Horace Mann and the Revolution in American Childhood

By

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Abstract

The history of American public educational reform during the first half of the nineteenth century is often told as a story of democratic triumph. According to this account, Horace Mann, secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education and widely considered to be America's most important early school reformer, brought the benefits of schooling to the working classes, allowing equality of opportunity for all. This approach to Mann's work emphasizes the material and economic transformations in American life during this period while largely ignoring the intellectual and religious transformations during the same period.

The dissertation argues that, rather than a democratic reformer, Mann is better viewed as a reformer of childhood. The dissertation explores the history of five reforms championed by Horace Mann during the first decade he served as secretary of the Board of Education (ca. 1837-46): common schools for rich and poor alike, normal schools, school libraries, school buildings, and the diminution of corporal punishment. In each case, Mann's arguments on behalf of reform are shown to have been made along child-centered lines. Adopting the image of the innocent child, a post-Calvinist image found widely among writers and poets beginning in the second half of the eighteenth-century, Mann argued that children do not merit poor schooling conditions. These conditions, if not corrected, could stunt the intellectual and moral growth of children.

Conceptualizing Mann as a reformer of childhood helps us make better sense of the relationship between Mann's own life history and his reforms. It also highlights the dependence of American educational reform on the tactics and arguments made by other

humanitarian reforms taking place in Europe and America between 1800 and 1850. This view of Mann also amends standard theories about the formation of the middle class during these same years. By bringing the image of the innocent child under state sponsorship, Mann showed how the state, and not just churches and voluntary associations, could be instrumental in promoting a new kind of middle-class respectability.

Acknowledgements

This dissertation has somewhat of a meandering history. I started out wanting to write a history of citizenship in early national America. What habits of mind and heart made good citizens as the country transitioned from republicanism to democracy? Who counted as citizens and why? At the encouragement William J. Reese and Charles L. Cohen, I started into the preliminary research. Unfortunately, after many months of reading, I had to give up in frustration. The debates I expected to see in early American newspapers and periodicals were nowhere to be found. Casting about for a new topic, I returned to the office of Professor Reese. "What about a biography of Horace Mann?" he asked. Bill pointed out that the last biography of America's most important school reformer was now decades old. Surely there was something more to say. He sold me on the idea of a circumscribed, doable project that would allow me to pursue my interests in citizenship and the history of ideas. I was intrigued with the prospect and started in.

The bulk of Mann's papers are housed in the Massachusetts Historical Society in Boston. Other important collections are found in the Clements Library at the University of Michigan, the Hay Library at Brown University, the Dedham Historical Society, and the archives of Antioch College. At all these places, staff have been unfailingly helpful and courteous to me as they answered my questions and processed my requests for manuscripts. Special thanks to Scott Sanders, head archivist at Antiochiana, Antioch College, whose contagious cheer and helpfulness made my two weeks in Yellow Springs among the most pleasurable scholarly escapades I recall having spent anywhere. Scott

generously shared his immense knowledge of Mann with me, and our joint love of baseball provided welcome banter and respite from the rigors of the research.

The project in its current form owes much to conversations I had with James Goldberg in the lunchroom of the Church History Library in Salt Lake City. Rather than write a cradle-to-grave biography, I found that I was most interested in the imprint Mann had made on American life during his years as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. At the same time, I saw relevance in Mann's early experience and training. Could I use Mann's past to illuminate his movements in the present within a non-linear chronology? James helped me to see that I could deploy a standard literary form (goals, obstacles, tactics) to write the kind of story I wanted to read.

It has been my good fortune to enjoy generous mentoring from many teachers over the years. Richard N. Williams and James Faulconer helped sharpen my thinking in ways I could scarcely appreciate during my time as an undergraduate at Brigham Young University. John W. Welch took a chance on me by giving me a job editing historical articles at *BYU Studies,* in the process inventing a new position for me, and to him I owe much that is good in my life today. Julie A. Reuben first stirred my interest in intellectual history, and the year I spent studying with her in Cambridge was a joy that helped chart my course. Bill Reese accepted my request to become one of his doctoral students and generously held a spot for me when I deferred for a year. He has tutored me in the history of education and has generously shared his office time with me. Bill has shown more than average patience as he observed me take longer than was needful to graduate. More than anyone, I owe the completion of the dissertation to him. His firm deadlines provided just the motivation I needed to finish.

Charles L. Cohen may care more about the writing of his students than anyone I know. His unsparing pen and trenchant eye for logical fallacy has made my writing better than it ever could have ever been otherwise. Other professors at the University of Wisconsin have enriched my scholarly life in significant ways. William Cronon does everything well, and the two seminars I took with him taught me that if I am not communicating with my audience, I am to blame. Susan Lee Johnson, a marvelous scholar and person, created a welcoming environment for asking questions. Yi-Fu Tuan has inspired me to think big and transcend disciplinary boundaries. Many of his "Dear Colleague" letters are almost like scripture to me, and lunch we had together at the University Club is a happening I will always treasure. Fran Schrag and Dan Pekarsky, two of the finest human beings I know, invited me into their homes and showed me the joys of listening before talking. I encountered Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen late in my career, and her exuberance for books was a happy contagion that has remained with me to this day. She has inspired me more than she will ever know. Adam Nelson has gifted me with excellent feedback along the way, and John Rudolph, in an important moment, taught me how Horace Mann illuminated the development of American class structure. In the History Department at University of Wisconsin, graduate coordinator Leslie Abadie has exuded great generosity of spirit even when my absent-mindedness proved difficult.

