

about the middle of the eighteenth century, the schools became practically free. The dame school pictured in *The New England Primer* is proof of the currency of primary teaching.

As time wore on there was little additional school legislation: the brief ordinances already enacted proved in the main sufficient. In 1671 the Court doubled the penalty imposed upon towns having one hundred families that failed to support a Latin school, and a little later it doubled it again. In 1683 the Court enacted that every town consisting of more than five hundred families or householders should set up and maintain two grammar schools and two writing schools, and that the penalty imposed on towns having two hundred families or householders that failed to comply with the requirement of the law should be £20.

Before the close of the seventeenth century, it is claimed, an educational declension had set in. The doubling on two occasions of the fine imposed upon towns that failed to comply with the compulsory law in respect to Latin schools, is significant. This declension is commonly ascribed to the wars with the Indians and the French that wasted the blood and treasure of the colony; the political and social contentions that disturbed its peace; the uncertain relations that existed between Massachusetts and the Mother Country, and internal, economic, and social changes. There can be no doubt, too, that the brightness of the early Puritan ideal had become dimmed. It was impossible even for the Puritans to resist the deteriorating influences of environment;