

This auspicious dawn was soon overcast. The expenses of the county superintendency looked larger when paid in aggregate sums to individuals, than when scattered among a multitude of commissioners and inspectors. The spirit of decentralization, the local jealousy of central power and influence, the inclination of towns to control their own local matters, aided to overthrow the office. It was believed that town officers could be selected who would perform the duties of supervision as well, and thus that a large sum might be annually saved to diminish the expense of tuition. How have these anticipations been realised? Painful as is the necessity of making the declaration, the undersigned is constrained to express the belief that the experiment has proved unsuccessful; and he believes that it would be difficult to find in the State an enlightened friend of education, who is placed in a position to observe the results of it even in a single county, who would dissent from this opinion. A large number of town superintendents adorn their position; but many, if chosen (and it generally so happens,) in reference to great personal merit, do not possess the precise class of merits which fit them to discharge the duties of school officers. The defects in their reports have been pointed out; the few inspections which have been made of schools appear from the general abstract annexed—averaging considerably below twice for each school; and however well a portion of these officers may be qualified, in regard to learning, to discharge the latter duty and to inspect teachers, there is no doubt that the action of nearly all of them in these all important particulars is often embarrassed and to some extent influenced by local considerations, which it would require a great degree of independence and nerve to set at naught—by the necessity in the rigid execution of duty, of wounding the feelings of neighbours and often of valued personal friends. Many of the schools, particularly in summer, are taught by teachers residing in the same town.

What are the remedies to be applied to correct these evils? To stand still is out of the question, it we would have the vigor and efficiency of the school system bear any comparison to its cost, or to the ends which it is intended to secure.—*N. Y. State Superintendent's Report for 1853, pp. 25-28.*

VALUE OF COLLEGES AND ACADEMIES.

The value of higher education to the individual, no one questions. Its value to the State, not only in those direct material benefits which the applications of science are daily bringing to the pursuits of industry, but in elevating the standards of public thought and taste; in affording some counterpoise to that spirit of exclusive physical utilitarianism so liable to attain ascendancy in a community where all is youth, vigor, action and success; and finally, in its highest and noblest vocation of keeping the intellectual and spiritual commensurate with the material development of a self-governing and powerful people, admits of just as little doubt.

Impressed with these considerations, our early legislatures, filled with the wise and patriotic men who were the founders of the State, made liberal provisions for the support of higher education. They freely devoted the property of the whole people of the State to that purpose. Large sums were voted to establish and sustain colleges and academies. By Article IX of the present Constitution, the revenues of the "Literature Fund" are exclusively and perpetually set apart for the support of academies. Not only therefore have public benefactions and repeated statutes, but the organic laws themselves, recognised higher education as a concern of the State, as a common interest, as a part of our system of public education. This being the case, no revision of our public school system would be complete, which should fail to include academies and colleges within its scope, and to apply the necessary remedies to any defects in their organization or otherwise, if found to exist.

It is believed that a most serious defect does exist in both of these classes of institutions, in the manner in which the public money is applied for the benefit of pupils. It is obvious at a glance, that however fair may be that application in theory, in practice it does not result in equally extending the benefits of such public moneys to the whole people. More than half the population of the State are precluded by poverty, or comparative poverty, from receiving any direct advantage from them. Thus those who least require the public aid to give higher learning to their children, receive it; and they receive it in part, at least half of it, from the property of the poorer class who are wholly excluded from its benefits. To the poorest man in the State as much as the richest, belongs every acre of the public domain and every dollar of the public funds. When legislation contributes the public property for the benefit of trade, commerce, and many other objects, it confers a greater individual benefit on the rich than on the poor man. This is a necessity inherent in the nature of things. But no excuse exists for it, where the benefit, so far as the action of the State is concerned, is purely a personal one, as is the case in extending facilities of education to individuals; and where legislation therefore finds no obstacle to a strict equalization of individual benefits.

