

circulated. This method was called "squadroning out" the schools.¹ But this evil was light and transient compared with those now to be mentioned. Soon the one central school of the town began to break up into a plurality of schools in the angles or "squadrons" of the town. For a time these schools were managed by the selectmen as before; but in a democratic society the portions of the town that had once gained schools would naturally soon begin to demand that their management be handed over to them, and just as naturally, the townships first, and then the Commonwealth, would in the long run yield to the demand. The result was the appearance and establishment of the school district. At first the district was established solely for the purpose of bringing the school to the people, and of regulating school attendance, leaving control, as before, in the selectmen of the town; but in time it became fully autonomous, a body politic and corporate.² In its rudiments the district system was in practical operation by the middle of the last century, but it was not formally legalized in Massachusetts until near its close. There can be no doubt that it tended to the diffusion of education, or that this diffusion was purchased at the cost of depth and thoroughness. Had the district served simply the first purposes that it was created to accomplish, it would have been much more than defensible under

¹ G. H. Martin, *The Evolution of the Massachusetts Public School System*. Boston, 1894, Lect. II.

² *The Report of the Commissioner of Education for 1894, 1895*, Chap. XXXIV.