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NOTES ON AMERICAN SCHOOLS, AND TRAINING COLLEGES

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BY

J. G. FITCH, M.A., LL.D.

ONE OF HER MAJESTY'S CHIEF INSPECTORS OF TRAINING COLLEGES

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INTRODUCTION.

THE occasion of the appearance of these "Notes" will be best explained by quoting the following extract from my annual official report on English Training Colleges, presented to Parliament in 1889:

"Through the favor of your Lordships, I was permitted last year to extend the usual official holiday, and so to gratify a wish which I had long entertained, to visit some of the leading schools and colleges in America. I have appended to this report, in the form of some notes, such of the chief facts and considerations brought under my notice in the course of this journey as I thought most likely to prove interesting and suggestive to school managers, masters, and mistresses at home, especially to those who are concerned in the training of elementary teachers."

This sentence indicates, I hope, with sufficient clearness, the very limited scope and pretensions of the notes which are here reprinted. A full and exhaustive account of so complex a subject as American Education would have been impossible

in the very brief time at my disposal. And it was mainly to furnish hints and information to my own countrymen, and not with a view to tell the American public anything which they did not know before, that these notes were written. Nevertheless, since a wish has been expressed by some of my many Transatlantic friends that what I have here said should be reprinted in the "States," my consent to that course has been willingly given; and the more willingly because to the real sympathy and admiration with which I witnessed some of the chief educational phenomena in America, there is added in this instance a very deep sense of the generous and thoughtful attention which I everywhere received from those whose institutions I visited or whose help I sought.

To institute comparisons of the methods, the extent, or the results of educational work in Europe and in America would be presumptuous without a much fuller acquaintance with the interior life of schools and colleges than it would be possible for a visitor to obtain. And as to mere figures, statistics, and printed reports, they may prove seriously misleading, unless the special conditions which give their true significance to those details are thoroughly understood. If I needed a warning against indulging in hasty generalizations from *data* imperfectly understood, I should find it in a recent article, otherwise very weighty and suggestive, which appeared under the honored name of Dr. Edward

Everett Hale in the *Forum* of July last. In it the writer says :

“ We spend more on public education in America than has been spent upon it in Great Britain in twenty years. In the year 1886, which I select for comparison because it is the latest in ‘ Whitaker’s Almanack,’ the State of Massachusetts alone, with a population of less than 2,000,000 people, expended about \$6,000,000 for the public education of its children, while the kingdom of Great Britain, with a population of 35,000,000, expended only \$17,000,000 in the same time. *What follows, of course, is that there are twenty times as many readers in America in the same population as there are in England.*”

The misleading character of the statement here, and the fallacy of the remarkable inference which is deduced from it, and which I have printed in italic, will be evident on considering two things :

(1) The figures quoted by Dr. Hale represent the parliamentary grant for elementary education only; that is to say, for children presumably of the laboring class, whose education is not prolonged beyond the fourteenth year, and who are supposed to need the assistance of a public fund in order to procure the means of education. No grant is made by Parliament for the instruction of children of the middle and upper classes who do not use the public elementary schools, nor for advanced or high-school instruction for pupils of any class;