EDUCATION IN NEW YORK.

Annual Report of the Superintendent of Common Schools.

SECRETARY'S OFFICE,
DEPARTMENT OF COMMON SCHOOLS,
ALBANY, Jan. 1, 1853.

TO THE LEGISLATURE.

The Superintendent of Common Schools is required by law, to annually report to your body:—

1. A statement of the condition of the common schools of the State.

2. Estimates and accounts of expenditure of the school moneys.

3. Plans for the improvement and management of the Common School Fund and for the better organization of the common schools; and

4. All such matters relating to his office, and to the common schools, as he shall deem expedient to communicate.

In pursuance of the above requirement the Secretary of State in his capacity of Superintendent of Common Schools, has the honor to submit the following

REPORT.

STATEMENT OF THE CONDITION OF THE COMMON SCHOOLS.

By the annexed abstract of the reports of the county clerks, (marked A.) the following facts are made to appear in reference to the school year ending on the 1st day of July, 1852:—

The whole number of districts the school houses of which were situated within the towns—which embraces all the districts in the State—was 11,887, an apparent increase of seventy-five over those of the preceding year. The actual increase, however is but seven, sixty seven districts having been erroneously omitted in the returns of 1850-1.

Of the above total number 8,655 were whole districts—each being composed of the territory lying wholly within one town; and 3,232 were joint districts—or those composed of parts of different towns. The number of such part reported was 6,633. There are evidently omissions in this latter enumeration, as every joint district must necessarily consist of as many as two parts and numbers of them actually consist of three or even four.

Reports have been received from 5,502 whole and 5,633 parts of districts, leaving 153 of the former and ostensibly 210 of the latter unheard from. The number of joint districts from which no reports have been received, if there are any such, cannot be deduced from the returns.

The number of separate neighborhoods—parts of districts the school houses of which are situated in another State—from which reports have been received was fourteen. The number of children in them was not reported, and consequently the special provision contained in section fourth of the school act of 1851, in their behalf cannot be carried out.

The average period of time during which the schools were taught in 1851 was a fraction over seven months and eighteen days. The average period during which they were taught by licensed teachers was a fraction over seven months and fourteen days—three days less than during the preceding year and twelve days less than during 1849.

The number of children between the ages of four and twenty one years residing in all the districts of the State on the last day of December, 1851 was..... 1,100,613

The number of children reported as attending school through the entire year was..... 8,765

No. attending for 10 months and less than 12.... 39,059
8 months and less than 10.... 68,742
6 months and less than 8.... 195,745
4 months and less than 6.... 178,330
2 months and less than 4.... 211,367
less than two months..... 200,473

Total..... 832,481

Leaving as the number of those between the above ages who did not attend the common schools..... 268,132

The above census is not to be understood as including all the children in the state between the specified ages, as there are new sections of country, and in some instances disorganized districts etc., where the inhabitants are not included in any school district.

The number of times which the schools were inspected by the town superintendents during the year was 29,848, not quite twice for each school reported from.

The number of unincorporated select and private schools included within the districts was 1,472 and the average number of pupils attending them 31,767—a considerable diminution in both items from the preceding year.

The number of schools for colored children reported was thirty; and the number of pupils, between the ages of four and twenty one years, taught in them, was 1,418. There are probably omissions in these returns as the number of such schools the preceding year was 105, and the number of children between the ages of five and sixteen taught in them, 3,805.

2. ESTIMATES AND ACCOUNTS OF EXPENDITURE OF THE SCHOOL MONEYS.

Teachers' Wages.

The amount of money received by districts the preceding the preceding year, as stated in reports of trustees was.....	$987,971 41
Collected by district tax for same purpose..	429,010 99
Collected by rate bills under the act of 1851.	224,979 71
Local funds applicable to same object.....	24,326 26
Paid for teachers' wages in colored schools besides the public money.....	1,265 90
Collected to pay the tuition of 1,319 children exempted from rate bills.....	5,337 29
Collected by tax to supply deficiencies in rate bills.....	8,324 45
Total expenditure for teachers' wages during the year.....	$1,681,316 01

Library Money.

The amount of public money expended for district libraries during the year was ...	$90,579 50

Collected by Tax on Districts for other Purposes.

For purchasing school house sites.....	$20,759 21
For building school houses.....	209,235 17
For hiring do.	5,856 84
For repairing do.	73,725 86
For insuring do.	3,846 10
For fuel.....	76,989 17
For bookcases, books, and apparatus.....	14,141 12
For other purposes.....	73,354 04
Total.....	$477,918 51
Add teachers' wages.....	1,681,316 01
Add library money.....	90,579 50
Total amount expended for school purposes during the year.....	$2,249,814 02

Whole amount of Public Money received and disbursed.

Received from all sources by town superintendents during the year reported, (ending July 1, 1852.....	$1,348,907 09
Apportioned for teachers' wages, $1,110,692 78	
Apportioned for libraries..... $2,293 32	
	1,242,916 10
Leaving unappropriated.....	$105,450 99

From the foregoing it appears that there was an increase in the amount of money expended for school purposes, during the past year, over the preceding one, of $364,967 86.

