

general intelligence, and a wider circumspection, to make them understand better the value of justice, order, and moral worth, and more anxious and vigilant to support them.

On this point no one has spoken with so much power as the Hon. DANIEL WEBSTER, now the first statesman in New-England, and probably in the United States, who, alluding in public debate to their Free-schools, where he himself received his earliest training, said :—

“ In this particular, New-England may be allowed to claim, I think, a merit of a peculiar character. She early adopted and has constantly maintained the principle, that it is the undoubted right, and the bounden duty of government, to provide for the instruction of all youth. That which is elsewhere left to chance, or to charity, we secure by law. For the purpose of public instruction, we hold every man subject to taxation in proportion to his property, and we look not to the question, whether he himself have, or have not, children to be benefited by the education for which he pays. We regard it as a wise and liberal system of police, by which property, and life, and the peace of society are secured. We seek to prevent, in some measure, the extension of the penal code, by inspiring a salutary and conservative principle of virtue and of knowledge in an early age. We hope to excite a feeling of respectability and a sense of character, by enlarging the capacity, and increasing the sphere of intellectual enjoyment. By general instruction, we seek, as far as possibly, to purify the whole moral atmosphere ; to keep good sentiments uppermost, and to

turn the strong current of feeling and opinion, as well as the censures of the law, and the denunciations of religion, against immorality and crime. We hope for a security, beyond the law, and above the law, in the prevalence of enlightened and well-principled moral sentiment. We hope to continue and prolong the time, when, in the villages and farm-houses of New-England, there may be undisturbed sleep within unbarred doors. And knowing that our government rests directly on the public will, that we may preserve it, we endeavour to give a safe and proper direction to that public will. We do not, indeed, expect all men to be philosophers or statesmen ; but we confidently trust, and our expectation of the duration of our system of government rests on that trust, that by the diffusion of general knowledge and good and virtuous sentiments, the political fabric may be secure, as well against opened violence and overthrow, as against the slow but sure undermining of licentiousness.”—*Journal of Debates in the Convention to revise the Constitution of Massachusetts*, 1821, p. 245.

Another benefit, which was not foreseen when Free-schools were first introduced, and which, like the last, both facilitates their extension and ensures their permanence and efficacy, is the great interest they excite, and the consequences that follow it. By the mode in which they are managed, the whole population is led to take an interest in them ; and each individual, as it were, is called on to assist in carrying forward some one school in the way best suited to the wants of his family and neighbourhood, as well as to the universal demand. The people, in their town meetings, vote the money for the schools ; the people, by their district committees, spend the money they have raised ; and the people, by their own children, get the benefit of the money. It is, indeed, the people's affair from beginning to end ; the *whole* people's affair : and as it is one that comes home every day to their notice, supervision, and wants in the daily education of their children in the very schools where they were themselves taught, it is sure to be understood, and equally sure not to suffer materially from neglect. The committees will not fail to get as good teachers as the money entrusted to them will procure, that their judgment may not be dis-