From start to finish during my years in Madison, it was my privilege to work as an editorial assistant at the History of Cartography Project. My associations at the project are among the most rewarding and far-reaching of my academic career, enriching my writing and thinking in innumerable ways, both large and small. The late David

Woodward, who conceived of and headed the project, gave me an assistantship at a time when funding for graduate students was difficult to locate. I was contemplating giving up and returning Utah at the time he offered me the job. I will forever be grateful to David for his largesse. I can scarcely imagine a more convivial boss to work for than Jude Leimer, who oversaw the daily editorial work. Beth Freundlich's skillful organizational support held the project together. Lisa Saywell and Jeff Bernard provided collegiality. Jan Manser made me feel like I had both a therapist and a mother nearby. Matthew Edney, who succeeded David as head of the project, instilled confidence in me, as did his coeditors, Mary Pedley and Mark Monmonier. Ros Woodward, continuing David's generosity, gave me wise advice at important points in my career. Jen Martin and Dana Freiburger have been the kind of friends I wish I could always be.

For two summers during my graduate study, and sometimes spilling over into the school year, I had the rare opportunity of working with Richard Lyman Bushman, professor of history emeritus at Columbia University. Richard was writing a biography of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet, and asked me to assist him in editing the manuscript and writing the footnotes. Although our approaches differ in sometimes dramatic ways, Richard, more than anyone, has shaped my idea of what biography can and should be. He hired me to work on his prose but really he worked on mine. I love Richard like a father and cannot imagine where I would be without him. He and Claudia have mentored me as they have many other graduate students.

My colleagues at the Church History Department in Salt Lake City have been unflinchingly supportive of my writing. Reid L. Neilson recognized that I had more interest in writing Mormon history than I thought I had, and hired me to work as a

historian in the department, for which my wife and I give thanks daily. Reid has created a flourishing working environment with many top-flight minds and souls. Matt Grow generously allowed me to take time away to write, almost all of which took place during a 5-week burst where some of my regular duties were put on hold. Matt McBride took an active interest in my work, as did Lisa Olsen Tait and Steven Harper. Marcus B. Nash and Richard E. Turley Jr. were constantly encouraging and made frequent inquiries about my progress. All of these colleagues, as well as many others unmentioned, have given me the mental stimulation and social support required to cross the finish line.

Thanks, finally, to family. My late father, Charles Woodworth, always seemed to know where I would end up long before I did. The first Ph.D. in the family, he provided a model of what I might become. He and my mother, Marsha Davis Woodworth, gave me a safe, loving home life and fostered an interest in learning that has remained a guiding light to this day. Brad, Becky, and Rachel gave the good will that only siblings can. My in-laws, C. Brent and Raydene Cluff, took an interest in the particulars of my writing, and my admiration and love for them has not dimmed from the moment I first met them on an afternoon in Chicago. Shawna Cluff Woodworth has been the best support I could ever imagine, giving me the time I needed to write, even when it meant that she would have to carry more of the load at home alone. She encouraged me in the moments when I thought all was lost. Benjamin, Jane, Grace, Julia, and Susanna helped me harness all my attention during the hours when I was holed up in my office, immersed in the past, so that the time when I could return to the present made the time spent with them all the sweeter. They were in my mind constantly as I wrote about Horace Mann and children.

Abbreviations

HM	Horace Mann
HMC	Horace Mann Collection, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
MA	Massachusetts Archives, Boston
MHS	Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston
S-M	Robert L. Straker Collection of Horace Mann. Antiochiana, Antioch College

Introduction

Americans today often grow despondent when the conversation turns to their public schools. Talk of "failing schools" is routinely heard in the public press. Newspapers and magazines report how little high school students actually know in scandalous terms, as though teachers are at fault and should be shamed—or, worse, fired—for not doing more. The press, of course, both reports the news and reflects the opinions its readers are readily inclined to share. The embattled status of public schooling has prompted avoidance strategies on the part of concerned parents. Many parents scramble to move their children out of public schools into private schools or hybrid public-private schools, or they move their families into neighborhoods where the public schools are thought not to suffer from the same deficiencies. Education spending remains often one of the least contested political planks, betraying our own anxiety about our schools falling further and further behind schools in other parts of the country or, more all-inclusively, in a supposed competition with other nations.[1]

The criticisms are so frequent and so widespread that it is easy to forget that Americans have not always been disappointed in public schooling. Into the 1960s, public opinion polling revealed that most Americans expressed satisfaction in their children's schools and found little to fault in them. In 1946, a Gallup poll reported that 87 percent of parents said they were satisfied with the schools their children attended. When asked for

[1] The criticism has been so ubiquitous that proponents have felt the need to rush to the defense of the public schools. Diane Ravitch, *Reign of Error: The Hoax of the Privatization Movement and the Danger to America's Public Schools* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2013); Michael Fabricant and Michelle Fine, *Charter Schools and the Corporate Makeover of Public Education: What's at Stake?* (New York: Teachers College Press, 2012); Arthur J. Newman, ed., *In Defense of the American Public School* (Cambridge, Mass.: Schenkman, 1978).

criticism, 40 percent of respondents in the same polls said they could think of nothing wrong with the schools.[2] Such figures remind us that American public schools, like so much else in post-World War II America, may have become a victim of their own success. For generations, public schooling has provided many Americans with a pathway to economic and social respectability, and for many people that remains true today. Because public education represents one of America's great success stories, we are especially disappointed when schools do not measure up to our high expectations.

