

proper adjustment, yet going, at best, only according to our expressive word, *bunglingly*. The enactments of the last session, have, to no inconsiderable extent, adjusted the relative parts of this machinery, in an admirable manner; and it now only remains for the people to do their part, by vigorously applying the power that is to move it.

For instance, the law formerly compelled towns, under a penalty, to choose school committees; and it accumulated such an amount of the duties upon these officers, that the efficiency, nay, I might almost say, the very existence, of the schools, for any useful purpose, depended upon their intelligence and fidelity; and yet, because this law provided no compensation for their services, nor even indemnity for their actual expenses, it left the whole weight of private interest gravitating against public duty. In the apprehension of many persons, too, there seemed to be something of officiousness and obtrusion, when the committees entered earnestly and faithfully upon the discharge of the legal obligations they had assumed. An office was lightly esteemed to which public opinion attached no rank, and the law no emolument. It was an office, too, in which fidelity often gave offence, and one whose duties were always deemed burdensome, and but rarely accounted honorable. Hence, the punctilious discharge of its various duties, required a higher degree of public spirit, or a greater enthusiasm in the noble cause of education, than the present condition of our society is likely to furnish. Besides, many towns circumvented the law; for, though the law had provided that the *office* of school committee man should not lie dormant, yet it could make no such wakeful provision in regard to the *officer*. Hence, school committees were not unfrequently chosen, by the towns, with a tacit, and sometimes, even, with an express understanding, that they were to sleep during the whole of the school terms, and only to rouse themselves up in sufficient season to make such an annual return, as would secure a share of the income of the school fund to their respective towns. But this condition of things is now changed. By the late law, school committees are hereafter to receive moderate compensation for services rendered,—or, at least, a sufficient sum to reimburse the expenses which they actually incur. Is it too much, therefore, for us now to say, in regard to these officers, that, not only their own townsmen, but the friends of education generally, have a right to expect, that they will so fulfil the requisitions of the law, that a looker on may know what the law is, by seeing what the committees do as well as he could, by reading its provisions in the pages of the statute book? Is this demand too great, when we consider the claims which the office has upon the efforts of all wise and benevolent men? The committees are to prescribe the books which are to be used in the schools. They are to see that every child whose parents are unable to supply it with books, is supplied at the expense of the town. They are to visit every district