

flattering. The following interesting letter on the subject was addressed to General Eaton, U. S. Commissioner of Education :

WASHINGTON, D. C., Nov. 2, 1870.

MY DEAR GENERAL : I have much pleasure in answering your inquiry as to my opinion of the American School system. I may congratulate you without reserve on possessing, in all the States through which I have passed, the best and most commodious school houses in the world. Nothing which I have seen in any European country will compare with them. The State of Massachusetts, and especially the city of Boston, stand pre-eminent. The Normal Schools, which I have seen, are excellent, and the attainments of the teachers, especially of the female teachers, beyond anything I could have expected, and far beyond anything I have witnessed elsewhere.

The munificence of the American people in the sections I have visited in providing schools, is, in my opinion, entirely without a parallel, a good education being offered free to every American child. If I have any regret, it is to notice that where such ample, almost lavish, provision has been made, there are still many who partake very sparingly only, while others absent themselves altogether from the feast. If you could introduce a plan for enforcing regular attendance for a course of years as is done in Germany, your educational system would leave little or nothing to be desired. I may state, from long experience, that where the education of children is wholly dependent upon the parents, selfishness or indifferance or intemperate habits of many, will cause a considerable number to be entirely neglected or only partially educated; and in a country like yours, where the only guarantee for your free institutions is the intelligent assent and support of your citizens, the state and the nation have a right to demand that those who share in the government of the country, and enjoy its privileges, shall have had the advantage of education and a virtuous training.

In my opinion, the successful working of the schools in Boston is mainly attributable to the fact that large compulsory powers are exercised by the school board of that city. I can quite understand that American citizens generally need no compulsory powers to enforce the education of their children; but with the immense influx of emigrants from all quarters of the world, too many of them, also, entirely illiterate, it is not safe to commit to the discretion of such persons the question whether the future citizens of this country shall, or shall not be, educated. It appears to me that a great impulse could be given to the work of education in every State by the exercise of some central inspection and supervision from your own department. Great emulation, I think, would follow from a fair annual estimate of the quality and result of the instruction afforded in every State emanating from some central authority. I think the District of Columbia might and ought to be made a model for every other section of the Union.

My observations have been entirely confined to the Elementary, Grammar, High, and Normal Schools, and institutions for technical instruction; but I have not seen any of your universities or professional colleges, and am unable, even if I were qualified, to give an opinion as to their extent and value.

While there is so much room for congratulation, there is an immense field remaining unoccupied which cannot be neglected without grievous loss to the nation. I refer to technical, industrial, and art education, which, so far as National and State effort is concerned, seem to have been much neglected. The Cooper Institute of New York, and the Institute of Technology, at Boston and Worcester, are bright exceptions. The first I regard as one of the most noble and useful instances of private benevolence I have ever encountered. I remain, dear General, yours faithfully

A. J. MUNDELLA.

*Pennsylvania School Journal.*

—*Corporal Punishment in School.*—A case was heard recently in the Superior Court of Massachusetts, involving a question which, so long as there exists the necessity for educating the young, would seem likely to reappear periodically before the courts. It was the old vexed question as to the right of a school teacher to flog or chastise his pupils. The facts of the case were of the stereotyped character, and the Judge, in summing up, declared that the law recognized the right of teachers to control their pupils, if necessary by "force, proper in kind and degree." The jury, however, failed to agree, after having spent five hours in discussing the evidence and the rights of parents. The duties of a teacher are, admittedly very onerous, and it is well that a certain latitude should be accorded in the management and sometimes necessary correction of pupils; but excessive punishment should always be avoided. The spirit of insubordination amongst pupils is very apt to spread, if not checked, and it would be a foolish mawkish sentiment which would object to a teacher taking vigorous measures in extreme cases, to maintain his authority.

### Science and Literature.

—*The Metric System of Weights and Measures.*—During the recent session, Hon. Mr. Morris introduced and carried through Parliament a Bill "to render permissive the use of the Metric system of weights and measures." This Act was passed, so the preamble runs, "for the promo-

tion and extension of the internal as well as the foreign trade of Canada and for the advancement of science." It is now in force and any one may, if he chooses, use the Metric system in his business. The fourth clause of the Act provides that

"Whereas the Governor in Council is of opinion that it has become necessary and desirable, he may direct standards of Metric weights and measures to be procured and legalized, and verified copies of them to be provided, and may by an Order in Council make regulations for authorizing and facilitating the use of the same for the verification of Metric weights and Measures in use in Canada."

