

# STATE OF NEW-YORK.

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No. 49.

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IN SENATE,

March 23, 1848.

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## REPORT

Of the select committee appointed to enquire into the condition and operation of the Normal School.

The select committee appointed to enquire into the condition and operation of the Normal School, and report as to the expediency of continuing the same,

### REPORT:

That the Normal School was established by an act of the Legislature, passed May 7, 1844; that there was appropriated by the act, for that purpose, the sum of nine thousand six hundred dollars, from that portion of the avails of the Literature Fund appropriated to the support of academical departments for the instruction of teachers of common schools—the object being the instruction and practice of teachers of common schools in the science of education and in the art of teaching. The school, by the said act, was to be under the supervision, management and government of the Superintendent of Common Schools, and the Regents of the University. It was further provided, by the said act, that the sum of ten thousand dollars, should be, annually, paid to the Superintendent of Common Schools, from

the revenue of the Literature Fund, for the maintenance and support of the said school, for five years, and until otherwise directed by law.

Your committee further report, that under the provisions of the act of 1844, a Normal School was established in the city of Albany, in a building hired for that purpose, the lease for which will expire on the first day of August, 1849.

On enquiry, your committee have ascertained that the Normal School commenced its operations under the act referred to, on the 18th day of December, 1844, with twenty-nine pupils; that the number of pupils, attending the school, has steadily increased from that time, and that there are now over two hundred, from all parts of the State, receiving instruction at the school. At the opening of the school, before its advantages could be understood, there was some difficulty in obtaining scholars. It was found necessary, as an inducement to enter the school, to make an allowance of \$1.25 for females and of \$1.00 per week to males; at present, and for some time past, the only allowance made, is for travelling, and the highest sum paid for that purpose is \$13.44.

Your committee have ascertained that 537 persons, male and female, have already enjoyed, for a longer or shorter period, the advantages of the school; that, of that number, 501, have, since leaving the institution, taught in the common schools, and it is believed, from the best information that can be had, that 421 of the Normal School scholars are now actually employed, as instructors in the common schools; and that, with few exceptions, they give entire satisfaction, as teachers; this has been effected, at the cost, for each student, of \$71.25.

Your committee are of opinion that the Normal School, as at present organized and managed, will be of great utility to the State. It is placed by law where it ought to remain, under the supervision of the Superintendent of Common Schools and the Regents of the University. These gentlemen, distinguished for their ability and learning, and devoted to the cause of education, have bestowed great attention on the school, in adapting it to the purposes for which it was designed. They have employed competent teachers, both male and female, who instruct the pupils in the different branches of knowledge, with commendable diligence and great success. Many of the teachers, now employed, are, as we are informed, persons who have

received instruction at the Normal School. Your committee cannot speak, in terms too high, of the regularity and order observable in every department of the school; of the propriety of deportment in the scholars, nor of the progress they make in all the branches of learning required for common school teachers.

We have, occasionally, visited the school, and from what we can observe, and learn from others, having a more particular acquaintance with its operations and results, we are of opinion that the utility of the school has been sufficiently tested, and that the State should make it a permanent establishment.

In the success of our common school system of education, the people of this State have a deep interest. The desire for knowledge pervades the country, and no reasonable expense should be spared or exertions omitted, to furnish to the rising generation, the means of a cheap, efficacious and general instruction; aside from the duty resting upon all to cultivate the mind and imbue it with useful knowledge, there are peculiar obligations devolved upon free governments in this particular; a nation to be free must be enlightened. Ignorance is a sure foundation upon which despotism establishes and perpetuates its power. To give instruction to the masses, therefore, is not only a moral, but a high political duty. That State, which, having the ability to do so, shall neglect to provide for the general instruction of its youth, is properly chargeable with a want of regard to the highest duty it owes to itself.

But it is not sufficient merely to establish schools for general instruction; they must be conducted on an approved system, and by competent teachers. To instruct others successfully, teachers must be, themselves, well instructed; nor is mere knowledge in any particular branch of learning, the only requisite for a teacher; he must have the ability to impart his knowledge in the most efficacious way, to his pupils. He must be governed by some system which has been found, by experience, to be effectual; a well digested plan of education, with regularity and order in their management, will be found to be necessary in giving to our common schools their greatest utility.

The Normal School, in these respects, will be found to be of the greatest importance; the scholars are there instructed on a well digested and approved system; the greatest order and regularity are strictly enjoined and enforced; instruction, in all the branches taught, and they are many and important, is minute and thorough; and each

scholar, at the end of his term, leaves the institution, not only well instructed, but, in every respect, properly qualified to take immediate charge of a common school, where he will introduce the plan of instruction under which he was formed, at the State institution. Not only will he be useful to the particular school in which he may happen to teach, but he will exert a salutary influence on all the schools in his immediate vicinity; they will necessarily adopt his plan of instruction, and uniformity will be, in some measure, secured throughout the neighboring schools. This result has already been made manifest, but, of course, to a limited extent, in various parts of the State.

Your committee are of opinion, that if the State shall continue to foster the Normal School, and take upon itself to provide, as far as is practicable, well instructed and competent teachers for the common schools, the effect will be to give more importance to those elementary and humble, but useful seminaries of learning. They will rise in public estimation, in proportion to the learning, ability, and competency of those who have them in charge; and when it is considered that the foundations of future usefulness are laid in the early stages of life, too much attention cannot be bestowed in furnishing to the youthful aspirant after knowledge, such instructors as will watch over his habits, and give, both to his mind and his heart, a proper direction. There is no business or profession more useful than that of teaching, and if, at any time, it has not been held in high estimation, it has been because its importance has not been understood. To give to it dignity and consequence is the surest means of establishing and extending its usefulness.

Your committee, impressed with the importance of the subject, recommend that the Normal School be permanently established at the seat of government; where it will be subject to visitation by the members of the Legislature, and that it be continued under the supervision and management of the Superintendent of Common Schools and the Regents of the University. The access to the seat of government will be as easy as to any other place in the State; and when it is considered, that the Superintendent of Common Schools, and a quorum of the Regents of the University, reside there, that place would seem to be indicated as the proper one for the permanent location of the school. Should the location be changed, it would become necessary to form a new board of managers, composed of inexperienced men, and some considerable time must, necessarily, elapse before they will be competent to supervise and manage the institution.

The committee are informed that the State owns an unoccupied lot in the city of Albany, of suitable location and dimensions for the building, and which may be appropriated to that purpose without detriment to any public interest; and for the purpose of erecting thereon a suitable edifice, they recommend the appropriation of the sum of \_\_\_\_\_ dollars, and also that the annual appropriation made by the act of 1844, be continued.

Your committee have prepared a bill, in conformity with the views above stated, which they ask leave to present to the Senate.

SAMUEL J. WILKIN, *Chairman.*  
D. H. LITTLE,  
W. M. HAWLEY.

SENATE CHAMBER, }  
March 23, 1848. }