Apportionment of School Money for coming year.

In pursuance of the requirements of sec. 21, of the "Act for the establishment of free schools throughout the State," passed April 12, 1851, the state tax of eight hundred thousand dollars for school purposes was apportioned among the several counties in the manner directed by said act and certified to the county clerks on the 23d day of June last. An abstract thereof (marked B.) is here with transmitted.

The appropriation bill passed at the last session of the Legislature set apart a hundred and thirty thousand dollars from the income of the common school fund, for the support of schools in the coming year. This is five thousand dollars less than was voted from the same source in 1851. The reason for this reduction is not apparent, as the revenues of the fund were quite sufficient to keep up the appropriation to its former amount.

The school moneys for 1853 have been diminished by another cause. Certain joint districts in the county of Saratoga were not included in the reports of 1851, and consequently receive no share of the apportionment for the succeeding year. The Legislature, on the 16th day of April, 1852, passed a law for the relief of these districts directing the Treasurer of the State to pay to the Superintendent of Common Schools, from the United States Deposit Fund, the sum of $2,293 30, to be paid over to the treasurer of Saratoga county to meet the above deficiency. This sum, with interest thereon, was to be returned to the treasury, from the school moneys to be apportioned for 1853. This with the preceding item, reduces the apportionment $7,707 54 below that of last year, and makes its actual amount, including the preceding appropriation, the appropriation from the income of the United States Deposit Fund and the State tax, $1,092,092 46.

A table exhibiting the manner in which this sum—comprising all the public moneys applicable to the support of common schools during the year 1853—is apportioned in each county, city and town of the State, is herewith appended (marked C.)

The whole fifty five thousand dollars set apart as library money has, contrary to the course pursued last year, been divided on the basis of population.

The act of 17th of April, 1851, probably authorized a distribution of one third of the library money, like other school moneys, by districts, but the act passed July 9, 1851—overlooked by my predecessor—restored the exclusive basis of population in the division of library money.

3. PLANS FOR THE IMPROVEMENT AND MANAGEMENT OF THE COMMON SCHOOL FUND, AND FOR THE BETTER ORGANIZATION OF THE COMMON SCHOOLS.

Improvement and Management of the Common School Fund.

The annexed tables (marked D and E) exhibit the increase and diminution of the Common School Fund, during the year ending on the 30th of September, 1852, and the revenues of that fund for the same year. The capital of the fund was, at the period specified $2,354,680 09, being an increase from the preceding year of $29,069 37. The balance of the School Fund revenue in the treasury on the 30th of September, 1851, was $193,581 41. The amount received into the treasury during the year ending 30th September, 1852, was including the appropriation from the income of the United States Deposit Fund $287,069 45. The amount transferred from the General Fund revenue for interest on moneys in the treasury belonging to the School Fund, under chapter 882 of laws of 1849, was $18,225 97, making in the aggregate $498,876 83. The amount paid out of the treasury during the same fiscal year, was $341,242 09. This leaves a balance of the revenues of the Common School Fund on hand on the 30th of September, 1852, of $154,584 74.

To the above or Common School Fund proper, add a sum from the United States Deposit Fund that will annually produce an income of $25,000, reserved by the constitution to be added to the capital of the School Fund, viz., $416,666 67, and also so much of the United States Deposit Fund as will produce a revenue of $165,000 annually devoted by law to the support of schools and the practical productive capital of the Common School Fund is $6,021,196 75.

The undersigned is not aware that any further legislation is demanded for the improvement and management of the Common School Fund.

The $800,000 State Tax for the Support of Schools.

Our school system so far as the means of its pecuniary support are concerned, represents but a series of adjustments between conflicting interests, and does not carry out strictly the theory on which the claims of any of these interests are sought to be established. The principle that education is a concern of government, that the government may of right and is bound in duty to support it, and that the property of the country may be justly taxed for that support has been distinctly recognized by the people of this State from its earliest organization. In 1789 but twelve years after the adoption of the constitution, the Legislature set apart public lands for school purposes. In 1796 the Board of Supervisors were required to raise by a tax upon each town, for the support of schools, half the amount of money received for the same purpose, under an act passed that year. Laws involving the same principles have been passed from time to time from that day to this.

But while the right and the expediency of taxing property for the support of schools, has always been concurred in by the bulk of our population, the expediency of throwing the burthen of maintaining education exclusive y on property, without any reference to the direct participation of the taxpayer in the benefits of the school, has never been declared by law until 1849. The "Free school act" of that year was intended to accomplish this object. Though the majority of the people twice expressed their approbation of free schools, by a vote on that distinct proposition, the law met with an opposition which neutralized the benefits which its friends anticipated from it. The strife which it gave rise to in the language of the Executive in 1851, "disturbed the harmony of society." Districts were rent with contention, litigation in school matters rapidly increased, the inhabitants in many instances refused to carry out the provisions of the law, and in others, directly resisted it as unconstitutional and oppressive.

