

had been established by the same authority at Cambridge. In 1656 and 1672, the colonies of Connecticut and New-Haven enacted similar laws ; and from this time, the system spread with the extending population of that part of America, until it became one of its settled and prominent characteristics, and has so continued to the present day.

This system of universal education has now therefore become, to a remarkable degree, the basis of the popular character, which marks the two millions of people in New-England. The laws, indeed, differ in the six states, and have been altered in each from time to time since their first enactment ; but all the states have laws on the subject ; the leading principles are the same in all of them ; and the modes of applying them, and the results obtained, are not materially different. Indeed, in almost every part of these six states, whatever may be the injunctions of the law, the popular demand for education is so much greater, that the legal requisitions are generally or constantly exceeded. The most striking instance of this is, perhaps, to be found in the city of Boston, where the requisitions of the law could be fulfilled by an expenditure of three thousand dollars annually, but where from sixty to seventy thousand are every year applied to the purpose. And yet multitudes of the poor and small towns in the interior show no less zeal on the subject, and in proportion to their means make no less exertion.

The mode in which this system of popular education is carried into effect is perfectly simple, and is one principal cause of its practical efficiency. The New-England States are all divided into small territorial communities called *towns*, which have corporate privileges and duties, and whose affairs are managed by a sort of committee annually chosen by the inhabitants, called *select men*. These towns are of unequal size ; but in the agricultural portions of the country, which contain four-fifths of the people, they are generally five or six miles square, and upon them, in their corporate capacity, rest the duty of making provision for the support of Free-schools. This duty is fulfilled by them in the first place, by voting at a meeting of all the taxable male inhabitants over twenty-one years old, a tax on property of all kinds to support schools for the current year, always as large as the law requires, and often larger ; or if this is neglected by any town, it is so surely complained of to the grand jury by those dissatisfied inhabitants, who want education for their children, that instances of such neglect are almost unknown. The next thing is to spend wisely and effectually the money thus raised. In all but the smallest towns, one school at least is kept through the whole year, in which Latin, Greek, the lower branches of mathematics, and whatever goes to constitute a common English education in reading, writing, geography, history, &c. are taught under the immediate superintendence of the *select men*, or of a special committee appointed for the purpose. This, however, would not be carrying education near enough to the doors of the people in agricultural districts to enable them fully to avail themselves of it, especially the poorer classes and the younger children. To meet this difficulty, all the towns are divided into districts, varying in number in each town from four to twelve, or even more, according to its necessities and convenience. Each district has its district school committee, and receives a part of the tax imposed for education ; sometimes in proportion to the population of the district, but oftener to the number of children to be educated. The committee of the district determine where the school shall be kept, select its teacher, choose the books that shall be used,