

**SPECIAL REPORT ON THE PRESENT  
STATE OF EDUCATION IN THE  
UNITED STATES AND OTHER  
COUNTRIES, AND ON  
COMPULSORY INSTRUCTION**

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**V. M. RICE**

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COMPULSORY INSTRUCTION.


BY  
VICTOR M. RICE,  
SUPERINTENDENT OF PUBLIC INSTRUCTION  
OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK.



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## P R E F A C E .

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The neglect of public officers to collect and preserve books and documents relating to schools has rendered the compilation of facts and statistics, showing the provisions made in different States to educate the people, a task slow and difficult. This is especially true of our State. Until the organization of the Department of Public Instruction, not even the annual reports of the Superintendent were saved and kept upon the official shelves. If reports were received from other States of this Union, or from foreign countries, care was not taken to preserve them. None certainly were in the office when this Department was organized in 1854. From 1821 to 1854, the school department was merged in the office of the Secretary of State, and the decision of appeals, the replies by letter to a multitude of inquiries from all parts of the State, the collating of school returns, the apportionment of public moneys and the visitation and inspection of institutions subject to the oversight of the Superintendent, and the want of appropriations, must have precluded any considerable attention to the collection of an educational library. While providing with commendable liberality for the support of common schools, the Legislature has ever neglected to make appropriations for the preservation of records, and for collecting books and reports, showing the progress of education in this and other countries.

A reason for this may be found in the fact that the products of the school are moral and intellectual, and not material; they cannot be measured, weighed, and their value computed, like the harvests of the farmer, the handiwork of the artisan, the tolls of the canals, the fare and freight on railroads, the profits of banks and manufacturing establishments—and so Legislatures have seldom given the attention to education which its importance demands. Anxious to promote it as the safeguard of popular institutions and constitutional liberty, they have not generally had a due appreciation of the advantage of well-armed agencies to direct the attention of the people to the schools, and to awaken public

solicitude for their proper care and improvement. For more than thirty years, the department which, properly organized and conducted, could have occupied economically and effectively the entire time and labor of five competent men, and which in public importance is the equal, certainly, of any other department, was a clerkship in the office of the Secretary of State.

At the same time a Board of Regents, twenty-three in number, with a secretary and clerk, was deemed necessary to grant charters to colleges and academies, and to dispense to the latter less than \$50,000 a year, to collect and publish their reports, and hold a nominal supervision over colleges, while the supervision of common schools, to the support of which hundreds of thousands of dollars were annually apportioned, and in which the pupils were as forty to one in the academies and colleges, was treated as a matter of secondary importance. It may not be deemed strange, under such circumstances, that the facts and statistics necessary to enable me to respond to the resolution calling for the accompanying report were not in this office. I therefore employed A. G. JOHNSON, Esq., to collect them from all available sources, and to him is chiefly due the credit of their collection and arrangement; for, pressed with a multitude of other official duties, I have been able to contribute a comparatively small portion of time to the work.

V. M. R.



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