In 1851, the Legislature with great unanimity, passed the law now in force. It is essentially a compromise between the views of the advocates and opponents of the law of 1849—between the theories of an exclusive property basis of taxation for the support of schools, and that mixed one, previously obtaining in which property as such, bore a portion (but a smaller portion) of the burthen, and the persons directly benefitted, the remainder. While the present State tax of eight hundred thousand dollars is a greater concession from property than any made previously to 1849, it does not, as the title of the bill would seem to assume, render the schools entirely free, in the sense of being exempt from the payment of tuition fees. Rate bills to pay some portion of the teachers' wages have yet to be collected in many, if not most, of the districts of the State. But to the indigent, the schools are now, as they were under the laws anterior to 1849, absolutely free.

In the school code reported to the Legislature, during its last session by the Commissioner, Mr. S. S. Randall, and in the last annual report of the late superintendent, it is proposed to substitute a mill tax for the present one. This is virtually, and indeed avowedly, a proposition to restore free schools.

A per centum tax, beyond all question, is more defensible in theory than one of fixed amount, when designed to meet a want which is varied by the same causes which vary the avails of the tax, viz: the increase or diminution of population and wealth. A fixed tax does not adapt itself to either of these contingencies, and among a rapidly increasing population, like our own, if it is exactly adequate to its purpose one year, it must necessarily fall short of it the next.

And that a mill tax cannot be fairly considered an onerous burthen on property, for the great object of maintaining popular education—for that protection which property itself derives from the dissemination of intelligence through all classes of society—has been very distinctly admitted by the opponents of free schools themselves, by their assenting to the eight hundred thousand dollar tax. When imposed it amounted to more than a tenth of one per cent on the assessed value of the property of the State.

Should another leading feature of the present law—the equal division of one-third of the school moneys by districts—be permitted to remain in force it is not probable that the class of districts which most strenuously opposed the free school law—the sparsely inhabited ones of the country—would object to the substitution of a mill tax for the present one, nor, on the other hand, that the wealthy city and village districts, which gave its popular majorities to that law, would press the change. Neither of these classes of districts would now desire it, except on conditions which would render it obnoxious to the other. This remark is thrown out to show that in settling this point we are not permitted to view it as a separate and independent proposition, to be decided on its abstract merits.

It constitutes, in fact, the principal in a series of measures adopted as an adjustment between rival interests and opposing views. Experience may, and probably does, demand the modification of some of these measures. It certainly makes such demand if it can be shown that they affect any portion of the community oppressively or injuriously. But whether it is expedient to so soon re open the whole question—to re awaken the desolating controversies which preceded the enactment of the present law—and this too, not to correct any positive evil, but only to attain what a portion of the community regard as a greater good—it is for the wisdom of the Legislature to decide.

Not doubting that the wants of an advancing population will ultimately call for an increase of the State tax, and that when so increased, it would be better on all accounts to make it a per centum and therefore a self adjusting one, the undersigned feels constrained to express the opinion that the time has not arrived for such action. Nor is he disposed at present to recommend any action which will affect the interior polity of the schools, or the duties of trustees. The evils arising from too frequent changes in the latter particulars have not been sufficiently appreciated.

The school system of New York is too vast, involves interests too important, to be rashly established or rashly changed. It requires permanency to adapt it to the circumstances of society and to give facility and vigor to its operations. Where no serious practical evil is felt, it can scarcely be doubted that a reasonable degree of such permanency is preferable to incessant changes, even though, independently considered, those changes might promise some degree of improvement.

In the rapid transition from system to system, in the constant change of details, made without the benefit of sufficient experience, which has marked the school legislation of the last four years, the natural result has followed. Grave errors have been committed. To retrieve them, new ones have been plunged into. The local officers have been embarrassed to understand their duties, varied by each year's legislation. They have consequently performed them with diminished spirit and greatly diminished accuracy. Want of zeal or want of efficiency in the principal soon extends to the subaltern, or paralyses his efforts. Even the teachers—a finer or more spirited professional body than whom is not to be found in our State—have lost something of that high enthusiasm which a few years since exhibited its kindling traces throughout our schools. Less is more lively, their efforts, unsupported from without, have fallen on a soil made sterile by indifference or checked by angry contention. Melancholy as is the confession, and excluded as are the exceptions to it, our schools in the opinion of the undersigned have deteriorated during the rapid changes of the last four years.

Whether we have reached a point in these mutations where it is best to pause, and let existing regulations when not obviously and seriously wrong stand until a further developed experience and a more settled public sentiment shall call for well considered changes in the grave question now to be settled. On it the views of the undersigned are already expressed.

4. ALL SUCH MATTERS RELATING TO HIS OFFICE AND TO THE COMMON SCHOOLS AS THE SUPERINTENDENT SHALL DEEM EXPEDIENT TO COMMUNICATE.

Appellate Jurisdiction of the Superintendent.

