

common occupations of life. He represents that these attainments were well-nigh universal. Enlarging upon their practical value, he uses the following language: "Such kind of education and knowledge is of more advantage to mankind than all the speculations, disputes, and distinctions that metaphysics, logic, and scholastic theology have ever produced. In the plain common sense promoted by the one, virtue, utility, freedom, and public happiness have their foundations. In the useless speculations produced by the other, common sense is lost, folly becomes refined, and the useful branches of knowledge are darkened and forgot."¹

Among the New England States, Rhode Island has an educational history that is peculiarly her own. She did not enact a common school law until the year 1800, and this she did not enforce, but rather repealed three years later. Not until 1828 was such a law put upon the statute book that remained there. But it must not be supposed that the people from Roger Williams' day down were altogether unschooled. Besides domestic instruction, there were voluntary schools carried on by individuals, associations, or towns. Schools are mentioned from time to time in the town records. An annalist of Providence, describing the state of things that existed towards the close of the last century, says that previous to 1770 schools were but little thought of; there were in his neighborhood three small schools, not counting an equal number of dame schools, with

¹ Samuel Williams, *History of Vermont*. Burlington, 1809, Vol. II., pp. 370, 371.