

WORCESTER COUNTY.

WHEN the present School Law went into operation, the Public Schools in this County were in a most neglected condition. The County had been divided into School Districts; but there was no record of their metes and bounds. Trustees were appointed for the several districts, but in most cases they took very little interest in the affairs of the Schools beyond appointing a Teacher, and collecting the quota of the School Fund.

Nearly every district was provided with a School House; but with very few exceptions, the houses were altogether unsuited to the purpose. Our larger towns were without any Public School buildings at all.

Teachers employed were generally selected from their respective Districts, and few of them were qualified for the position. No supervision of any kind was exercised over the schools.

The children of the County were divided into two classes, those who were able to pay for their education, and those who were not. The first were charged regular tuition fees; the others were admitted free, the Teacher receiving payment from the School Fund of the County according to the number of these so called "charity scholars."

From what I have said of the system, and of the Teachers acting under it, there can be but one conclusion in reference to the degree of efficiency which those schools have attained, that it was of a very low degree. Facts confirm this conclusion, and there is now something to do, in undoing what has been done amiss.

Education has been very much neglected in this County. There are a number who can neither read nor write, and many whose education extends little beyond.

The people manifest great want of zeal in sustaining Public Schools, and great indifference about availing themselves of their advantages, when opened free to them. I am apprehensive that we could secure but little by voluntary contributions for building and furnishing suitable School Houses. In some few districts, I have been unable to get the inhabitants to put such repairs upon their School Houses as are necessary to fit them to be occupied in the winter, though I assured them they should be repaid the cost.

In this connection I would state that the Trustees of Buckingham Academy and Berlin Female Seminary have acted in entire concert with me, affording the use of their buildings, and using their Academic fund. Thus the schools have been kept up to their standard, and made free to all, and at a much less expense than it could have been done otherwise. This has tended to the convenience and advantage of all, and is an arrangement, which I think might be entered into with similar advantage in other places.

The School Districts have been revised, but as the law requires the matter to be kept open for two months after public notice is given, and we apprehend that some change may be desirable, we have not as yet acted upon the report of the Commissioners.

In the appointment of Teachers, we have secured the services of some very competent persons. But on account of the difficulty of finding a sufficient number to supply all the Schools, and acting under the system of temporary permits, we have engaged many of those employed under the old system, as the only means of having some of the Schools opened at all this Winter. Another difficulty, in some districts, has been to find comfortable board within sufficient proximity to the School-House; and this difficulty, I apprehend, will be increased when we can employ those who come up to the legal standard of qualifications.

In arranging the salaries, we encountered the difficulty of not knowing what our income would be. At the same time we wished to guard against