This system has found much favour among scientific men, and has frequently been recommended by scientific bodies as the basis of a uniform international system. It was adopted in France in 1840 and all other systems declared illegal. In 1864 by Act of the Imperial Parliament, the use of the Metric system was made permissive, and it is now, conjointly with the Imperial system, in use throughout the United Kingdom.

Last year a royal commission was appointed on the subject. In their report the Commissioners bear testimony to the utility of the system and to the progress of public opinion in its favour, and recommend that the Government afford facilities for its more extensive use. They reported that it is used exclusively in the following countries:—France, Belgium, Netherlands, Italy, Spain, and her colonies, Portugal and her colonies, Greece, Mexico, Chili, Brazil, New Grenada, and the other South American republics. It has been partly adopted in Switzerland, Hanse Towns, Denmark, Austria, and British India; and its use is permissive in Great Britain and Ireland, the United States, and Prussia and North Germany. By a recent Act of the North German Parliament its use will be compulsory in that country after the 1st of January next. In the session of 1870 a committee of our own Senate reported in its favour, and the result of their report is Mr. Morris' Act. A schedule gives tables of the values of the principal denominations of weights and measures of the metric system, expressed in terms of the standard weights and measures of Canada. Measures of length are expressed by *metres* and decimal multiples of a metre, one metre being 1.093944 yards; measures of surface by *ares* and decimal multiples of an are, one are being 100 square metres or 119.6714 square yards; weights by *grams* and decimal multiples of a gram, one gram being .002204 of a pound avoirdupois; and measures of capacity by *litres*, and decimal multiples of a litre, one litre being 26.428 of a wine gallon. The system is no doubt an excellent one from a scientific point of view, but the jaw-breaking words in which its denomination are expressed will prevent its coming into popular use. People whose mother-tongue is the Saxon do not take kindly to such words as *miriametre*, *millimetre*, *centiare*, *myriagram*, *kilolitre*, *hectolitre*, and the like. If Mr. Morris could translate these terms into plain English he might bring the system into general use; but we fancy it will be a long time before we hear of ladies calling at fashionable counters for a decametre of muslin or a centimetre of ribbon; of farmers selling pork at so much a hectogram; or of whiskey being retailed by the decalitre.—*Toronto Globe.*

—*What Literature and Science have lost by the Siege of Paris.*—Some time must elapse, says the *Pall Mall Gazette*, before we shall be able to estimate with accuracy the losses which the interests of literature and science have sustained through the siege of Paris. Not a few eminent professors and members of the Institute have been serving in the ranks of the National Guard and the Army of Defence, and it is hardly possible that they can all have escaped without injury. Already we learn that the Abbe Moigno, editor of *Les Nouvelles* has been wounded by the explosion of a shell; that Mr. Desnoyers, fils, of the Museum Library, has been killed, and that M. Tenad is a prisoner in Germany. As to the interruption to study, it is only necessary to bear in mind how very few philosophers have the habit of abstraction attributed to Joseph Scallager, who is said to have been so engrossed in the study of Homer that he became aware of the Massacre of St. Bartholomew and of his own escape only on the day subsequent to the catastrophe.

The damage inflicted on buildings devoted to science is more obvious. The Galleries of Zoology and Mineralogy have both been penetrated by shells; the College de France has not escaped unhurt; and the Meteorological Observatory, lately erected in the Champs de Mars, has been converted into barracks. In the Jardin des Plantes and Jardin d'Acclimation the ruin has been complete, all the animals being slaughtered either for food or by way of precaution, and the rare trees—some of them of priceless value—have been cut down for defensive purposes, or else to make charcoal. In the gardens and nurseries outside the city, the devastation has been equally severe. Chatenay the chief establishment of M. Croux, formed the headquarters of the Bavarian artillery; the large palm-house was turned into a stable, and the flower tubs used as cribs. Sheep and cattle have been pastured in the Jardin pour les Etudes Pomologiques, near Aulnay and everywhere the young trees have furnished stakes for gabions and branches for faggots. These are a few of the effects of "civilized warfare."