

Christendom. Connecticut gave to the world the first example of a government providing a munificent fund for the education of every child within its limits, and of securing the benefits of this provision equally and forever to the humblest as well as to the highest, to the poorest as well as to the richest. She connected with this fund a system of general and minute supervision, good for its time, to preserve the fund from abuse and misapplication, and to give thoroughness and efficiency to its actual workings. It was a system suited to the state of society then existing—to the staid and sober habits of the people. It answered in a good measure, its design. It made teachers and parents both feel their responsibility.

The results of this school system, were great and good. Every hamlet in Connecticut of no more than twenty houses, whether spread out upon the plain, or crowded into the valley, whether sprinkled along the sloping hill-side, or wedged in among the brown rocks of some wild ravine, could show its district school-house, which was regularly opened for many months in the year. There was hardly to be known the son or daughter of Connecticut, who could not read and write. It was the rarest of all things to see one who had not received a good elementary education.

This was reported to the honour of Connecticut throughout the Christian world. The lover of his race, who had been rewarded for his zeal for the elevation of his countrymen, by a life-lease in a Prussian or Austrian dungeon, saw his prison wall all light about him when he thought of the one government in the world that had provided efficiently for the education of the humblest child, and gathered hope for the time, when his government and all governments should do the same. In our own Union, the other States were reproved for their negligence, and spurred on to their duty by the example of what Connecticut had been the first to perform. The emigrant mother in Vermont or Western New-York, as she looked around upon her untaught boys and girls, sighed for the schools of Connecticut and was ready to exchange the rich fields that were beginning to look so luxuriant about her, for the most rocky farm within the limits of a Connecticut school district.

But within the last twenty years a change in all these respects has taken place. Connecticut no longer holds the same high position which she once did. Austria and Prussia have provided their subjects with an efficient and successful Common School system. Other governments in Europe are slowly awaking to their duty and interest in respect to the same high matter. Despotism even is striving to make peace with its wronged and outraged subjects, by giving, in return for the civil rights which it withholds, the substantial blessings of universal education. Many of the States of our own Union are giving themselves to this cause with a zeal and energy which show them determined to make amends for past neglect and torpor. In Massachusetts, Ohio, New-York, Georgia, Rhode-Island, and many other States, vigorous and successful efforts are made. School funds are accumulated; taxes are readily imposed and cheerfully paid; Boards of Education are instituted; periodicals are circulated; public lectures are given; Normal Schools for the instruction of teachers are provided; teachers' conventions and institutes are attended with zeal and profit. These, and other signs, show beyond question, that there is a strong movement in the public mind; that the people are being aroused. In some States and parts of States this interest is well-nigh enthusiastic.

But Connecticut! where is Connecticut the mean while? Where is she, who was once the star of hope and guidance to the world? She was the first to enter the lists, and was the foremost in the race. Is she foremost now? Whatever may be the truth of the case, it is certain, that she is not thought to be in the other States. It is the general opinion, *out of Connecticut*, that she is doing little or nothing; and, whereas, a few years since, her name was mentioned in connection with Common Schools, with honour, only; it is now, in this connection, coupled with expressions of doubt and regret, and that by wise and sober men. Her large State endowment is described as having put her effectually asleep, as having sent her to "Sleepy Hollow," from the influence of which, when she is aroused for a moment, it is to talk of her noble School Fund and James Hill-house, just as Rip Van Winkle did of his neighbours who had been dead forty years. The School Fund is quoted every where *out of Connecticut*,—we venture to say it is quoted in every other State in the Union, as a warning and example to deter them from giving the proceeds of their own funds, except only on the condition, that those

who receive shall themselves, raise as much as they take, and report annually as to the results. Those who go from other States into Connecticut, can hardly credit the testimony of their own senses when they are forced to believe the apathy that prevails. Every newspaper and lecturer *out of Connecticut*, high and low, ignorant and knowing, sneers at the Connecticut School Fund, and the present condition of the Connecticut schools.

Are the people of Connecticut aware that this is the case? Do they know what the people of other States think and say of them? Do they believe that what is thought and said is true and deserved? We can hardly believe that they are generally aware of the bad repute into which their schools have fallen. Or if they are informed in respect to it, they do not believe that they merit so bad a name. The majority are too well contented to leave their schools as they are. They persuade themselves that their school system works as well as any public school system can be expected to work; that notwithstanding all that may be said out of the State against the schools of Connecticut, these schools are better than those of any State in the Union. They are opposed to any agitation of the subject. They will give their hearts to no strong and united effort to improve their schools. On the other hand, those who know that our schools are inferior to those of some of the other States, and who see clearly, in the prevailing apathy, the certain signs of a still greater degeneracy, are almost discouraged to hope for any great and permanent improvement. Neither of these classes are wholly in the wrong, nor wholly in the right. It is not true, that the schools of Connecticut are as good as those of certain other States. It is not true, that our public school system is as good, or is managed as efficiently as the systems of many other States. There is not only danger, but a certain prospect, that if things remain as they are, the schools of Connecticut will degenerate still more, and Connecticut will be dishonoured more and more, in the comparison with her sister States. It is not true, indeed, that all the hard and contemptuous things that have been said about our schools and our school fund are just and deserved, but the facts can be brought to prove that there is too much ground for them, and that the public apathy on this subject is inexcusable and fraught with evil.

What then is the condition of the Common Schools of Connecticut? Facts are stubborn things. We present the following, in which the contrast is strikingly exhibited:—

First, as to appropriations for school purposes. Money is the sinews of education as of war. The willingness to appropriate money shows zeal for any cause. Connecticut, in 1795, set apart for school purposes a large and increasing fund for the support of schools, which now amounts to \$2,070,000, and divides \$1.40 for every scholar between the age of 4 and 16. Besides this, there are the town deposit-fund and local funds. Instead of annexing to the reception of their annual dividend the condition of raising a specified sum, the annual taxation was gradually diminished, till in 1822 it ceased altogether. In 1845, it is not known that a single town or school society in the State, raised a tax for school purposes by voluntary taxation. In a few of the large city districts, a small property-tax is collected, and applied to the wages of teachers, but not amounting in the whole State to \$9,000, or 3 cents to each inhabitant, or 10 cents to each child between the ages of 4 and 16.

Massachusetts and New-York, as the capital and dividend of their school funds have increased, have, at the same time, increased the sums to be raised as a condition of receiving the dividend of their funds. From 1835 to 1845, the capital of the Massachusetts Fund was increased from \$500,000 to \$800,000. During the same period the amount annually raised in towns by tax, for the wages of teachers, has advanced from \$325,320 to near \$600,000. The statute of 1839 requires that \$1.25, for every child between the age of 4 and 16, should be raised and actually expended for the purposes of instruction in each town, whereas, more than \$3.00 for every child of the above age was actually raised by tax in 1845 in 53 towns, more than \$2.00 in 190 towns, and \$2.99 is the average through the State. \$2.99 is the average in Massachusetts and 10 cts. in Connecticut. It is instructive to look over the list of towns as arranged in the school returns of Massachusetts for 1846. The town standing first is a new town just out of Boston, which raises \$7.64. The town numbered 8 is an unpretending agricultural town in Worcester county, which raises \$4.82. The town num-