Doubts have arisen as to the power of the Superintendent to hear and determine cases of appeal, arising under the school laws of the State. These doubts have been occasioned by the repeal of sec. 152, chap. 480, of the Laws of 1847, by an act passed in 1849.

This repeal is supposed to have been the result of a clerical error. Whatever its effect it is well understood that the idea was not entertained, or even broached, in the Legislature, of abolishing the appellate jurisdiction of the Superintendent, and compelling all parties aggrieved by the acts or decisions of the inferior school officers, to resort to courts of law for redress. Entertaining this belief, and conceiving that the act of 1849 did not at all events affect some of the legislative enactments conferring jurisdiction on the Superintendent, passed prior to 1847, the undersigned has entertained the appeals which have been brought before him; and he is not aware that his decisions have been in any case disregarded. But to remove doubts and prevent controversy, it is recommended that the Legislature by former enactment reconfirm that appellate jurisdiction in the Superintendent without which our school system would be crushed by litigation almost within a single year.

ACADEMIES AND COLLEGES.

The money devoted by the State to educational purposes is divided mainly between three classes of institutions, viz:—common schools, academies and colleges. With the two latter the Superintendent has no official connection. But they as much as the former constitute parts of our educational system. Each of these parts exercises a direct and important influence on the others. The higher educate instructors for the lower, and the lower fit pupils for the higher. It has often been assumed that their interests are antagonistic and in one point of view, they have sometimes been practically made so by attempts in the Legislature to increase the appropriations to one at the expense of the others. A candid discussion of the relations which they should sustain towards each other so far as the action of the government is concerned, is therefore deemed appropriate in this connection.

Nothing can be more obviously true than the proposition that every dollar devoted by the State to educational purposes, should be so expended as to render its benefits, to the greatest practicable extent, equally open to all. The common schools alone at this time, present this condition. In them tuition is cheap to all and absolutely free to the indigent. The academies and colleges, with the exception of certain beneficiary scholarships, and with some other exceptions which will be presently noticed, require tuition and other fees, and an expenditure for books, which shut their doors on a large class of our population. The public money which they receive does not, then, equally inure to the benefit of all, but to that of those who need it least, the wealthy, and in point of fortune, the middle classes.

There are two ways of removing this inequality. The one is to deprive academies and colleges of all share in the public moneys. What would be the effect of this? Wealth would still sustain these institutions, but necessarily in diminished numbers, as the cost of tuition in them, increased to counterbalance the withdrawal of the public aid, would exclude not only poverty, but that moderate competency which united with effort and energy now not unfrequently attains their benefits. Higher education would thus become the luxury, and the additional power of the wealthy. If the sons of the poor and of those in middling circumstances, were not excluded from the learned professions, and from all occupations demanding a higher grade of learning, they at least would start both in the attainment and the practice of those professions on no equal footing with the educated sons of the rich; and they would require double talent and double industry to ensure equal success. Is this idea to be for a moment tolerated in a government which has brought for the reasonable wants of all? Are the public prepared to surrender, for the benefit of a small portion of our population, the treasure which they have been pouring for half a century into the coffers of our academies and colleges? Shall the monopoly, and hence the double power of learning, be made an appanage of the aristocracy of wealth?

It has been said that the increased amount of public money which might be distributed among the common schools, on depriving the academies and colleges of any participation in it, would put the former on such a footing that all the higher branches of education could be successfully taught in them. The proceeds of the Literature Fund and of the United States Deposit Fund, applicable to the support of academies, is about forty thousand dollars per annum. Add to this an equal amount, for annual aid to colleges—though, for a considerable term of years, they have received nothing like that amount. This eighty thousand dollars divided among the common schools of the State, would give to each between six and seven dollars—a sum scarcely sufficient to purchase the text books which one scholar would annually require in pursuing the higher branches of literature and science. How far would it go towards purchasing the scientific apparatus necessary in teaching these higher branches of science? how far towards collecting those libraries, without a knowledge of whose stores, scientific attainments lose half their value? How far it would go, added to present salaries, towards paying the wages of a class of teachers competent to instruct in academic and collegiate branches? These questions are asked to place in a strong light the futility of an idea, which has found advocates among those who have not sufficiently investigated the facts in the case and who have probably formed exaggerated impressions of the aid which the State extends to its higher institutions of learning.

Union schools with such additional aid might, it is true, form a substitute for academies—but to what good? Few localities out of cities and villages will admit of them, until population and wealth have greatly advanced; and their benefits, it is believed, would not be as evenly disseminated as those of the academies now are. And why throw away what has already been lavished on academies—the acquisitions of years—merely to build up a new class of schools, to attain the same object? In their present sphere, the Union schools are productive of inestimable benefits; as substitutes for academies generally, they are uncalled for, and promise no improvement.

