

purchase of sites, and the erection and furniture of school-houses, in such towns as are subdivided into districts. They are also required to choose, by ballot, a school committee consisting of three, five, or seven persons, who shall have the general charge and superintendence of all the public schools of the town, examine and license all teachers, visit each school on some day during the first or second week after its opening and before its close, and monthly during its session, without giving any previous notice to its instructors, prescribe the text books to be used, and procure a sufficient supply of each for the use of the pupils, whose parents or guardians are required, if able, to purchase the same at their original cost. In addition to the Primary Schools, or schools for children, the inhabitants of each town, containing five hundred families or upward, are required to maintain a school for instruction in the higher branches of learning; and if the town has four thousand inhabitants, or upward, in the classics.

Any two or more contiguous districts may associate for the organization and maintenance of a Union School for instruction in the higher branches; and any two adjacent towns of less than two thousand inhabitants, may establish a High School, by the consent of a majority of the electors of each. Each town in the State, however small, must maintain one or more schools for an aggregate period of six months in each year. Every town comprising one hundred families, is required to keep up such schools for an aggregate period of one year—and if the number of families amounts to one hundred and fifty, or five hundred families, two or more schools must be kept up for aggregate periods of nine months in the former, and one year in the latter case.

Until the year 1834, the moneys annually voted for the support of schools in the respective towns, constituted the sole fund provided for their maintenance. These moneys were, and still are apportioned by a vote of the town, among the several districts in such proportions as the majority of the voters deem expedient. In 1834, all unappropriated moneys then in the State Treasury, derived from the sale of lands in Maine, and from the claim of the State on the government of the United States for military services, together with 50 per cent. of all moneys thereafter to be received from the sale of lands in the State of Maine, were permanently appropriated for the aid and encouragement of Common Schools—such fund in the whole not to exceed one million of dollars.

Another distinguishing feature of the Massachusetts system consists in the power of the town or district committee to take possession of land designated by a vote of the town or district for the erection of a school-house, not exceeding forty square rods, without consent of the owner, and upon an equitable appraisal of its value by such committee, subject to the revision of a jury, who may change the location of the lot, and re-assess the damages in their discretion.

The inhabitants and legal voters of the town may also control, to a certain extent, the action of the several districts in the appropriation of money for school purposes. If the latter refuses to vote such supplies as may be deemed necessary, any five taxable inhabitants may appeal to the town, the electors of which, at their next meeting, may take the matter into consideration, and, by a majority of votes, impose such tax on the district as they may deem necessary.

**Board of Education.**—In 1837 a Board of Education, consisting of the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and eight other persons appointed by the Council of State, and who hold their offices for eight years respectively, was organized by the Legislature. This Board receives reports from all the town committees—arranges and condenses the school returns, and makes a full report to the Legislature annually on the second Wednesday in January. They are authorized to appoint a secretary, whose duty it is, under the direction of the Board, “to collect information of the actual condition and efficiency of the Common Schools, and other means of popular education, and to diffuse, as widely as possible, throughout every part of the Commonwealth, information of the most approved and successful method of arranging the studies and conducting the education of the young.” He is also required to visit, as often as may be practicable, the schools in different parts of the Commonwealth.

The several school districts, or towns where no districts exist, are authorized by law to raise moneys for the purchase of school libraries and apparatus. Each district raising \$15 or upward for this purpose, is entitled to receive \$15 from the State Treasurer, to be expended for the same purpose; and any district having one hundred and twenty children, and raising \$80 for that purpose, is entitled to the same amount from the State. The same proportion in the ratio of expenditure on the one hand, and legislative county on the other, exists where the number of children consists of any higher multiple of sixty.

**Normal Schools and Teachers' Institutes.**—Three Normal Schools have been established in Massachusetts, for the education of teachers. One at West Newton, in Middlesex County, one at Westfield, Hampden County, and the third at Bridgewater. The school at West Newton is appropriated exclusively to females; those at Bridgewater and Westfield admit both sexes.