The disappointment observed in attitudes about public schooling today easily obscures how far the schools, taken as an aggregate, have come. Before about 1830, most American schoolchildren sat on rough-hewn benches in dingy, ungraded classrooms—that is, if children went to any school at all. Lacking the tug of compulsory education laws and family traditions in school going, many children rarely if ever attended. Even the most upstanding communities often kept their schools open just a few months out of the year, reluctant to tax themselves any longer. Schoolhouses were often poorly heated and ventilated, and playgrounds were largely absent. Many schools, especially in rural areas, lacked libraries, and what few books were to be found often included an abundant dose of sectarian works catering to the views of one religious group. Although many teachers were earnest and well meaning, as a group they were largely untrained and frequently ill-mannered, often subjecting children to the cruelest of punishments. There was a time, we all too easily forget, when schools were not only inhospitable to children but dangerous for them.[3]

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[2] David Tyack and Larry Cuban, *Tinkering Toward Utopia: A Century of Public School Reform* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995), 13.

[3] For observations of schools prior to 1830, see Barbara Finkelstein, *Governing the Young: Teacher Behavior in Popular Primary Schools in Nineteenth-century United States* (New

As imperfect as today's public schools are, the contrast with the past is startling. At the beginning of the twenty-first century, millions of schoolchildren sit at their own finished desks in well-lit, air-conditioned public school buildings across America. If the schools do not possess these accoutrements, administers aspire to have them. Even poorly-educated parents largely agree on the need for their children to attend school. Students from different ethnic or socioeconomic backgrounds sit alongside each other in the same classroom under the organizational assumption that public schools are for all, rich and poor alike, and that every child should possess a pathway to a successful life. Each school has a library stocked with books that teach values Americans share—honesty, tolerance, decency, and so on—and in terms easily understood by children. Daily studies are punctuated with periodic trips to the playground, the play considered an essential compliment to learning in the classroom. Teachers are typically trained and credentialed, having made the teaching of children their career. When discipline is meted out, teachers reason and persuade, appealing to the child's own sense of order. Teachers who lay hands on students do so at the risk of losing their jobs.

In contrast to schools in early America, which took little account of a child's interests or needs, public schooling today is largely structured around children: their physical constitution, their psychological makeup, their age-appropriate capabilities. Teachers today talk in the language of child-centered education, and child-centered

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York: Falmer Press, 1989), 155-58, 197-209; Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 13-29; [Warren Burton], *The District School as It Was* (Boston: Carter, Hendee, 1833). Such conditions, of course, were not unique to the United States and seem to have existed for centuries elsewhere. Keith Thomas, for example, describes schools in early modern England as "a repressive regime, governed autocratically, sustained by corporal punishment and tempered only by the master's mildness, incapacity, or financial dependence upon his pupils." Keith Thomas, *Rule and Misrule in the Schools in Early Modern England* (Reading, UK: University of Reading, 1976), 14.

methods are typically held in high regard.[4] Politicians who say they want to improve "our children's schools" generate little opposition; to oppose this standard, after all, would be to tread on the seemingly inviolable, the sanctity of children themselves.

The subject of this dissertation is how this dramatic change in the nature of American schooling first got started. How did Americans come to structure public schooling around the actual or perceived needs of children? How did a concern for children's well being come to rival and in many cases replace the apathy of adults? How did this revolution in the nature of childhood in America come about?

In some ways, of course, the answers to these questions are not uniquely American and take us beyond schools themselves to consider complex, large-scale economic change over the course of centuries. The revolution of schooling around the concerns of children fits within a larger set of changes in the relationship between children and household economies. Until the emergence of "modern childhood" in the eighteenth century, children were conceived largely as producers who were expected to assist in generating the basic subsistence required for their birth family to survive; in many cases, children as well as young people, at least through marriage age, were expected to assist in adding resources to the child's birth family. As industrialization moved the means of production from homes to factories, children's labor became more expendable, and they moved from farms to schools with greater frequency. The decline of the apprenticeship system and the opening of new professions requiring specialized knowledge made further schooling more necessary than ever before, dramatically altering the lives of children. Children became conceived less as producers and more as

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[4] Larry Cuban, *How Teachers Taught: Constancy and Change in American Classrooms, 1890-1990*, 2d ed. (New York: Teachers College Press, 1993).

consumers and, thus, the objects of adult philanthropy. As more children spent larger amounts of their lives in school, it made sense for adults to invest larger amounts of money in the spaces where their children more frequently inhabited.[5]