There is a method in the judgment of the undersigned by which the State can render the benefits of the funds which it appropriates to higher education equally accessible to all—throw open those benefits to the poor without curtailing any now enjoyed by another class—and in doing this neither diminish the number, nor impinge the interests of the existing higher institutions of learning. That method would be to distribute among those institutions as much money as now—and more, if necessary—but to require them to repay every dollar thus received, in gratuitously educating such pupils as the State shall designate.

By a proper method of designating the pupils, the inequalities of the present system would be done away; and results attained as accordant with enlightened philanthropy as with the theory and spirit of our political institutions.

The following is an outline of the proposed plan:—Let the common school districts of the State be arranged into as many academy districts as there are now or may hereafter be of academies. Let each academy then be required to receive annually from the common schools in its district and gratuitously educate a pupil for every $—— received from the State; a college to receive pupils from the free departments of a certain number of academies on the same footing. The selection of the pupils should evidently be made on the basis of educational qualification and general merit. There are several methods of accomplishing this, which it is necessary at this point to discuss. That the object is practically and readily attainable is established by the experience of the Free Academy in the city of New York, and some other kindred institutions.

The Free Academy in the city of New York presents, in fact, a practical exemplification, in a single locality of the plan above proposed for the whole State. It receives its pupils from the common schools on the basis above suggested, and it educates them gratuitously. The undersigned has, during the past season, visited this institution personally, examined its records, investigated its plans of action in detail, and witnessed its operations. To say that it is eminently successful in accomplishing the objects of its foundation, is but faint praise of the men whose philanthropy originated, and whose energy secured, that foundation—or of the able and efficient corps of teachers who manage its concerns. Within its halls the marks of caste and the distinctions of wealth are elsewhere so pervading—pervading the mansions of the living and even the mausoleums of the dead—are for once ignored. The sons of the rich and the poor—neither of them degraded beneficiaries, but the honored cadets of a paternal government—meet on ground where neither has vantage. Sitting on the same benches, pursuing the same higher branches of science, drinking from the same rich fountains of classic literature, cultivating the same elegant tastes and personal accomplishments, the undersigned saw with emotions he will not attempt to describe, the representatives of almost the extremes, and of every intermediate point, in social and pecuniary condition—the sons of the merchant whose vessels visit every ocean, and of the employees of his storehouses and his wharves—of fathers whose names are historic in professions in literature, in arts and in arms, and of the obscure and toiling mass whose sinews support this social superstructure above them.

The difference between such a foundation—where the best and brightest youths of the country, irrespective of all other distinctions, are brought together to be equally anointed and sandaled for the Olympic race of life and manhood, and renown—and to be put in a position where high heart and bold endeavor will place the rewards of life equally within their reach—in the place of that order of things where the necessities of education are measured by pecuniary or social condition—where poor schools are thought to suffice for the poor—and where eleemosynary instruction is doled out to the indigent, like cheap food in winter—marks the development of a truly American idea and is at once the symbol and the commencement of a new phase in educational and social progress.

It is scarcely to be doubted that the great metropolis—the munificence of whose philanthropy are only equalled by those of her business enterprise—whose thoroughfares and suburbs are everywhere sprinkled with her magnificent charities—will add to this class of her institutions, nor that she will ultimately perfect her system of free education, by the establishment of a free college on a scale proportioned to the wants of her population.

There are other institutions in the State approaching the character of free academies. One at Lockport has taught four hundred pupils during the year. Another is in process of organization at Utica.

With peculiar pleasure the Superintendent calls attention to the fact that one free college is already established in our State. By private foundations and benefactions, Geneva College—changing its name to Hobart Free College—has been made free to all who possess the requisite preparation in study, and who can furnish satisfactory testimonials of character.

The engrafting of a free department on the existing academies and colleges, would be a great saving of expense to the State over the erection of new and entirely free ones, and by this means it is believed that even the sums now distributed among these institutions would send the blessings of free instruction in the higher branches of learning, to a considerable extent, throughout every class of society.

It has already been asserted that the change proposed would not result injuriously to the pecuniary interests of the academies and colleges. If they receive the same amount of aid from the State as at present, it makes little difference to them whether it goes to cheapen the tuition of their entire number of pupils as it now does, or whether it makes the tuition of a portion free, and slightly increases that of the others. Such would be the effect of the change if the number of students remained the same as at this time. But the number would undoubtedly so increase by the accession of an entirely new class, as to prevent a rise in tuition, and at the same time to overbalance the comparatively small additional cost to the institutions thus relieve, accruing from the increase of scholars.

In another respect, the proposed change would directly aid the pecuniary interests of the academies and colleges. They would no longer be considered as appertaining, in their advantages to a comparatively small class of society. They would become parts of an educational system equally the property of the whole people and equally endeared to the whole people. The public aid, instead of being closely limited to a fixed amount as at present, to one class of them, and precariously doled out to the other, would flow in as broad and steady a stream as their own interests and those of the public should be found to demand.

Education of Teachers.

