

“ Law, however complete in its provisions, and the sanctioning of a course of instruction, however practical and comprehensive, will contribute little for the education of the people, without the parental, vigilant and energetic oversight of the Government. If it is the duty of the Government to legislate on the subject of public instruction, it must be its duty to see its laws executed. To pass a public law, and then abandon, or, what is equivalent, neglect the execution of it, is a solecism in Government. Yet this is the very absurdity which some Governments have long practised; and this is the primary cause why education has not advanced under such Governments. After having enacted a law or laws on the subject of Schools, they have left them,—as a cast-off orphan,—to the neglect or the care, as it might happen, of individuals, or neighbourhoods, or towns,—among whom the law has remained a dead letter, or lingered a feeble existence, according as the principal persons in each locality might be disposed to act or not act, in a matter so vitally important to the entire interests and highest prosperity of the State.”

“ If Government exists for the prosperity of the public family, then every thing relating to educational instruction demands its *practical* care as well as legislative interference. Yet not a few persons have spoken and written as if the Government had nothing to do in a department which more than any other involves the heart and strength, and happiness of the people, not to say the existence of a free Constitution and system of laws, than merely to pass a statute and make certain appropriations,—leaving the application or misapplication of public monies, and every thing practical and essential in the administration of the law, to various localities, as so many isolated or independent Democracies.”

Mr. Ryerson, in the extract from his report which I have just given, most justly and most truly criticises the total neglect in which the execution of our law on Elementary Education is left, and the absolute want of control and surveillance on the part of the Government. I do not think that any one will bring forward as an argument against me that a surveillance is exercised by the Superintendent and the School Inspectors. This surveillance, if it exists at all, is limited to controlling the expenditure of the public monies; as for the rest, it does not and cannot exist in consequence of the want, in the person of its officers, of those powers without which no control, no efficient surveillance can exist. The School Commissioners are the sole judges of every thing which relates to the execution of the most essential part of the law: the system, the mode of teaching, the course of study, the choice of books,—all is within their exclusive jurisdiction, and the Government has no more than the Superintendent or the School Inspectors the right of imposing its will upon the Commissioners, the supreme judges of the instruction and the education of youth. Of what use are the Superintendent and the School Inspectors? Can they exercise that control and surveillance which are necessary towards the efficient working of a law having public instruction for its object? Can they control the progress of education, the qualifications of the teachers? Have they the legal right, the power to make the law work, to correct the abuses, to force the Commissioners to adopt a rational mode of teaching, to regulate, to improve the course of study? No. What then is the use of these Inspectors who are but the counter-parts of the Superintendent, and, like him, without power and without authority?

6th CAUSE.—Incapacity of the School Commissioners.—Another radical defect in our law and which, more than any other cause, has contributed towards paralysing the effect of that law, is the incapacity of nearly the whole of the Commissioners. It seems to me that a law, the good effects of which depend entirely upon those who are charged with its execution, ought to be, as respects its operation, confided to persons capable of understanding all the importance of the mission which is given them, and endowed with all the knowledge necessary to enable them to appreciate the numerous difficulties, the responsibility of that mission; and the