

of attainment and occupying a far greater share than ever of the attention of civilized communities.

There are, of course, many very unskilful teachers here as well as elsewhere, and the more so, that the profession is too commonly adopted without the requisite previous preparation, and the schools of such persons are in consequence very defective. Such is the fact often with those possessed of sufficient literary attainment. Is not the correction of these defects among the first duties of an inspector, and if so, must he not give a careful examination of a practical character, must he not be familiar with the subject, and able to exemplify in his management of the several classes, some system or other sufficiently general in its application, practical in its nature, and embodying the most valuable improvements of the day? This much at all events seems clear, that the literary progress of the schools should be tested by the careful examination of a qualified inspector, and that to conduct such examinations on different principles in every different county or district, would be just as absurd, as for successive inspectors to give different and occasionally contradictory instructions to the same teacher.

This is acknowledged in most countries where any system of popular education prevails; and in a short tour, which I lately made through some of the New England States, I had an opportunity of ascertaining, that the necessity of adopting some such improvement in the supervision of schools is there openly acknowledged.

To enable the duty, as I have described it, to be properly discharged, would require considerable care in the selection of officers. In fact they should be more or less practical teachers; and I see no reason why the office should not be held out as a reward, a step in the profession, to intelligent and deserving teachers. This at least would tend to the establishment of a fact I would gladly see more universally acknowledged, than it is at present, namely, that the profession of teaching is deserving of some consideration, requiring careful previous preparation, not dependent exclusively on a certain amount of literary attainments, nor to be judged of by unqualified persons, and that it involves a certain degree of proficiency in the art of teaching and science of education,—two subjects in some places so generally neglected, that while the latter is almost universally unthought of, the Common School teacher has to attempt the acquisition of the former by years of the most painful experience in his school, frequently without a chance of ultimate success, and often under the most disadvantageous circumstances.

Without attempting to enter on a full account of the details consequent on the measures I have hinted at, it may not be deemed unsuitable to mention here one of the most prominent, namely, the expediency of forwarding to some duly constituted authority, a full report of each inspection, contained in answer to a series of printed queries having reference to the most important points affecting the well being of the schools,—such as the nature of the instruction afforded, the improvement of the classes since a previous inspection, qualifications of the teachers, the books made use of, &c., &c., so that thus there might always be satisfactory evidence, on the one side of reasonable improvement, and on the other of careful supervision. All this might be in addition to a suitable general report, at the end of each year or half year, similar to those, of which I have seen some admirable specimens from the Superintendents in office during the past year.

Of course, the authority and qualifications of such officers, and the mode of selecting them in accordance with the habits and feelings of all parties, and without interfering unduly with the rights and privileges of local authorities, must be a subject of grave consideration. As, however, we don't send lawyers to inspect schools of medicine, or clergymen to report on artillery practice, I conceive that the profession of teaching is deserving of similar courtesy, and that its inspectors also should be from its working members, or at least practically acquainted with its details; a measure of justice peculiarly due to Common School teachers,—a class who, here and elsewhere, have been too long treated with contumely and neglect.

The above remarks have reference to two prominent points regarding the inspection of schools, namely, the nature of the duties of inspectors and of their relation to the local and other authorities,—alluding generally to the former and merely introducing the latter as worthy of serious attention.

Touching the expense, the last point connected with the super-

vision of schools, to which I shall now allude, I can make no comments of a nature to enhance or diminish its interest, and indeed I only mention it to mark my sense of its extreme importance. No regularly organized, or in my opinion effective, system of inspection can be put in operation without considerable expense; let the services be purchased at a fair rate, efficiently performed and closely watched; and the last object will easily be effected if the organization be complete.

I need scarcely add that the above remarks are of the most general character, all minute details being omitted,—my object being to bring specially under notice the consideration of some system of supervision, embracing a careful examination of the schools, conducted with something like uniformity of action as regards method of teaching and school organization, that thus the improvements going on around us may be generally introduced, the deserving teacher brought prominently forward and the standard of popular education gradually elevated.

The only other circumstance to which I am anxious at present to direct attention, is one of far more importance to the school teacher than may at first be thought; so important indeed does it seem to me, that I must necessarily consider even an initiatory step towards it, as a great boon;—I mean the adoption of some measure to mark the school teacher's entrance into the profession, some sort of diploma or certificate, the possession of which will authorize him to exercise his profession wherever he can procure employment, even as the physician or lawyer does, without, on every change of residence, having to undergo a new examination. This will at once make him a member of a body, give him a certain standing, and relieve him from the painful and vexatious necessity of submitting to the verdict of persons often completely unqualified to pronounce on his merits as a teacher, however they may be able to judge of his literary attainments. In what other profession are the members subjected to an examination by those unacquainted with its secrets? I have heard many intelligent and superior Common School teachers complain bitterly of their position in this respect. Fancy such a person subjected to the scrutiny of individuals having the requisite authority, good intentions, and reasonable information, but utterly unacquainted with school organization, discipline, modes of teaching, possibly even with the meaning of the word Education;—at one examination perhaps told that he is ignorant of some subject, because he chanced to be unable to quote the words and page of an antiquated text book, at another found fault with because he proposes to introduce some improvement of which his examiners never heard. How galling must this be to any man of common feeling, and what chance is there for a reasonable amount of ability and information being given to Common School teaching, without some steps are taken to elevate it to the rank of a profession, and prevent the intrusion of unqualified persons.

It by no means follows that such a course is always pursued, but every teacher is liable to it. I am not now going to discuss or allude to the authority from which such a certificate should emanate; let that be settled as it may; at least place the Common School teacher in a position of more independence; give some sort of bond of unity to the body, so that each man can point to his diploma and say, "This stamps my profession, that authorizes me to teach here, if you give me employment." Nor will such a step preclude the possibility of any local authority examining a teacher if desired, because while the teacher has the option of refusing to submit to the examination, the other party may decline making the appointment without satisfying himself on that score. It should not be in the power of any party to annul such certificate, except for immorality, and though I could not recommend such a step, even this precaution might be omitted, because, as in other professions, neglect of duty, failure of powers, or the infinitely graver defect of a want of sound moral integrity, will prevent the individual being employed.

I shall intrude no further on your space than to observe, that the above general remarks have been made by no means with the intention of imposing my own opinions on the judgment of others, but rather with the view of directing attention to two points connected with Common Schools, which I deem of primary importance, and in one of which, at least, former circumstances have enabled me to acquire a very extended experience.