

enlightened friends of popular instruction throughout the country, and, I may add, throughout the world, as *the one measure*, without which our system must have remained comparatively inert; but with which, it must, if properly sustained, rise to excellence and cover itself with honour." But, during the last few months, some persons in Upper Canada—who have probably never investigated the subject—have formed quite a different opinion from Dr. POTTER and his fellow-citizens. Of course, the utility of the office depends entirely upon the ability and diligence with which its duties are discharged. Where the incumbent of the office is incompetent or inactive, the whole system within his jurisdiction (with some rare exceptions) will remain stationary or retrograde. He is the mainspring of the system in his District. In illustration of the importance of this office, and of the great usefulness of which it is susceptible, it will be sufficient to quote two paragraphs from the Report (pp. 17, 18, 19,) of the Superintendent of Common Schools for the State of New-York in 1844—the first paragraph describing the condition and character of the Common Schools in that State before the creation of the office of County or District Superintendent, and the second showing the early results of the labours of that office:—

"Up to the year 1841, the only class of officers whose special duty it was to visit and inspect the schools, and to provide a suitable body of teachers for their instruction, were the commissioners and inspectors of Common Schools. In what manner these important and responsible duties were discharged by them, has already been submitted to the Legislature, in previous reports from this Department. Incompetent teachers were permitted to take charge of a *great majority of the Schools*, under the official sanction of certificates of qualification, granted frequently without any previous knowledge of their character or attainments; and the visitations required by law were seldom, and in a majority of instances, never made. Trustees of districts contented themselves with discharging the duties specifically imposed upon them by law; and after having contracted with a teacher at the lowest prices they could obtain, and made the requisite arrangements for continuing the School for a length of time sufficient to enable their district to secure its proportionate share of public money, they rarely felt themselves called upon to investigate the condition of the School itself; and the *inhabitants of districts* conceived their duty discharged by sending their children, when convenient, to the School, and punctually paying their quota of the tax list or rate bill, when called upon for that purpose. No opportunity was afforded for comparing the condition of the School with that of others, near or remote; and each teacher, for the brief period embraced in his contract with the district, without supervision, encouragement or advice, daily passed through a tedious and monotonous routine of unintelligible, and consequently uninteresting exercises. After an interval of three or four months, another teacher was employed, and the same process repeated, with such variations only as resulted from the substitution of one impracticable method of instruction for another. The profession of the teacher became, too often not without cause, disreputable—the School-house a by-word of repulsion—and the District School synonymous with all that was vulgar, low, immoral and degrading. The repeated and concurring testimony of individuals and public officers, and the observation and experience of all who have had the means of knowing the condition of these schools, in the greater portion of the districts of the State, will corroborate the truth of the picture here reluctantly drawn. That there has not been a gradual and steady improvement in their condition, notwithstanding the obstacles they have been compelled to encounter, it would be equally unjust and untrue to assert: but under the disadvantages inseparable from an almost total absence of public or private supervision, that thorough and complete elementary education, which it was the policy and design of our system of public instruction to secure to every child of the State, has been almost universally withheld. But we may congratulate ourselves upon the accession of a new order of things, in relation to the workings of our system."

"The reports of the several County Superintendents which are herewith transmitted, exhibit unequivocal evidence of efficient exertions on their part, in the performance of the responsible duties assigned them by law and by the instructions of this Department. To their efforts is to be attributed, to a very great extent, the revolution in public sentiment, by which the District School, from being the object of general aversion and reproach, begins to attract the attention and regard of all. To their enlightened labours for the elevation and advancement of these elementary institutions, we owe it in a great measure, that new and improved modes of teaching, of government and of discipline have succeeded in a very large proportion of the districts, to those which have hitherto