Few estimate sufficiently the importance of teachers as a class, or their influence on society. Nearly as much as parents they mould the moral character of the young; and their influence is probably even more felt in developing the intellect and giving it direction throughout an extensive portion of society. Ridicule of teachers constitutes one of the staple jokes of literature; and its caricatures have not been without their influence on those whose victims have weight in assigning both literary and social position. Prejudice against this occupation in our country, is as unjust as it is impolitic. Where in the United States have teachers, as a class, been found behind the moral or intellectual cultivation of the body of the community in which they have been called upon to teach—nay, not in advance of it? How often has even the breath of suspicion fallen on the moral calibre of one of the twenty-five thousand common school teachers of New York? Of their intellectual calibre, the bench, the bar, the sacred desk, the highest business and official positions of our country, bear emphatic testimony. For unremitting industry in a laborious and physically prostrating occupation—for a patient bearing of inconveniences and annoyances which those unfamiliar with the subject can hardly appreciate—for a zealous and high toned devotion to the duties of their calling, ample opportunities of observation have satisfied the undersigned that no class of men excel the teachers of New York. And it is notorious that none, where the extent of their duties and responsibilities are taken into consideration, are so inadequately paid. Beyond a few cities and large villages the wages paid to teachers do not equal those of any class of operatives whose occupation demands any previously acquired dexterity.

It is common to urge the necessity of establishing a professional class of teachers—a class of teachers for life. This most desirable result cannot be obtained at present rates of remuneration, and there are no indications of a sufficiently favorable change in the latter particular to justify any hope in the future—or at least until long years to come—except in the few wealthy localities already alluded to. Our teachers as heretofore must be mainly drawn from those who are preparing ultimately to engage in other pursuits. The State as heretofore, must be satisfied with qualifying, so far as practicable a temporary class of teachers. It is a necessity which admits of no alternative, but the entire degradation of our schools. Nor is the necessity a hard one, when the vast sums lavished by government on comparatively trivial objects, are taken into consideration. In matters pertaining to education if anywhere, the policy of a republican state should be liberal.

The undersigned would earnestly recommend that all existing public aids towards the instruction of teachers be continued, and that some additional ones be added, as proposed under the next head, looking towards the preparation of a greater number of thoroughly educated teachers, to diffuse the benefits of improved methods of instruction, not only directly in their schools but by their example, throughout the body of those of the State.

The State Normal Schools.

The policy of a class of institutions exclusively for the education of teachers has been amply vindicated in the experience of this and other States.

The Normal School established in 1844, has surmounted most of the prejudices which it encountered in the earlier stages of its career, and a thorough conviction of its utility is now entertained by the great body of the educators of the State.

Little feit at first, three thousand two hundred and thirty pupils have received the benefits of instruction in it, and now are extending a knowledge of the better systems and improved processes of instruction thus acquired throughout the State. They are doing this as teachers in the departments for the instruction of common school teachers in the academies; they are doing it in the larger schools of the cities and villages which become models to others; and finally, they are beginning to be felt in the body of the common schools of the State.

The institution though exposed at the beginning of the present term to the disadvantage accruing from the loss of an experienced and popular principal was never in a more prosperous condition than now. Professor Perkins was succeeded as principal by Mr. S. S. Woolworth; and notwithstanding the disadvantage above alluded to, and some others of a very serious character, under which the institution temporarily labored, the latter gentleman has been able not only to retain the usual number of pupils, but to increase it. There have attended during the current term, two hundred and seventy six—forty more, and representing several more counties, than at any preceding period.

The undersigned is under the impression that the course of studies requires some modification, and that the school should be made more strictly a professional one than at present. Its object is not to give teachers their first education in the elementary branches, but to take them, after these branches are acquired and instruct them in the theory and practice of teaching. In doing this, they will necessarily be to a considerable extent practiced, and thus improved, in elementary studies; but this should be regarded as simply an incidental benefit, and by no means an excuse for the want of a good previous acquaintance with these studies—or for that same slow and elaborate course of instruction in them, which is practised in elementary schools. The State provides other and far less expensive schools for the latter purpose. Here, the object is to make teachers; and it requires time and expenditure enough to do so, with a standard of admission which would dispense with the necessity of anything more than a rapid and merely review course in the common branches of an English education. The executive committee of the Normal School have this subject under examination, and will, in due time take what they regard as the appropriate action on it.

Owing to a variety of causes, not necessary here to be detailed, the Normal School has undoubtedly been an expensive one, for the amount accomplished by it. Many of those causes, though inevitable, were temporary in their nature and are already beyond recurrence. Of the usual liberal annual appropriation by the Legislature of ten thousand dollars for the support of the school the executive committee have been able, during the current year, to save two thousand, and carrying out the earlier liberal policy of the institution towards its pupils, the balance has been appropriated to assist them in defraying the expense of their board. It is believed the expenses of the institution will be still farther reduced, without any injury to its efficiency. Its receipts may also be increased from several sources, and more particularly by an extension of the experimental department, which will also give additional facilities for instructing the pupils of the higher one in the practice of teaching. All these topics are engaging the attention of the executive committee.