From the beginning of Puritan settlement in New England until the early decades of the nineteenth century, few links existed between colonial and, later, state governments and schooling. It was widely assumed that families, supplemented by churches and towns, had direct oversight of the education of children, making a wide-scale reform of schools both difficult and, quite possibly, untenable.[6] But beginning in the second half of eighteenth century, as modern nation states in Europe and America began to take an active interest in their own long-term security, governments came to see strategic interest in improving the health of citizens, ensuring political loyalty, protecting citizens from harm, and reducing crime.[7] Although a decentralized political structure prevented the American nation state from enacting national educational measures, individual states within the federal union began for the first time to actively intervene in the lives of children, especially in cases where parents were seen to have fallen short.[8] In the United States, rapid immigration after 1820 strengthened the resolve of state governments to get more involved in schooling. Immigrants had to be taught republican

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[5] Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History,* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 71-83; Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500,* 2d ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 81-113. A decline in family size after 1800 made children more expendable on farms and probably increased parental investment in children. Ansley J. Coale and Susan Cotts Watkins, eds., *The Decline of Fertility in Europe* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986), and Michael Haines, *Fertility and Occupation: Population Patterns in Industrialization* (New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1989).

[6] George Leroy Jackson, *The Development of School Support in Colonial Massachusetts* (1909; New York: Arno Press, 1969); Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education, Society, and Economic Opportunity: A Historical Perspective on Persistent Issues* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 3-16.

[7] Stearns, *Childhood in World History,* 74.

[8] One national measure, Jefferson's Northwest Ordinance, did have a dramatic impact on local education by allocating a portion of federal land for local schools.

values and assimilated in American political principles. Schools came to stand alongside more traditional community structures like churches as a primary venue for making good Americans.[9]

Scholars have long recognized that the beginnings of American school reform along lines we recognize today started in antebellum America during a time of widespread change and reform within American society.[10] The watershed event often cited in the histories occurred in 1837, when Massachusetts became the first U.S. state to create a governing board for public schooling. In the same act that created the governing board, the Massachusetts legislature also created the office of secretary of the board—essentially a deputy commissioner, or what we would call today the state commissioner of education. Other states had experimented with education deputies before this time, but what made Massachusetts different was its commitment to using these new offices as tools not merely to manage schools but to reform them. The secretaryship in Massachusetts was used not just to manage tax monies, as had been done elsewhere, but to recommend comprehensive changes and improvements. Under the leadership of a board of education and its secretary, Massachusetts emerged as the country's leader in school reform, providing a model followed by other states in subsequent decades.[11]

The dominant figure in antebellum American school reform was the first secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, Horace Mann. Mann has long interested the

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[9] Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995).

[10] William J. Reese, *America's Public Schools: From the Common School to "No Child Left Behind"* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2005), 10-30; Steven Mintz, *Moralists and Modernizers: America's Pre-Civil War* Reformers (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1995); Ronald G. Walters, *American Reformers, 1815-1860,* rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997).

[11] Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980).

American public: even Americans who know little about him can associate his name with education in the same way they associate Edison with light bulbs or Ford with cars. This association reflects both Mann's importance but also inter-generational experiences with public schooling. There was a time when public school children celebrated Mann's birthday every year. They recited Mann aphorisms in concert and gave reports on his contributions to American education. Mann is not as well known today as he once was, but he is still widely acknowledged today as "the father of American public education"—the figure who made the earliest, most comprehensive, and most far-reaching arguments on behalf of public schooling in American history.[12]

Born in 1796 to middling farmers who wavered between Congregational orthodoxy and Baptist heterodoxy, Mann was the only member of his family to attend college. Trained as a lawyer, he rose quickly up the ranks of Massachusetts politics, first as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives and then as a member of the Massachusetts Senate. He was president of the Senate at the time Governor Edward Everett of Massachusetts tapped him to serve as first president of the secretary of the Board of Education. After twelve years in this position, Mann resigned to serve in the U.S. House of Representatives. He concluded his public career as president of Antioch College, dying in office in 1859.

Mann lived in a time when public oratory carried much more emotional power and gravitas than it does today. His primary vehicle for reform came through the twelve

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[12] Andrew J. Milson et al., eds., *American Educational Thought: Essays from 1640-1940* (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2010), 133; James C. Carper and Thomas C. Hunt, *The Dissenting Tradition in American Education* (New York: Peter Lang, 2007), 266; E. D. Hirsch, "The Inspiring Idea of the Common School," in *Civic Education and the Future of American Citizenship,* ed. Elizabeth Kaufer Busch and Jonathan W. White (New York: Lexington Books, 2013), 15-35, esp. 24.

reports he issued every year to the Massachusetts legislature, which in turn frequently acted on his proposals. Intended to be heard as much as read, Mann's annual reports were printed by the thousands and distributed to the four winds. They were quoted, reprinted, reviewed, and plagiarized across the United States and in countries as far away as Germany and Argentina.[13] Excerpts were read aloud from the floors of state legislatures and at gatherings of town citizens and educational societies. We don't think of state-issued reports as being all that influential today, but in Mann's time, when intellectual culture was more intimate and more easily followed through newspapers than it is today, his words carried great weight both in New England and across the states who looked toward Boston, in particular, for intellectual leadership and heft. Mann's reputation as a thinker and as the father of American public education rests largely on the basis of these reports and the reforms implemented as a result of them.[14]

The historiography on Mann is surprisingly thin for a person of his stature and importance. Only half a dozen or so biographies exist, most of them written long ago. The fullest portrait, Jonathan Messerli's *Horace Mann: A Life,* appeared over forty years ago. Messerli wrote at a time of widespread pessimism about public education in America, and that pessimism comes through in his writing. Most of the earlier biographies had praised Mann as a perpetually triumphant reformer who had brought educational opportunity to those who previously didn't enjoy it. Reacting against this hagiography, Messerli sought, unconsciously or not, to bring more realism to writings of Mann. Messerli said little of Mann's accomplishments as a school reformer and instead

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[13] Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 142.

