

the head of the system has time or opportunity to establish and bring into effective operation any one branch of it. School legislation, therefore, with our American neighbours is as unsettled now, as it was at the beginning of the last twenty years and more; it has been undergoing successive modifications; and their schools (except in cities and towns) are less improved than their country in every other respect. They seem to forget that the *representative* functions of government,—the power to exercise which is based on popular election—relate chiefly to the *making* of laws, and the *imposition of taxes*; but that the *administration* of law should be free from the influences of popular passion, and be based on immutable maxims of justice and patriotism. They recognize this in the selection and appointment of their supreme judges of constitutional and civil law; so should they in the supreme administration of school law, and in the development of school economy. Should their State School Superintendents, after being carefully selected, hold their offices during pleasure—another word with us for during good behaviour and efficiency—there would be much more hope and certainty of maturing and efficiently consolidating their school systems.

Our American friends appear to me to suffer equally, if not more, in their educational interests from their love of rotation of office and frequent popular election to it, in respect to their county and town Superintendents of schools. Their system appears to me to be inconsistent, as a general rule, with the selection of competent superintendents, or with the impartial and thorough administration of the law, among those by whom the local superintendents are elected or opposed, and to whom such superintendents are looking for votes at an approaching election. Under the operations of such a system, it appears to me there must frequently be as much electioneering as school superintendence and administration; that the latter will often be warped to advance the former; or, as is expressed in an American report, that there will be much “log rolling and pipe-laying” to secure the universal suffrage of election or re-election to the office, at the expense of the advancement and elevation of the schools.

4. In the *fourth* place, I think the progress and efficiency of the common schools in the neighbouring States are also much impeded by *the absence of anything like a uniform series of text-books*, the great evils of the endless variety of which are graphically portrayed and earnestly lamented in their school reports, but for the removal of which no remedy is provided.

Such appears to me the chief defects in the American School systems, so far as I have been able to examine and observe them. In a former part of this report, I have stated what appeared to me the cardinal defects of the English elementary school system, as compared with that of other European Countries; and I trust our American neighbours will not regard the above remarks as proceeding from any other than the most friendly feelings, and a sincere desire to advance the best interests of universal education.