

It has been said, and with great truthfulness, that "the most important branch of administration, as connected with Education, relates to School Inspection." It is asserted by some careful observers, that the Dutch Schoolmasters are decidedly superior to the Prussian, notwithstanding the numerous Normal Schools of Prussia, and the two, or three, only in Holland; and this superiority is attributed entirely to a better system of inspection. This is the basis on which the whole fabric of their popular instruction rests. The absence of such a thorough supervision of Schools as is maintained in Holland with such admirable results, is the weakest part of our System.

What is needed for all our Schools, and what is essential to their highest efficiency, is a constant, thorough, intelligent, impartial and independent supervision. Comparatively few persons possess the varied qualifications so indispensable to success in this delicate and important work. So important was it regarded by the distinguished Author of the Dutch system of inspection, that, after a long life devoted to educational labour, he said "Take care how you choose your Inspectors; they are men whom you ought to look for lantern in hand."

"A School," says Edward Everett, "is not a clock, which you can wind up, and then leave it to go of itself. Nor can other interests be thus neglected. Our railroads and Factories require some directing, controlling and constantly supervising mind for their highest efficiency, and do not our Schools need the same? To meet this great want, eleven of the fifteen Cities of our State, and numerous large Towns, have availed themselves of the provision of the Statute, and elected School Superintendents who devote their whole time and energies to this work of supervision. I have visited all, or nearly all, of these Towns and Cities, and several of them frequently, and can bear my decided testimony to the great benefit that has resulted to their Schools in consequence."

The Spirit in which Inspection should be Performed.

The Regulations in regard to Inspection, which have been adopted by the Council of Public Instruction, are sufficiently explicit as to the general details of inspection, and the mode in which it should be conducted. I will, therefore, only repeat here what I wrote on this subject in 1846 and 1850, when our present System of Education was inaugurated. I said:—

"To perform the duty of Inspector with any degree of efficiency, the Inspector should be acquainted with the best modes of teaching every department of an English School, and be able to explain and exemplify them. It is, of course, the Inspector's duty to witness the modes of teaching adopted by the Teacher, but he should do something more. He should, some part of the time, be an actor as well as spectator. To do so he must keep pace with the progress of the Science of Teaching. Every man who has to do with Schools, ought to make himself master of the best modes of conducting them in all the details of arrangement, instruction, and discipline. A man commits a wrong against Teachers, against children, and against the interests of School Education, who seeks the office of Inspector without being qualified and able to fulfil all its functions. In respect to the manner of performing the visitatorial part of the Inspectors' duties, I repeat the suggestions which I made in my Circular to Local Superintendents of Schools, in December, 1846. They are as follows:—

Your own inspection of the Schools must be chiefly relied upon as the basis of your judgement, and the source of your information, as to the character and methods of School instruction, discipline, management, accommodations, etcetera; and on this subject, we ought not to content ourselves with exterior and general facts. . . . But it is not of less importance to know the interior regime of the Schools,—the aptitude, the zeal, the deportment of the Teachers,—their relations with the Pupils, the Trustees and the neighbourhood,—the progress and attainments of the Pupils, and in a word, the whole moral and social character and results of the instruction given, as far as can be ascertained. Such information cannot be acquired from reports and statistical tables; it can only be obtained by special visits, and by personal conversation and observation,—by an examination of the several Classes, in their different branches of Study; so as to enable you to ascertain the degree and efficiency of the instruction imparted.

The Great Value of Inspection to Public Schools.

"The importance of the question of Public School Inspection," remarks the *English Journal of Education*, "is much broader and deeper than at first sight appears. The history of that laborious transition which has occurred, first, from contented ignorance to discontent with ignorance, and then to strivings after intelligence, and attempts at education, fructifying in a very general effort to make Schools efficient, discloses to the