[14] The reports are analyzed in Lawrence A. Cremin, ed., *The Republic and the School: Horace Mann on the Education of Free Men* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1957).

blamed him for the beginnings of a mindless uniformity and bureaucratization in public education that troubled many people in the Vietnam era. Many of the earlier biographies had paid inordinate attention to Mann's school reforms. Messerli de-centered Mann by providing groundbreaking treatment of his wide-ranging reform activities on behalf of antislavery, temperance, the mentally ill, and women's rights.[15]

Written in the psychobiographical spirit, Messerli's cradle-to-grave biography painted a brooding and, in my view, frequently speculative picture of Mann's inner life. My own approach in this dissertation differs considerably from Messerli's. I am more interested in Mann's intellectual life than in his psychology. Rather than writing a full biography, my focus is the first decade of Mann's years as Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, the period when his most important reforms were implemented. Instead of proceeding with a strict chronology, I flash back to Mann's early life when doing so helps illuminate the origins of his reform movements, showing more extensively than do other biographies how Mann's reforms grew out of his own experience as a child growing up in an orthodox Congregational church located in a small Massachusetts town. Messerli paid little attention to the arguments made in Mann's school reports; my approach mines them for their ingenuity and suggestiveness. My study returns to the older interest in school reform, though I do bring in Mann's other reform activities as they become relevant context and pretext for Mann's school reforms. Although I am not blind to Mann's weaknesses, I am more interested in exploring how Mann and his

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[15] William Torrey Harris, *Horace Mann* (Syracuse, N.Y.: C. W. Bardeen, 1896); B. A. Hinsdale, *Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States* (New York: C. Scribner's Sons, 1898); Albert E. Winship, *Horace Mann, the Educator,* 3d ed. (Boston: New England Publishing, 1896); Edward I. Franklin Williams, *Horace Mann: Educational Statesman* (New York: Macmillan, 1937); Louise Hall Tharp, *Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953); Robert B. Downs, *Horace Mann: Champion of Public Schools* (New York: Twayne, 1974).

reforms ultimately triumphed than how his reforms might not be the ones we want today. I like to think of my study an empathetic approach to Mann's life and work.

Historians of American public education have most frequently viewed Mann as a democratic reformer. Living in the era of Jackson, Mann is thought to have brought the benefits of schooling to the working classes and the poor just as Jackson was once thought to have championed "the people" in the political realm. Robert Downs, for example, captures this standard view of Mann well when he argues that Mann's primary contribution was that he convinced "the leaders and masses of people that popular education possessed enormous potentials, a device that would provide equality of opportunity for all."[16] Lawrence Cremin, the most prodigious historian of American education, argued that Mann is best seen as having carried forward Jefferson's "republican style of educational thought"—that is, universal public education necessary for the creation of literate citizens—while recasting it in the form of "nineteenth-century nondenominational Protestantism," the latter emphasizing education as moral elevation and Christian piousness. Mann's merger of republicanism and millennialism, Cremin argues, became "a characteristic American theory of education that was designed to prevail for more than a century."[17]

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[16] Downs, *Horace Mann,* 149. For other writing in this vein, see Rush Welter, *Popular Education and Democratic Thought in America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1962), 97-102; Lawrence Arthur Cremin, *The American Common School: An Historic Conception* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951); Robert E. Potter, *The Stream of American Education* (New York: American Book Company, 1967), 212-25; William Hayes, *Horace Mann's Vision of the Public Schools: Is It Still Relevant?* (Lanham, Md.: Rowman & Littlefield Education, 2006), 21-28; Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy: The Education of Democratic Citizens* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas 2010).

[17] Cremin, *American Education*, 136-37; William J. Reese, "Public Schools and the Elusive Search for the Common Good," in *Reconstructing the Common Good in Education: Coping with Intractable American Dilemmas,* ed. Larry Cuban and Dorothy Shipps (Sanford, Calif.: Stanford Universtity Press, 2000), 13-31, esp. 22.

The view of Mann as a democratic reformer conceives of school reform as primarily a response to changing social and material factors in the early nineteenth-century, especially the large problems of urbanism, industrialism, and immigration. Mann's writings, Carl Kaestle has observed, emphasized "both the precariousness and the preciousness of the republic" brought on by these social dislocations.[18] By improving the conditions of public schools, Mann is thought to have neutralized the potential threats to the republican experiment: "the widening gap between rich and poor, the schismatic tendencies in religion, [and] the growing heterogeneity of the population."[19] He raised the quality of public schools such that rich and poor alike would want to be in them and see in them a useful pathway to upward mobility. Mann's reputation as the father of American public education hangs largely on this interpretation of Mann as an egalitarian figure.