Should the changes above alluded to be made, the undersigned believes that about six thousand dollars per annum will be adequate to the support of the school. But any alterations to be made safely must be made gradually, and any extension of the experimental department will call for some preparatory disbursements. The Legislature are therefore respectfully advised to continue the usual appropriation for the coming year.

The present Normal School is entirely inadequate to supply the number of thoroughly trained teachers, which the public interests call for. The departments for the instruction of common school teachers in the academies, form useful adjuncts to it, and when vigorously conducted, their beneficial influences in improving the teachers in the surrounding localities, are incalculable. But the pupils in these departments attend but one term during the year, and they are no more entitled to re-entrance than any other claimants. They cannot therefore, rapidly enough to meet the public wants, if at all, prepare that class of thoroughly trained teachers which the public interests demand, both as educators and as models to their brethren. Applications for such come daily to the Normal School from our own and other States. While the foreign ones are wholly refused, scarcely half of the domestic applications can be supplied. A committee of the Legislature, at its last session, recommended the establishment of another Normal School, to be located in the western part of the State. In this recommendation the undersigned heartily concurs. It is believed that the necessary buildings would be furnished freely to the State. This being the case, but a trifling outlay would be necessary to put another school in operation; and, with the diminution of the expenses to the scale above proposed, both would cost but two thousand dollars more, per annum, than the present one, a trifle, when results are taken into consideration.

New York City Schools.

The Superintendent has visited, during the past year, several of the ward schools of the city of N. York, and also several of those under the older organization of the Public School Society. All were in a highly flourishing condition, and they furnished convincing proof that the aggregation of large masses of children into single schools, carried on by numerous instructors—each teaching but a branch or two, and in separate compartments—is far preferable, where circumstances admit of it, to a division of the same number of children into small and scattered schools.

The first named arrangement, known popularly as that of the "Union School," admits of a better system of classification, and consequently of a better division of labor in teaching; it saves a heavy per centum of expense in buildings, apparatus, etc.; and finally in one of these great schools if well conducted, an *esprit du corps* is induced—and the undersigned cannot but believe, a sort of intellectual momentum from the action in one direction of associated mind—which can rarely, if ever, be as fully obtained in a small school.

Efforts are making to merge the organizations of the Public School Society and of the ward schools. The former were established by a noble and disinterested philanthropy. Enlightened and benevolent men acted as pioneers in spreading the blessings of education among the masses of the metropolis, before the State was able or willing to make adequate provision for that object. At this period, however, separate organizations are not needed to accomplish the end, and by dividing the efforts of the friends of education they become positively detrimental to it. That the attempts to consolidate them will be conducted on principles alike just and honorable to all parties, is guaranteed by the character of the gentlemen who have the subject in charge; and that, if so conducted, they will prove successful, admits not of a well founded doubt.

For statistics of the New York schools under the supervision of the Board of Education, see report of the Board, and report of the City Superintendent, hereunto appended, (marked I and J.)

Asylum and Charitable Schools in New York.

Various Orphan Asylum schools, the school of the Mechanics' Society, the school of the Society for the Reformation of Juvenile Delinquents, and those of several other charitable establishments, in the city of New York, receive the public moneys, by districts, and *per capita*, on the same footing with other schools. Following up the commendable disposition to consolidate, adverted to under the preceding head, it is proposed to exclude them from this privilege, if such it may be called, on the ground that the public schools are open to all, and that any diversion of the public moneys from them leads to a less economic expenditure, to a diminution of the unity and consequently of the composiness and energy of the system, and that it tends to a constant increase of these evils, by encouraging the formation of separate and voluntary school organizations. These positions, correct in the abstract, do not, in the judgment of the undersigned, apply to the cases of an occasions for purely charitable purposes, when subjected, as in the present case, to the operation of the same general laws and to the same official supervision as other common schools.

The police and other regulations necessary for the proper management of a body of orphan children, or those separated from their parents on account of poverty or petty crime, cannot be conveniently enforced without keeping them mainly within limits which admit of the constant supervision of their superiors such as a house or yard. The disastrous results which would ensue on attempting to send them through the streets of a city to a public school cannot be a matter of doubt. To say that these unfortunate children shall be deprived of education, or that those who already generously feed and clothe and shelter them, shall not be allowed that aid in educating them which flows from simply putting them on a par with other children in regard to the school moneys, is a view of the case which the undersigned considers alike repugnant to justice, humanity and expediency.

For the number, average attendance and other particulars of these schools, see report of Board of Education, (marked I.)

Reports of County Clerks.

The annual reports of the county clerks embodying abstracts of the town superintendents reports made to this department in pursuance of sec. 172 art. 6, of the school laws, contain numerous and frequently important errors. Many of these were discovered after the last annual apportionment was certified to the clerks, and consequently when it was too late for correction. In some cases, two, many districts had been reported in a town, in others too few—thus giving the former more, and the latter less, than their proper share of the public moneys. When excesses were reported, the superintendent drew for them on the county treasurers, and applied them to meet reported deficiencies. Fortunately these have about balanced each other during the current year, with the exception of one marked instance where the intervention of the Legislature became necessary to supply a large deficiency. For the account, see exhibit (marked H.) hereunto appended.

