

publication from any one of the neighbouring States in which the evils of the great variety of text-books in the Common Schools has not been acknowledged and lamented. But it is only in the new States that effective means have been taken to prevent it. There the passing of general common school laws, and the selection of Text-books for the schools by governmental authority, have taken place simultaneously, the great evil of omitting the latter having been witnessed in the older States. In the New York and New England States, the school laws were passed, and the schools were established and carried on for many years, without Government apparently being aware of the importance of making some provision in reference to text-books. In the meantime compilers and publishers of all descriptions of school-books overspread the land with them. Every part of the country was visited by rival school-book venders, and every school was filled with heterogeneous text-books. In the midst of this multitudinous and constantly increasing variety of text-books, there could be no class division and no class instruction in the schools, and therefore no efficiency or success in instruction. The value of the teacher's time and the usefulness of the school were reduced more than five hundred per cent. in value. For the last fifteen years attempts have been making by the State Governments and Educationists to cure an evil which should have been prevented; but the task has proved most difficult, and has as yet been very partially accomplished.*

The Boards of Trustees for cities and incorporated towns in the State of New York, allow but one set of prescribed books to be used in the schools under their care, and with the view of correcting the evil as far as possible in the country schools, the State Superintendent has prescribed that each set of Trustees shall select a series of books for their own schools, and then shall not change them for a period of three years; and any disregard of any instructions of the State Superintendent subjects the party offending to a fine of ten dollars. In the New-England States the power of the State Executive has always been confined to seeing that every township or town of a given population should have a school or schools of a given character, but the selection of the books, as well as of the teachers in the schools, has been made by township or town committees, and all attempts to induce a surrender of these long exercised local powers to the Executive have hitherto failed.†

Those Governments have, therefore, been compelled to employ means to accomplish by *influence*, what they could not by *authority*, in remedying what is admitted to be a fundamental defect in their school system. They have, therefore, appointed Committees or Boards with secretary-lecturers, whose whole duty it is to collect and diffuse information on the best means of improving the common schools.

The magnitude of the evil of a multiplicity of text-books, and the difficulty of correcting it, may be inferred from the following extract from the Report of the Superintendent of Schools for the State of Connecticut, for 1847; judging from the Reports of the School Visitors, there has been but little progress made during the past year in reducing the number of text-books in the same school, and in schools of the same society. In a few instances, the visitors speak encouragingly of the prospect of securing uniformity hereafter, but not in a single society do the visitors report that the books recommended or prescribed by them, are the only books used in all the schools under their supervision. On the other hand, the very obvious evils of a multiplicity of books are spoken of almost unanimously, as one of the main obstacles to the improvement of the schools. To remove or diminish these evils, a number of remedies are suggested by the visitors:—

"1. The appointment, on the part of the Legislature, of a Committee or Board, whose recommendations or prescriptions shall extend over the whole State.

* Since this paragraph was written I have learned that measures are being adopted, the present month, (August, 1849), under the auspices of the State Superintendent, which are expected to result in the adoption of one (and only one) series of school-books for all the common schools in the State of New York.

† The Massachusetts Board of Education sought for power to recommend Text-books for the schools in 1838, but it did not succeed. That Board has no power to apportion school moneys or to make school regulations, or to interfere with the schools at all; its power, as the last annual report, (1847) of the Board expresses it, "is simply a power to collect and diffuse information, and to make suggestions to the Legislature."

"2. A recommendation or prescription on the part of the State Superintendent—a compliance with which shall be made the condition of drawing the school money.

"3. The similar action of a County board or committee, which should be binding through all the schools of a County.

"4. The school societies, through a committee, might be authorized to purchase all the books which are needed, and assess the expense upon the scholars who use the books.

"5. The withholding of the school money from every society and district which will not take the steps necessary to secure uniformity of text-books in the common schools within their respective limits.

"The great point to be reached is uniformity in all the schools of the same society and town, and in adjacent towns where the population is changing from one to the other, as in manufacturing districts. This uniformity it is believed cannot be reached unless the action of the committee or board who are intrusted with regulations on this subject, can extend beyond a single year. Indeed, there is reason to believe that there is at this time a greater variety of text-books used in the common schools in the State, than there was three years ago. The attempt on the part of school visitors to introduce new books without securing the removal of those already in use, has only added to the variety; and the diverse action of the same body in successive years, only makes confusion worse confounded.

"From the reports made to this department in 1846, corrected by the returns of this year, it appears that there were in use upwards of 295 different authors or text-books in the following studies, viz:—13 in Spelling; 107 in Reading; 35 in Arithmetic; 20 in Geography; 21 in History; 16 in Grammar; 7 in Natural Philosophy; 5 in Chemistry; 2 in Geometry; 3 in Mental Philosophy; 3 in Rhetoric; 5 in Book-keeping; 2 in Botany; 5 in Algebra; 1 in Natural History; 2 in Physiology; 1 in Composition; 4 in Penmanship; 2 in Moral Philosophy; 3 in Surveying; 2 in Mensuration; 2 in Declamation; 4 in Dictionaries, &c. &c."

Success of the Means Employed to Introduce an Uniform and Proper Series of Text-books into the Schools of Upper Canada.—

The Connecticut State Superintendent then recommends the plan which had been unsuccessfully recommended by the Boston Board of Education to the Legislature of Massachusetts in 1838, and which has been adopted by our Provincial Legislature in our common school system in Upper Canada, in order to introduce uniformity of Text-books into schools. Had this provision been made at the time of passing our first Common School Law in 1841, or the second Act in 1843, the difficulties of carrying it into effect would have been much less than in 1846, and the school system would have been greatly in advance of its present state; for between the year 1841 and 1846, some new school-books were compiled and published, and many others were imported, all of them together not forming a complete, much less an appropriate series of text-books. It was not, therefore, surprising that some opposition should have been manifested at the introduction of so novel and important a provision in our school system. I had shown its necessity in my *Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada*, (pp. 171, 174); and I am happy to be able to say that results have justified its adoption, silenced every whisper of opposition, and already secured the actual support of the public to an extent that could not have been anticipated at so early a period, and which is without a parallel in any State in America. It is just two years since the Board of Education for Upper Canada was established, and recommended an uniform series of Text-books for the schools. The Board employed no powers of prohibition, became neither a book-manufacturer nor a book-seller; did not interfere with private enterprises, but provided and suggested facilities for its useful and profitable exertions, and that in connexion with measures which led not only to the introduction of school-books of an improved quality, but to a reduction of nearly twenty per cent. in their prices, thus preparing the way for securing to the whole country the double boon of *good and cheap* books. The proceedings of the Board which have borne these early fruits I have detailed in my *Special Report*, (pp. 7-9), prepared June, 1847, and printed by order of the Legislative Assembly. I stated in that Report that I had procured from the National Board of Education in Dublin, the very liberal donation of twenty-five sets of their Books, Forms and Reports, to enable me to present a set to each District and City Municipal Council in Upper Canada. I have since visited the several Districts, and personally presented the books in question, at the same time explaining their character and soliciting a careful examination of them, as to both their contents