My own view is that the democratic reformer idea is not wrong so much as it is limited. The view privileges material and the economic change at the expense of intellectual and the religious changes during the same period and even before. Moreover, historians have largely overlooked the fact that Mann was not just reforming schools. He was, I argue, reforming the way adults thought about children by putting forward a new way to think about children. Mann was in fact America's earliest and most important advocate of children. His arguments for child-centered learning, at times contested in his day, became deeply imprinted on the direction of American public schooling. His concern for poor children, moreover, had broader implications for the way Americans came to see all children, rich and poor alike. The contention of my study, then, is that

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[18] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic*, 80.

[19] Frederick M. Binder, *The Age of the Common School, 1830-1865* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1974), 47-48.

Mann is best viewed as a reformer of American childhood. Mann spoke of children in fundamentally new terms, which drove reforms that were inscribed into law in Massachusetts and were replicated elsewhere. In this way, Mann revolutionized the way his contemporaries thought about childhood and the relationship between childhood and public education. We are the inheritors of this intellectual legacy.

Conceiving of Mann as a reformer of American childhood offers several advantages not found in the older historiography. Since the rise of the history of childhood as a field of historical inquiry in the 1960s, a number of scholars have drawn our attention to an ideological shift away from a more dark, benighted, often depraved, view of children put forward by Reformed Protestants and their theological descendants to a more optimistic, positive view of childhood innocence postulated by Enlightenment thinkers (particularly Locke and Rousseau) and expanded upon by their Romantic successors. The view of childhood innocence has roots in ancient Greek humanism and can be found in Western sources as diverse as the teachings of Jesus, but not until the early nineteenth century was it elevated into the "cult of the child" and given widespread expression in literature, art, and poetry. Thereafter, the image of children as innocent and good became diffused and tacitly accepted in many sectors of society.[20]

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[20] Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature* (Harmondsworht, UK: Penguin, 1967); Robert Pattison, *The Child Figure in English Literature* (New York: Palgrave, 2001); Ann Wierda Rowland, *Romanticism and Childhood: The Infantalization of British Literary Culture* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 2012); Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); Judith M. Gundry-Volf, "The Least and the Greatest: Children in the New Testament," in *The Child in Christian Thought,* ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 29-60; David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 31-36; Ana Müller, "Children and Physical Cruelty: The Lockean and Rousseauvian Revolution," in *Childhood and Violence in the Western Tradition,* ed. Laurence Brockliss and Heather Montgomery (Oxford: Oxbow Books, 2010), 129-35.

Historians have located the image of childhood innocence in diverse places. Philip Greven has identified the way a more benevolent view of children undergirded the rise of what he calls the "moderate" parenting style in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[21] Jay Fliegelman has found the innocent child in eighteenth-century political culture, in the way American politicians conceived of the relationship between liberty and authority and the consent of the governed.[22] And Marah Gubar has identified the ambivalence about childhood purity found in Victorian novels and children's books.[23] Yet no one has examined the image in relation to American public schooling or the role of this image in antebellum American school reform. My own study is the first to put either Mann or American school reform into active dialogue with historians of childhood.[24] Mann's great triumph, I contend, was to bring the image of the innocent child under state sponsorship.

The conception of Mann as a reformer of childhood also helps us provide more expansive contexts for understanding antebellum school reform. By locating school reform in child reform, my study shows more extensively than others Mann's dependence

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[21] Philip Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977).

[22] Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982).

[23] Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). To date, historians who study late eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century literary Romanticism have shown the most interest in the image of childhood innocence. See, for example, James Holt McGavran Jr., ed., *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Athens: University of George Press, 1991); James Holt McGavran Jr., *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999); Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[24] The authoritative history of childhood never mentions Mann. Steven Mintz, *A History of American Childhood* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2004).

on European thinkers for the reforms he implemented in Massachusetts.[25] I resist calling Mann a Romantic, for it is not clear that Mann would have identified with the literary Romanticism of a Blake or a Wordsworth. It is far from clear whether he ever read Rousseau, as was true of Dickens and other purveyors of the image of childhood innocence.[26] Mann is more properly a post-Calvinist who, like many eighteenth- and nineteenth-century people, rejected the doctrine of infant depravity and replaced it with a discourse that emphasized children's innate goodness. His assumption of childhood innocence, I hope to show, made sense to many people living in his day and thus illuminate his school reforms in new and interesting ways. The framing device, in turn, helps us better understand the origins of American public schooling as we know it today.

The image of the innocent child, as has been stated, had its origins among the literate classes of Europe. Over the course of the nineteenth-century, however, the image was largely accepted by an ever-expanding American middle class. Historians who study class formation in the first half of the nineteenth-century have emphasized various factors that proved crucial in the formation of a middle class: gendered division of labor, evangelical religion, and voluntary societies are among the most important.[27] My own study suggests that government also played a promotional role. Many have observed that the rise of public schooling in the first half of the nineteenth century was closely

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[25] The influence of Europe on Mann's thinking has been argued by others, but the ways that thinking got translated into reform has not been shown. Cremin, *American Education,* 140; William J. Reese, "The Origins of Progressive Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 41 (Spring 2001): 1-24, esp. 10.

[26] Jane Phares, "Natural, Civilized, Citizen: Dickens's Characters and Rousseau's Philosophy" (Ph.D. diss., Florida State University, 2009).