Another unjust and unfortunate result follows from this order of

things. Wealth and learning, which aside from commanding talent, are the two greatest sources of social and political power in a State having no legally privileged classes, are centred in the same hands. The professions, the arts, the honoured and well paid occupations, which require scientific attainment, are filled by the sons of those who are able to educate them for such places, or their educated sons start in them with every advantage. Even talent which is partly a thing of culture and practice, far oftener finds its development, and always the best theatres for its display, in these pursuits. Thus all circumstances combine to divide society and strengthen a *caste*. It is true that the exceptions are very frequent, that the wealthy often become poor, and the poor wealthy, that energy vanquishes the obstacles to learning, that genius bursts through all restraints: but still, the tendency is in the direction indicated, and it is a tendency which the laws of a free State ought not to favor. In such a State, the power of knowledge is the best and most natural check to the power of wealth. Wealth can and will strengthen itself by the addition of the former. Laws should not aim to prevent this—they cannot prevent it. Wealth will, if necessary, support its own institutions of learning, without the public aid. But if laws should not and cannot take learning from the rich, they can give it to the poor. They can, at least, distribute the public moneys so that they shall be as available for this end to the latter, as to the former. And every consideration of justice and expediency demands that it should be done.

The academies and colleges have been, in part, founded by private property. So far, the application of their funds is beyond the public control. But when the State gives, it has a right to prescribe the conditions.

But it is useless to attempt to disguise the fact that donations of the public funds to these institutions, as now constituted, are regarded with jealousy and aversion by a not inconsiderable portion of the community. Unmistakable manifestations of this feeling have been witnessed in our legislative halls and elsewhere. Is it wonderful, under the circumstances, that it should be so? Demagogues, mistaking the source of this feeling, have denounced the higher institutions of learning; and superficial observers have mistaken their railings for embodiments of popular sentiment. But the body of the people entertain no such views. They know too well that we owe our existence, as a nation, to high popular and individual intelligence, more than to the sword. They do not forget the solemn voice of the Father of his country, pleading for higher as well as lower institutions of learning. They do not need to be reminded, that the great statesman who went farthest in the doctrine of human equality—who did most to obliterate every vestige of aristocracy, privilege and rank—desired it to be recorded in his epitaph, as one of the three crowning acts of his life, that he was the founder of the University of Virginia. No part of the people of New York would contribute to the overthrow of those seats of learning, where their own Clintons, Livingstons, Jays and Hamiltons, had the talents nurtured and disciplined, which laid the foundation of the State, developed its physical resources, and started it onward in its career of prosperity and greatness. But a large portion of its citizens demand, and have a right to demand, that where they give they shall also receive—that the doctrine of an absolute and practical equality in privileges, which the onward march of public sentiment has introduced into one class of our public schools, shall prevail in all our public schools, so far as they are sustained by the State. This done, all vestige of antagonism between the higher and lower ones, is at once swept away. Indeed, the poor man will feel that he has a deeper interest in sustaining the academies and colleges, than the rich man, because he alone can obtain, through them, those advantages for his offspring, which the money of the other could buy from other sources. He will toil on through life unrepiningly, when he knows that by the justice of a parental government, the avenues to wealth, preferment and renown, are made as open to his children as to those of the most fortunate or most favored citizen of the land. The winter cold and the scorching heat will be welcome to him, his plain food and lowly pallet will be sweet to him, greater privations if necessary will be cheerfully endured by him, when he reflects that his son, if gifted for the task, may be prepared to go forth like the son of the small New Hampshire farmer, to see wealth and power bow down about him; to have senates and nations hang on his words; to leave the impress of mind on the arts, institutions and literature of a people, and on the destinies of a race. And that son will not only weep like Webster, when he remembers the sacrifices of a noble parent, but with gratitude for what he owes to the just beneficence of his country.—*Ibid, pp. 22, 34.*

TIME.—Man is ever quarrelling with Time. Time flies too swiftly, or creeps too slowly. His distempered vision conjures up a dwarf or a giant; hence Time is too short, or Time is too long! Now Time hangs heavy on his hands; yet for most things he cannot find Time! Though Time-serving, he makes a lackey of Time; asking Time to pay his debts, Time to eat his dinner, Time for all things.