Other errors of the same class have come unofficially, to the knowledge of the department which, from their being to the advantage of the towns in which they occurred, or from other causes, were not reported; and, like the preceding, they were discovered too late for correction.

Under existing arrangements, mistakes will always creep into the reports of the county clerks. They are in reality generally originally committed by the town superintendents themselves. The duties of the former officer are merely clerical, in the premises. He can exercise no discretion, unless it be to call upon the superintendents to amend their reports. Unless there is an error peculiarly glaring, an officer elected with reference to duties having no connection with schools, or the facts reported on, cannot be expected to detect it. The fault—rather of the system than the county clerks—demands legislative correction. A remedy will be proposed under the next head.

Chairman of Board of Town Superintendents to Make the Annual Reports.

To obtain accuracy in the reports of the town superintendents, no so efficient method can be devised, it is believed, as to require these officers to annually meet and compare their reports, before an abstract is made of them for the use of this department. By instituting such a comparison between the several reports, and between them and those of the preceding year—and by having this done by a body of men more familiar than any other with the facts involved—the detection of serious errors would be rendered next to inevitable. And this preliminary correction accomplished, an experienced member of the same body would be less liable than any other person to commit errors in preparing the required abstract of the town reports; and on all accounts would seem to be the most appropriate one to entrust with that duty. At the annual meeting for the above purpose might be transacted the other business, which already requires the superintendents to assemble thus often, and therefore but an inconsiderable addition be made to present expenses.

The undersigned would recommend that the town superintendents be required to meet on the first Wednesday of August in each year, and to elect one of their number Chairman of the Board of Town Superintendents, who shall hold such place until the next annual meeting of the board; that it be made their duty then to compare and correct their reports and deliver them to their chairman; that the latter be required within twenty days to make out and forward an abstract of the same to the State Superintendent, receiving the per diem allowance of a town superintendent while necessarily employed in discharging this duty.

Other benefits besides the direct one above indicated, would result from this arrangement. The chairman of the Board of Town Superintendents would be a most convenient and appropriate medium of communication between the State and town superintendents, and a desirable source for the former to obtain advice and information from in relation to local school matters.

State Certificates to Teachers.

To give to the State certificates that importance and dignity contemplated in their institution, and to make their attainment an object calling forth a wholesome spirit of emulation among our teachers, it has been conceived improper, by the Superintendent, to continue awarding them on these private recommendations, which almost any respectable teacher is able to obtain. And inasmuch as a single town superintendent, or even two contiguous ones, would often be exposed to pressing importunities or to local influences which might embarrass them in their action in this particular, it has been deemed but an act of justice to relieve them of such responsibility.

The Superintendent will not, therefore, except in extraordinary cases, or where he is personally acquainted with the qualifications of the candidate grant certificates, unless on the recommendation, officially made, of the Board of Town Superintendents, or Board of Education, in the county or city where such candidate resides. Such Boards should only annually recommend a very limited number of candidates, and they should select for that purpose those teachers whom they consider the most meritorious in all particulars in their county—wholly irrespective of personal applications. Indeed all such personal applications for their recommendation should be discountenanced. Their action should be spontaneous, and therefore purely a mark of honor for distinguished merit.

The county Boards of Superintendents and the city Boards of Education have also been requested, in case they become satisfied that any State or county certificate is held by an incompetent or unworthy person, to recommend the annulling of such certificate to this department.

Webster's Dictionary.

In pursuance of the contract made by the late Superintendent, under the authority conferred by chapter 449 of the laws of 1851, with the publishers of "Webster's Unabridged Dictionary," nearly eight thousand five hundred copies of that work have been purchased for the use of school districts. Much difficulty and delay have occurred in carrying out the law from the fact that it contained no provision for defraying the expense of transporting the books from this office, where they were required to be delivered to the several counties—nor for collecting the moneys which were required to be deposited with the county treasurers in payment for them. The publishers were ultimately directed, by the undersigned, to forward the books by the cheapest modes of conveyance, directly to the clerks of each county—the former defraying a portion of the expense equivalent to a delivery of the books in Albany. This has been done. This department has paid out $499 01 for transportation and some small bills remain yet outstanding.

The collection of the sums due for the books from the county treasurers has been accompanied with an unjust expense to the publishers and a very considerable amount of labor and trouble to this department. It is respectfully recommended, therefore, that the Superintendent be authorized to retain from the library money apportioned to each town an amount sufficient to meet the next instalment due for the dictionaries purchased for it.

CONCLUSION.

Other topics of interest, connected with our schools, press on the attention of the undersigned; but the result of another year's observation and experience will be obtained on them before they are made subjects of communication to the Legislature.

HENRY S. RANDALL,
Superintendent of Common Schools.

THE SUPPER TO MR.