[27] Mary P. Ryan, *Cradle of the Middle Class: The Family in Oneida County, New York, 1790-1865* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1981); John S. Gilkeson, *Middle-Class Providence, 1820-1940* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1986); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

associated with the values and behaviors essential to financial success in an emerging market economy. But egalitarianism was not just the product of a schooling that gave everyone a greater opportunity to compete and achieve in a competitive environment. Egalitarianism was also fostered in the kinder, gentler, anti-competitive, and essentially humane values found within the school itself. The incorporation of the image of the innocent child into a public school setting meant that teachers now taught and modeled new ways that children ought to be treated, and ought to teach each other, as they went out into the world of work.

Conceptualizing of Mann as a reformer of childhood helps enlarge our understanding of the humanitarian reform that took place on both sides of the Atlantic between about 1750 and 1850. It links children to other dispossessed and vulnerable populations: blacks, women, the poor, and the mentally ill. The innocent child becomes a subset of a larger enlightened, post-Calvinist viewpoint that saw people as undeserving of hardship not of their own choosing and that impelled reformers to come to their aid. Much of the work done on humanitarian reform concentrates on the role of volunteer societies in helping oppressed populations. My own work adds to the smaller literature on humanitarian reform in a legal and governmental setting during antebellum America.[28]

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[28] Robert H. Abzug, *Cosmos Crumbling: American Reform and the Religious Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); Conrad Edick Wright, *Transformation of Charity in Postrevolutionary New England* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992); Margaret Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011); David Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971); Robert E. Cray, *Paupers and Poor Relief in New York City and in Rural Environs, 1700-1830* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1988); Monique Bourque, "Populating the Poorhouse: A Reassessment of Poor Relief in the Antebellum Delaware Valley," *Pennsylvania History* 70, no. 3 (Summer 2003): 235-67; Priscilla Clement, *Welfare and the Poor in the Nineteenth-Century City: Philadelphia, 1800-1854* (Cranbury, N.J.: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1985); Ruth Wallis Herndon, "Poor Women and the Boston Almshouse in the Early Republic," *Journal of the Early Republic* 32 (Fall 2012): 349-81.

Each of the five chapters here is devoted to a different reform championed by Mann during the first ten years of Mann's secretaryship. Chapter 1 examines the idea of the common school, beginning with the founding of the Massachusetts Board of Education in 1837 and Mann's call to serve as its first secretary. Chapter 2 examines the beginnings of teacher training, or "normal schools," in America, in light of child-centered thinking. Chapter 3 assesses the centrality of different views of childhood on school library and textbook reform. Chapter 4 shows how views of children and childhood undergirded schoolhouse reform. Chapter 5 examines how the view of innocent childhood informs campaigns against corporal punishment in the schools. Taken together, these five reforms comprise the most enduring institutional legacy of Mann's reform activities and form a basic latticework observed in American public schooling today.

Prologue

In 1937, school children across America gave long speeches about the life and virtues of Horace Mann. The occasion was the centenary of the creation of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and that meant it was also the centenary of the creation of the office of secretary of the Board of the Education and Mann's acceptance of the offer to serve as the board's first secretary.

Since the creation of the Massachusetts Board of Education, momentous changes had occurred in public schools across the United States. Every state in the union now had oversight of public schools. Every state had a board of education and a secretary or commissioner charged with making sure the state's tax monies were efficiently spent. These state officials, with the sanction of the citizenry, had implemented a range of child-centered reforms the public had come to expect of schooling. School years had lengthened, teaching had professionalized, and free public education was in theory universally available to all American children. Many children, though not all, enjoyed well-heated and well-ventilated buildings. Most schools had well-stocked libraries. Horace Mann, eulogized as "the father of American education," was credited with being the main source of these changes.[1]

The tributes of Mann that year went well beyond classroom speeches. The National Education Association (NEA), which orchestrated the centenary celebration, encouraged every school to celebrate Horace Mann's birthday on May 4 and to organize

[1] "Horace Mann," *Journal of Education* 119 (Nov. 16, 1936): 489; "Brown Pays Honor to Horace Mann," *New York Times,* Jan. 17, 1937, 41; and Paul Bixler, "Horace Mann: Mustard Seed," *American Scholar* 7 (Dec. 1937): 24-38, esp. 30-31.

high school graduation exercises around Mann.[2] School children everywhere stood up and recited Mann sayings in unison. Students made posters about Mann. They put on plays and pageants and radio programs.[3] They held parades and sang original songs. One of these songs, performed by a school in Columbus, Ohio, went like this:

> To Horace Mann our voices raise
> In tribute and in song of praise;
> Our public schools are here today,
> Our education without pay.
> He it was who planned it all,
> For the great and for the small,
> In thankfulness we sing of thee—
> Helper of humanity![4]

School administrators supported and encouraged these celebrations, but parents and community leaders, working independent of the NEA, also promoted Mann from the housetops. Towns unveiled statues and plaques. PTA groups held lectures on Mann and

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[2] The celebrations began in October 1936 with the dedication of a statue of Horace Mann at Antioch College in Yellow Springs, Ohio, and continued through American Education Week in November 1937. For a calendar of events and initiatives, see "The Horace Mann Centennial," *Phi Delta Kappan* 19, no. 1 (Sept. 1936): 4, and Joy Elmer Morgan, "The Philosophy of the Centennial," *Journal of the National Education Association* 26, no. 1 (Jan. 1937): 1.

