

schools. Together, they constitute a system of which Boston may well feel proud, and which have earned for her the well-deserved reputation of being the Athens of America. In their efficiency, their general arrangements, and the facilities they afford for obtaining a good English education, they are perhaps unsurpassed by any other educational institution in the world.

With regard to the best method of teaching, I have seen nothing but what has tended to deepen my conviction that the Normal school system—by which I mean that mode of imparting instruction and that plan of school government introduced into Canada by our Chief Superintendent, and exhibited in the Provincial Normal and Model schools—is better adapted than any other for the harmonious development and healthy cultivation of the mental faculties. In Boston, in Providence, in New York, wherever I went, I heard our Canadian Normal school spoken of in the most flattering terms, as being one of the most, if not *the* most efficient in the continent of America. Our system of teaching differs in the most important particulars from that in use in the neighboring States, being less mechanical in its nature, and more addressed to the understanding and reasoning powers of the learner. Instead of considering the child a machine from which a certain amount of work is to be expected, it proceeds upon the assumption that he is an intellectual being to be carefully trained and educated according to the laws of his nature. Its legitimate aim, doubtless a lofty one, but still one which it is better designed than any other to attain, is the cultivation of *all* the powers of the mind, the improvement of the taste, the guidance of the imagination, and the elevation and refinement of the whole character. I consider that Boston would derive even more advantage from the adoption of our system of teaching, than we shall from its plan of school organization.

I cannot refrain from adverting here to a subject which is, at the present moment, creating considerable excitement in our midst, and about which much misapprehension prevails—I refer to the use of corporal punishment in our schools. It seems to be very generally believed in this city, that your Board, in adopting the Normal school system, pledged itself to conduct the public schools without having recourse to that mode of discipline,—that in fact the Normal school system does not recognize, in any case, the necessity of an appeal to the rod. It has been represented that these are the views entertained at the Department of Public Instruction and given expression to by Dr. Ryerson and Mr. Robertson, at the opening of the Central School in May, 1853. Now some error must exist on this point, for I know that the deliberate opinion both of the Chief Superintendent and of the Head Master of the Normal School is that it *must* be resorted to in rare and exceptional cases. It is true that the Normal school system insists that the cultivation of kindly intercourse, and mutual confidence and respect between the teacher and his pupils is, except in very extreme cases, all that is necessary; but at the same time, it is also certain, that it asserts that order is the first law of the school room, and that obedience and submission to the authority of the teacher must be maintained at almost any sacrifice. I have said this much to show that the prevalent impression upon this point is wrong, but I by no means intend to imply, that corporal punishment has not, on the part of one or two of our teachers, been far too frequently inflicted within the past two or three months. Although I believe that in cases of direct insubordination, when all other means have failed to produce submission, the infliction of even severe chastisement may be necessary and salutary; I consider that these instances are very rare, and that the frequent resort to this means of asserting authority, by any teacher, betrays a deficiency of moral power, and a want of ability to command respect by force of character. The constant habit of witnessing it cannot but have a demoralizing effect upon the school; and there is great danger when it is inflicted, on almost every occasion of misconduct, that it may be resorted to unjustly, by the teacher, in a moment of haste and irritation, simply as the readiest means of enforcing order, and in cases where milder and less objectionable means would have been equally efficacious. I would not have your Board take the power of appealing to the rod out of the hands

of the teacher, for cases of aggravated ill behaviour will occur which only this form of discipline can reach, but it is a power of a very grave nature, and should be used with great judgment and discretion. That the infliction of corporal punishment should be a matter of almost daily occurrence in the class of any teacher, and should be made use of for slight and trivial causes, is, I think, utterly inexcusable, and an evil which ought to be remedied. Every teacher engaged in our schools should be required, by this Board, to strictly carry out the *spirit* of the Normal school system, and then, a love of study for itself, and a generous desire to secure the approbation of their instructors, and to promote the interests of their school would be developed among the pupils which would constitute a sufficient stimulus without appeals to the sense of fear.

In the second place, a well organized system of public instruction should secure an education for *every* child in the community, and, if necessary, *compel* every child to partake of its advantages.

Boston has adopted two laws directly bearing on this subject. One of these requires, that every parent or other person having control of a child between *five* and *fifteen* years of age, shall send him to school for a period of at least twelve consecutive weeks in each and every year, under penalty, in case of neglect, of a fine of \$20; and the other provides, that every child of school age, who is found on the streets during school hours, and not engaged in some lawful occupation, shall be taken in charge by one of several officers, called Truant officers, and upon conviction before a Justice of the Peace, be either fined \$20, or committed to the house of instruction or reformation, for a period of time not greater than one year. The immediate effect of the adoption of these two ordinances in Boston, has been to increase the number of children in the public schools about ten per cent., and the average daily attendance about fifteen per cent.

It may be asked, has Government any right to authorize city Councils to pass by-laws rendering it obligatory on the part of parents to send their children to school? In answering this, it is necessary to remember that our common school system is a branch of Government itself, just as much as our Law Courts, and our Police and Criminal regulations are, and that one of the chief aims of Government, in establishing and maintaining it, is its own preservation. Our school system is designed to furnish children with that amount of moral, physical, and intellectual culture, that discipline of mind, that self-reliance, that ready energy, those habits of deep practical investigation, and that patriotic love for their country and its laws and institutions, which will make them acting, practical, common-sense citizens and subjects,—men who know their own rights and obligations, but who also know the rights and obligations of others, and the relation they sustain to Government and their fellow men. In establishing a school system, one of the most important objects of our Legislature, then, is the *forestalment of crime*, by bringing the minds of children under proper influences, before they have become contaminated with vice. Our Courts of Law and their various officers, cannot interfere until crime has actually been perpetrated. No one questions the obligation of Government to furnish educational privileges for its subjects; now, when, at very considerable expense, these privileges are provided, has it not an equal right to see that every class in the community partakes of them? No one doubts the right of Government to punish when crime has been committed; should it not have equal power to punish those, who neglect the means employed to prevent crime—in other words, should it not have the power to punish the parent who, without just cause, deprives his child of an opportunity to obtain an education? The parent is not the absolute owner of the child; the child is a member of society, has certain *inalienable rights*, and is bound to perform certain duties, and so far as these relate to the public, Government has the same right of control over the child that it has over the parent. It has an equal right, therefore, to command the *child* to attend school, and to compel the *parent* to permit him; inasmuch as it is equally bound to use all due means for the prevention of crime, and to punish it when it has been committed.