

tinguished commissioner ; and presented to the legislature in 1822 but its adoption being delayed, it was destroyed by fire in 1824. Mr. Livingston was afterwards employed to reproduce it, but it seems never to have been adopted as the law of the State, although it was published by Congress and extensively circulated, and is said to have formed the basis of the criminal codes of some of the Mexican and Central American States, whose people were of Latin origin. This is probably the most complete and perfect code which has ever been produced in America ; but for some reason the people of the State of Louisiana have never felt prepared to take the bold step of an entire change of its criminal law, by its adoption.

The earliest attempt at codification in any of the American States where the common law of England prevails, was made by the State of New York in 1830, by appointing three of their most eminent men, John C. Spencer among the number, as commissioners to revise the statutes of the State. This was soon after accomplished, and the code adopted. But these revised statutes do not embrace entire anything more than the statute laws of the State. They naturally embrace some changes, both by way of addition and alteration, and commonly include most of the authoritative judicial constructions of former statutes. The same plan has been adopted in most of the other States, and is found a very great convenience in bringing all the statute laws of the State into one body, so as to be readily accessible.

My own experience of the practical working of attempts at codification has been restricted to these Revised Statutes. That process was resorted to in the State of Vermont, while I was connected with the Supreme Court of that State. The result did not impress me favourably in regard to any actual improvement in the statutes, by reducing them to a formal code, either in regard to certainty or completeness. The Commissioners for presenting the draught of the revision consulted the statutes of other States, and incorporated many new provisions into their report, and altered some of the existing ones, and changed the phraseology in many instances, either for greater certainty or symmetry, but in almost every instance produced many times more uncertainty than they cured, and in some instances resorted to such refinements of language, as might seem more suitable to other writings than to the statutes of a State. The highest judicial tribunal of the State was, more or less, occupied for many years in removing the