

**THE LECTURES DELIVERED BEFORE THE
AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION,
AT SPRINGFIELD,
MASS., AUGUST 19, 1856; INCLUDING
THE JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS AND A
LIST OF THE OFFICERS**

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The Lectures Delivered before the American Institute of Instruction, at Springfield, Mass., August 19, 1856; Including the Journal of Proceedings and a List of the Officers by Various

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VARIOUS

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AMERICAN INSTITUTE OF INSTRUCTION.

TWENTY-SEVENTH ANNUAL MEETING.



JOURNAL OF PROCEEDINGS.

SPRINGFIELD, MASS. AUG. 19, 1856.

The Institute assembled in City Hall, at half past eleven o'clock, A. M., and was called to order by the President, JOHN KINGSBURY, of Providence, R. I.

The Secretary being absent, N. E. Holland, of Barre, was chosen Secretary *pro tem*.

Adjourned.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

The Institute met at half-past two o'clock. Prayer was offered by Rev. Dr. Osgood, of Springfield.

Mayor Phelps then rose, and in behalf of the City Government and the citizens, warmly welcomed the members of the Institute to Springfield.

The subject which had called them together, he said, was one of vital importance. This country is indebted to education for the choicest blessings it possesses. The Pilgrim Fathers were early impressed with the importance of this subject. As early as 1636, the General Court of Massachusetts Bay appropriated four hundred pounds for the establishment of a College, and this, with the bequest of John Harvard, founded Harvard College. Language

cannot adequately describe the influence which this single institution has had upon the destinies of this country. In this connection the Mayor complimented President Walker, who was present to take part in the exercises of the occasion. The interest (he continued) thus early manifested, has been kept alive by the descendants of those men. In this city he believed that the descendants of Pynchon, Smith, Burt, and others, cotemporaries of Winthrop, were no more insensible to the claims of the subject of education than were those men. He closed by a repetition of the welcome he was delegated to tender them.

The President replied as follows :—

It has been said, by some one, that the nations of the old world were sifted, and the choicest wheat obtained to be sown in the settlement of this country. This is no idle boast, uttered in the spirit of self-praise ; but finds its verification in the fact that the church and the school-house seemed to be greater objects of solicitude to our ancestors, than the habitations which were to shelter them and their children. For many years, their regard for education and religion, showed that they themselves had been so educated as to be able fully to appreciate the importance of handing down to their posterity the rich blessings of these institutions.

But a change came over their descendants, especially in reference to common school education. Though not wholly ignored, yet the subject lost its former high rank in their estimation. To unfold the causes of this change would require all the time which it would be proper to use on this occasion. Let it suffice to say, that among these causes, we may enumerate the hardships to which pioneers settling in a wilderness are always exposed ; the troubles arising from the Indian and French wars ; the war of the Revolution and the consequent derangement of the finan-

ces ; the influx of a more heterogeneous population ; the constant tides of migration setting westward ; the rapid development of the physical resources of the country ; and the results of scientific discoveries and mechanical inventions ; all of which, at first, combined to give to material things comparatively a greater importance than to either intellectual or moral. Consequently the interests of common school education had begun to languish. Though a commendable zeal was still manifested for the academy and the college, there was generally thought to be no necessary connection between them and common schools ; while many believed there was a special antagonism between them. They did not know, or seemed to forget, that perhaps *four* out of every *five* who entered the academy, and afterward the college, were first incited to do so by the instruction, however imperfect, given in the common school. As a natural consequence of this, while the principal of an academy and the professor in college were duly respected, and received a tolerable compensation for their services, the common school teacher was too often a starveling, occupying the situation merely from necessity, and regarding its duties as most unwelcome drudgery. Sometimes alas ! the office was filled by those whose only claim was a necessity arising from want. It is not strange that the office of teaching had fallen into disrepute. There was little or nothing to make it desirable for those already engaged in it, and still less to induce men of talent and high cultivation to engage in it anew.

It may be difficult to say precisely when public sentiment in this respect was at its lowest ebb, and juster views began to prevail. Nor can we name any one individual, who gave the first impulse to that feeling which now pervades nearly the whole American mind. It seems to be one of those movements which may be compared to the

formation of a noble river. We know that whatever may be its magnitude, it may come from a spring which a single leaf might hide. So it may be with what may now be styled the revival of education, especially that of common schools. Contributions have been made to it by hundreds and thousands, and here and there it has received the impulse of some more powerful tributary. To enumerate and unfold these primal or tributary influences, is no part of my present object. It would require a more propitious time and an abler hand. That very progress of art and science, of philosophical and mechanical invention, which, in a former period, was prejudicial to common school education, has brought about a reaction in its favor; the development of the physical resources of the material world has furnished the pecuniary means; the almost uniform state of peace for many years has left men at leisure to think upon the subject; and the greatly increased interchange of thought and opinion consequent upon foreign travel, have all had some agency in the result. At the same time, such minds as Bell and Lancaster, Fellenberg and Pestalozzi, with others in our own and in foreign lands, have contributed their share of influence.

Not the least of these agencies has been the public press. The first educational journal published in our country, at least the first of any importance, and, we may add, the first in the world, was the "Journal of Education," begun just thirty years ago by that veteran friend of education, William Russell; than whom no man has pursued with more unflinching zeal, even to this day, the design of elevating our modes of instruction.

The "Journal of Education" then commenced in 1826, was succeeded by the "Annals of Education," under the care of the late William C. Woodbridge, and by him and