

City of Baltimore, whose public schools are an honor to the State, and reflect the highest credit upon all entrusted with their management) is in a state of the most utter and hopeless prostration. Our plan of public instruction must be constructed anew; made uniform in its operations throughout the State, supported more liberally by State and county resources, and above all, it should be made subject to some controlling, supervisory power, through whom all its operations should be annually communicated and made public, or it will fail to meet the exigency of our condition, or be attended with any public benefit. A glance at the law upon which the present school system was founded, will make this appear more evident.

It was not until the year 1825, that the subject of common school instruction was brought to public notice.

The Legislature of that year was with difficulty prevailed upon to pass a general law on the subject, but it was so imperfect in its construction, so wanting in the necessary constituents of a perfect system, so mutilated in its final passage, that it has retarded rather than advanced the progress of public education. Those provisions of the act which gave it the character of a general law, and threw upon the Legislature the responsibility of its support and management, were nullified by the insertion of other provisions wholly incompatible with the character of a uniform State system.

It is true, the Act of 1825, provided nominally for the appointment by the Governor, of a superintendent of public education, and made it his duty to take charge of the whole business of public instruction, to carry into operation through the different counties its provisions, to watch the operations of the system, and to report to the Legislature such alterations and improvements as his experience should suggest from time to time; and yet this provision, so indispensable to the successful operation of any system, was rendered nugatory by the total failure of the law to provide any salary for the superintendent, or even the payment of his necessary expenses.

Another provision of this law, equally hostile to the successful operation of any system, was that which gave to each county, by a public vote, the privilege of accepting or refusing it, and of course the power of destroying the uniformity of the system, which was its most valuable feature. These sections with others of an equally prejudicial character, destroyed the general public character of the plan, and made the law, in those counties which accepted it, strictly local, subject merely to the local county authorities, and wholly out of the reach of any State supervision or control.

The law thus adopted was from time to time added to, altered and amended, in most of the counties which accepted it, according to the wishes and judgment of the ever changing Boards of School Commissioners, and county authorities; whilst the counties that rejected the law, formed separate systems of their own which likewise received in their turn, the legislative sanction. [So