Twenty-five hundred dollars annually are appropriated by the State, defray the incidental expenses of Teachers' Institutes.

**Moral and Religious Instruction.**—It is made the “duty of all resident ministers of the gospel, of the selectmen and school committee, in the several towns and cities of the State, to exert their influence and use their best endeavors that the youth of their towns or cities shall regularly attend the schools established for their instruction;” and also of the Presidents, Professors, and Tutors of the University at Cambridge, and of the several Colleges, and of all preceptors and teachers of Academies, and all other instructors of youth, to exert their best endeavors to impress on the minds of children and youth committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth; love to their country, humanity and universal benevolence; sobriety, industry and frugality; chastity, moderation, and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of human society, and the basis upon which a republican constitution is founded; and it shall be the duty of such instructors to endeavor to lead their pupils, as their ages and capacities will admit, into a clear understanding of the tendency of the above-mentioned virtues, to preserve and perfect a republican constitution, and secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness; and also to point out to them the evil tendency of the opposite vices.”

County Associations of teachers and others holding semi-annual meetings of not less than two days each, for the express purpose of promoting the interests of Common Schools, are entitled to receive fifty dollars each, annually, from the State. The State Association of Teachers is entitled to one hundred and fifty dollars annually, from the same source; and seven thousand dollars are annually appropriated to the State Normal Schools.

No child under the age of fifteen years can be employed in any manufacturing establishment, unless such child shall have attended some public or private day school, taught by a qualified teacher, at least eleven weeks out of the preceding twelve months, and for the same length of time in every year during such employment.

In 1850, the Board of Education was authorized to employ visitors to aid the Secretary in the examination and inspection of schools; and under this authority several of the most distinguished friends of education in the State have been from time to time engaged in this work.

This, then, is the system of public instruction, the prominent and leading features of which have been in successful operation for more than two centuries, and under which, and mainly and chiefly in consequence of which, the Commonwealth of Massachusetts has attained to a conceded superiority in all the essential elements of physical, moral, and intellectual advancement over all her sister States.

ITS DISTINGUISHING excellences may thus be briefly enumerated:

I. The clear recognition of the absolute right of every child, whatever may be his condition or circumstances, whether rich or poor, bond or free, deaf, dumb, blind, or even idiotic, in prison or at large, to that amount and degree of intellectual and moral cultivation which shall enable him most efficiently and usefully, both to the community and himself, to develop the various faculties of his nature.

II. The equally clear and distinct recognition of the duty of the State to furnish such education at the common expense of its citizens, in proportion to their respective pecuniary ability.

III. The simplicity and efficiency of the machinery by which this great result is steadily and systematically produced through the township and district organization, each harmoniously co-operating with the other, each preserving in its own clearly defined boundaries and jurisdiction, and each striving, in its own sphere, to carry forward, elevate and expand the great interest which all have at heart.

IV. The admirable provision for the maintenance and support of the schools of each town, by annual appropriation superficially made for that purpose by the vote of its own citizens—the minimum standard of such appropriation being fixed by law, beyond which an unlimited discretion may be exercised; and the opportunity thus afforded for bringing annually under review and full discussion the solemn trust thus committed to the charge of the respective municipalities and townships of the Commonwealth.

V. The various auxiliary agencies brought to bear upon the universal education of the people, through the clergy, the colleges, universities, and academies of the State, County and State Associations of Teachers and others, Teachers' Institutes, the numerous philanthropic and benevolent associations, the manufacturing establishments, and even the prisons and penitentiaries, and especially the executive and legislative departments of the government. The power and influence thus concentrated in behalf of early and thorough instruction, evince an intelligent appreciation of its vast importance, and a settled determination in the public mind to avail itself of every practicable agency for its advancement.

VI. The provisions for the complete instruction and preparation of teachers, for the frequent visitation and thorough inspection of the several schools, and for periodical and systematic reports of their condition, progress, and prospects.

Admirably adapted, however, as this system is, both in theory and practice, to the community in which it originated, and for whose benefit it was designed, it by no means follows that similar results would be