, be exceeded. The community now spends the money, but fails to get its hundred cents of value returned for each dollar.

In conclusion, whatever degree of success has marked the recent experience of Quincy, has been due to three concurring circumstances; — the town, by its action, retained a committee in office long enough to enable it to mature and carry out an educational policy, — in fact to all intents and purposes it was a commission; — that committee had a distinct idea of something necessary to be done, and of a method of doing it; — and, finally, the assistance of a competent and intelligent executive officer was secured. This concurrence of circumstances is one not easy to be brought about, and if it is not brought about there is no remedy, — the community must pay at least twice what they are worth for its schools. For one only of these three conditions can any further public provision be made; that, however, is the most important of the three. It has already been referred to as the organization of the superintendency. In the State of Massachusetts alone, as the table facing page 46 shows, over four million dollars are now annually raised by taxation to be expended on the common school system. Of this large sum it has been suggested that one-half is injudiciously expended. To say the least, no intelligent direction is given to it. It is exactly as if in cities and towns, mills or factories were kept in operation for public purposes, but the care of them was entrusted to shifting committees chosen by popular vote. Just those mills and factories are indeed running; but, instead of putting into them hemp, or cotton, or iron to be worked up, we put in our children. The teaching of a human generation is such a very simple business that any one can direct it! — The result is precisely the same as if a like policy were pursued in those industries which pay the taxes which support the schools. If mills and founderies were run in this way, you would have very poor cloth and iron at a very high cost. So it is as respects the common school system, — only the human intellect is a much more delicate raw material with which to deal than cotton or iron ore. The consequence is that very few persons, whose attention has not been particularly

called to the matter, have any idea what a wretched article of public education we in Massachusetts are now getting, in spite of the large sum we pay for it. So far as my observation enables me to judge, the old Commonwealth is in this matter living on its past reputation.

Neither can any improvement in the present state of affairs be hoped for from the school committee as it now exists. In a permanent point of view, indeed, the temporary presence of an active-minded, restless man upon a committee is more apt to work an injury than otherwise. He introduces his changes, and does not carry them out; he rides his hobby for a year or two in school and committee room, and then goes away leaving his hobby behind him. Teachers and scholars after he has gone, mount the hobby and go through the motions he has taught them, for a time, — but they are no better than any other motions; just as a rut, after all, is a rut, and nothing else. Education is now a science, even common-school education. Only within the last thirty years, however, has it become so. Being a science, it must, like all other sciences, be carried forward by specialists, and not experimented on by amateurs. Indeed, the wise amateur is he who will recognize his own insufficiency, and call in the assistance of the specialist. In our larger cities, and most noticeably so in the case of cities the size of Boston, the committee system is, therefore, wholly outgrown. It should long since have given way to the commission. Spasmodic, lumbering, changeable and incapable of that sustained effort necessary to carry out any enlightened policy, the school committee, once its work has outgrown it, invariably becomes a mere focus of intrigue. Progress through it cannot be said to be impossible; but it is terribly slow, and even more costly than it is slow. Our people have a democratic, and, perhaps, healthy prejudice against commissions; but they come to them at last. Though no one yet has uttered the word, it is probably not unsafe to predict that the next interest to be entrusted to them for development will be the common schools of our larger cities.

As yet, however, in Massachusetts, so far as the common-school system is concerned, specialists in education do not, as a class, exist. Individuals there are fully qualified for the work, men of observant character who have reflected much on their own experience and

are self-trained; but the science of training and developing the human mind through a careful study of its laws is not as yet recognized here as a science at all. It is looked upon as a business or a knack, something to be acquired by practice or picked up by observation. Young men are elaborately trained in schools of theology, of law, of medicine, and of science; but teaching itself is as yet looked down upon by educationalists as something too ludicrously simple to call for any special preparation. Any one can understand the development of the human intellect! —The normal schools are consequently looked to to supply the want, if, indeed there is a want. This, however, is not the mission of the normal schools. Their field of usefulness — and it is a very large field — is on a wholly different plane. They supply teachers, and they have their hands full in doing that. The teacher, however, even the successful teacher, does not need to have the enlarging influence of an entire liberal education. The superintendent does need it. From the necessity of the case, also, the professional teacher of the common school, especially the country common school, must be a person contented with the smaller prizes of life. You cannot have forty professors, or persons qualified to be professors, to teach their A B C's or "the three R's" to the 1,600 children of a country town. It is possible, however, to have one professor, or at least a part of one professor, to direct and infuse with his spirit the others. But before he can direct or infuse others with his spirit, this man must himself have a spirit. In other words, he must have acquired the principles of his science in the same way that physicians, and lawyers, and clergymen acquire those of their sciences. Until some public provision exists for this, every attempt at an organized superintendency will only result, as those attempts hitherto haver esulted, in a dangerously large percentage of failures, bringing discredit on the system. Yet what is there which does not fail when entrusted to incompetent hands? — Is it a campaign, or a ship, or a business, or a household, or a college?

In this matter our institutions of higher education would seem to owe a debt of recognition to the cause of general education which they have been somewhat slow to recognize. There is a missing link here, and, in what should be an American specialty, we seem to be behind other countries. The apparent attitude as

yet taken by our universities towards our common schools is, either that those who direct and develop the latter must, like poets, be born and cannot even be improved, or that any one is equal to so simple a work. Certainly, training their graduates for every other path in life, they make no effort to train them for this. And yet, taking into view the vast field of our common-school system and its intimate connection with the mass of the people, it would not be easy to conceive any position in which a competent teacher, a man believing in his mission, could exercise a wider and larger influence over the future of this country, than in the chair of pedagogy of the past graduate course of one of our great universities. He would teach the teachers. It is encouraging to find, also, that an appreciation of this fact, — of the fact that our institutions of higher learning owe something to the cause of general education, begins to find acceptance. To the University of Michigan belongs, in this case, the honor of the lead, through the recent establishment as part of its course of a chair of the Art of Education. Unquestionably the example will speedily be followed elsewhere, and a spirit of scientific instruction will thus be generally diffused.

The common schools are the one thing in regard to which there is no division of opinion in America. The people of the country cling to them and lavish appropriations upon them in the firm belief that they are the ark of the national salvation. In Massachusetts one-fifth of the entire amount raised by taxation is expended on them. That under these circumstances they should be no better than they now are is a significant fact, meriting more than a passing notice. They are not what they should be, — indeed they are very far from it. Any practical experience which throws light on the causes of their deficiency is, therefore, of value; any intelligent experiment made with a view to remedying that deficiency cannot be unworthy of attention; what is true of one is probably not untrue of all; — and it is a wide-spread public want, — this pressing need of intelligent direction concentrating the costly and misdirected efforts to a given end, and inspiring them with a consciousness of progress, — this advantage of a trained superintendency, which more than all or anything else has been illustrated in the recent common-school experience of Quincy.

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