

**LECTURE ON PUBLIC
INSTRUCTION IN
PRUSSIA, PP. 8-180**

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Lecture on Public Instruction in Prussia, pp. 8-180 by George S. Hillard

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GEORGE S. HILLARD

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LECTURE
ON
PUBLIC INSTRUCTION
IN
PRUSSIA.

READ BEFORE THE AMERICAN INSTITUTE,

BY

GEORGE S. HILLARD, ESQ.

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OF BOSTON.

Philadelphia:

KEY & BIDDLE, 23 MINOR STREET.

1836.

PREFACE.

THE Discourse, which forms a principal part of the following pages, was furnished to the INSTITUTE by particular desire. The writer of this abstract, having been long convinced that the institutions of New England, for popular education fulfilled the design of such education, but very imperfectly, desirous also, to "exclude boasting," and to substitute, if possible, some actual improvements in practice, such as might accomplish the true design of popular instruction, took occasion, in the summer of 1835, to publish in a weekly paper, a series of articles, very imperfectly illustrative of the actual state, and possible amendment of the common schools of the country. Those anonymous speculations, not ascribed to any female, suggesting some applications of the Prussian system of education to the Ameri-

can people, were so far acceptable to some of the most intelligent members of the Institute, that they applied to the writer for more detailed illustrations of that system. These were readily furnished, and, in the form of the annexed discourse, were read, as a favour to the writer, by George S. Hillard Esq., in August, 1835.

This Discourse was detached from the annually printed discourses of the Institute, and is now printed in a convenient and cheap form, to furnish, for wide circulation, it is hoped, some practical views of education, which may be extensively beneficial. Other documents and observations, in relation to this great public interest, are subjoined for further illustration of it. The whole claims no other merit than the desire to diffuse sound and practical ideas, among all who take any part in meliorating and exalting general society, by means of a rational, and truly moral education of all classes of the people.

ELIZA ROBBINS.

PHILADELPHIA, March 20th, 1836.

Hon. Richard Fletcher Esq
with the respects
of C. Brooks.

under cognisance of the minister. These visits are unexpected, always determined by a real necessity, and entrusted to men especially fitted for the occasion. In the general course of affairs, the correspondence and intervention of inferior authorities, immediately connected with the ministry, is sufficient to carry on the system in its ramifications most remote from the centre of authority.

Every department, circle, and parish, has its school board, which regulates its respective affairs, and every school its proper inspectors or committee, consisting of laity and clergy, who have particular and frequently recurring duties in regard to the schools. The minister, though thoroughly informed of results, does not interfere minutely with details. His information of the operation of the whole system is nearly perfect, being gathered from full and accurate reports of the dependent functionaries.

Two features in this system are very striking—one, is the respect felt by the na-

tion for the dignity and uses of education; and the other, the positive fitness required by the laws, for the exercise of the respective duties of those employed in the administration of it. "The high rank assigned to the head of public instruction, marks the respect in which every thing relating to that important subject is held by the government; hence science assumes her proper place in the state. Civilisation, the intellectual and moral interests of society, have their appointed ministry. This ministry embraces every thing relating to science, and consequently all schools, libraries, and kindred institutions."

"The spirit of the Prussian monarchy is decidedly adverse to unpaid functionaries of any kind," says M. Cousin, therefore the administrators of the public education have generally some small salary proper to their office. "In Prussia all public servants are paid; and as no post whatsoever can be obtained without passing through the most rigorous examinations, all are able and enlightened men. And as, moreover, they are

taken from every class in society, they bring, to the exercise of their duties, the general spirit of their nation, while in that exercise they contract habits of public business." By such an arrangement it must be seen that voluntary benefactors are excluded, except in the bestowment of donations and legacies to the schools, and also that the intrusive counsels, and arbitrary proceedings of well intentioned ignorance, cannot prevent the constant improvement and progress, which wise men, associated together for the public benefit, will certainly aim at, and may probably accomplish. No languor, negligence, and apathy are likely to enter into the applications of a system guarded in so many ways. Every parish must, by the law of the land, have a school; and the pastor, or minister of that parish, is in virtue of his office, the inspector of that school; associated with him is a committee of administration and superintendence, composed of some of the principal persons in the parish. If all the operations of this association were