[3] For samples of these events, see Department of Education, Commonwealth of Massachusetts, *Horace Mann Centennial, 1837-1937* (Boston: Walter A. Smith, 1937).

[4] Eleanor Craven, "Horace Mann's Birthday," *Journal of the National Education Association* 26 (Apr. 1, 1937): 124. For examples of other school activities honoring Mann, see "Winning Essays by School Pupils," *Altoona [PA] Mirror,* Nov 10, 1937, 8; "Pageant Depicts Quest for Truth," *New York Times,* May 6, 1937, 27; "Commencement Addresses of C.H.S. Graduate Participants," *Connellsville [PA] Daily Courier,* June 5, 1937, 10.

gave away books about him as door prizes.[5] Statues and plaques and books sound like the trappings of the white middle classes, but in fact the fêtes of Mann spanned class and race. In Cleveland, the local branch of the NAACP held a formal dinner and commemorative speech, and black workingmen's clubs honored Mann at luncheons.[6] In Kansas City, black schoolchildren read essays on the ways Mann had positively influenced their lives.[7]

These were hard times, and it felt good to people to call up the memory of a self-sacrificing hero like Horace Mann. The tributes often recounted how Mann gave up a lucrative law practice to accept an ill-paid job devoting many years of his life toward the betterment of others less fortunate than himself.[8] Mann's story presented a useful foil for the image of the money-hungry plutocrats who were thought to have brought on the Great Depression. He helped point the way to falling into the same trap in the future. "The story of Horace Mann's struggles against the indifference and greed of his day," one writer explained, "will help us all in the present struggle to safeguard and improve the schools."[9]

Some hailed Mann as a humanitarian. Others called him an evangelist, a prophet,

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[5] Craven, "Horace Mann's Birthday," 124; "P.T.A.'s Will Honor National Education Week," *Southeast Economist [Chicago],* Nov 11, 1937.

[6] "Social and Personal," *Cleveland Gazette,* Mar 6, 1937, 3; "Social and Personal," *Cleveland Gazette,* Apr 17, 1937, 3. In Kansas City, black college students lectured black high school students on Mann's life and contributions. "Sumner High School," *Wyandotte Echo [Kansas City],* Nov 12, 1937, 1.

[7] "Sumner High School," 1.

[8] Lyle W. Ashby, "Commencement and Horace Mann," *Journal of the National Education Association* 26, no. 1 (Jan. 1937): 29; "American Education Week, 1937," *Journal of the National Education Association* 26, no. 5 (May 1937): 144; Willis Thornton, "U.S. Extols Horace Mann, 'Father of Public School,' on Centennial This Year," *Ada [Oklahoma] Weekly News,* May 6, 1937, 1.

[9] Morgan, "The Philosophy of the Centennial," 1.

or a genius.[10] He was most often remembered as a democratic hero, a champion of the working poor. Joy Elmer Morgan, the editor of the *Journal of the National Education Association,* thought Mann led "the first great battle of the masses won without war—the first example in human history of what can be done on a large scale through intelligence and co-operation to achieve opportunities for the masses which in former ages had required violent revolutions."[11]

There was a fair amount of bluster in talk such as this, some of it bordering on propaganda. Morgan and others at the NEA lobbied for Mann to be placed on a par with Washington, Jefferson, and Lincoln, in effect lending the credibility of the country's most cherished political principles to education. The NEA, of course, stood to benefit.[12] The tributes often exaggerated Mann's accomplishments and minimized the efforts of his contemporaries, as tributes to individuals often do.[13] But in this age of the fascist hero, fandom of a democratic educational apostle seemed both fitting and benign by comparison. Reasonable minds outside public school circles took note of the Mann celebrations and found them entirely fitting. Mann, the *New York Times* editorialized, had

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[10] Geraldine Kegg, "Pioneer Educator Honored with Centennial Program," *Newark [Ohio] Advocate and American Tribune,* Nov. 10, 1937, 11; "Brown Pays Honor to Horace Mann," *New York Times,* Jan. 17, 1937, 41; G. O. Mudge, "Horace Mann and His Educational Ideas," *High School Journal* 20, no. 5 (May 1937): 163-69, esp. 163; "270 Students Get Diplomas," *La Crosse [Wisconsin] Tribune and Leader-Press,* June 11, 1937, 7.

[11] Thornton, "U.S. Extols Horace Mann," 1.

[12] Morgan, "The Philosophy of the Centennial," 1. Some formulations of the pantheon included Susan B. Anthony. "Let America honor him [i.e. Mann] as it honors Washington, Jefferson, Lincoln, Anthony, and other pioneers who laid the foundations of its greatness." Eleanor Fishburn, "Horace Mann and Your School," *Journal of the National Education Association* 26, no. 11 (Nov. 1937): 264.

[13] Moreover, the tributes often exaggerated the deprivation in Mann's early education, noting incorrectly, for example, that "until nearly twenty years of age Horace Mann never went to school more than a few weeks in midwinter." In fact, Mann attended school for months at a time from an early age. A. E. Winship, "Horace Mann," *Journal of Education* 120 (Feb. 1, 1937): 68-70, esp. 68.

had "a great and wholesome influence" on every state in America. His life and accomplishments "should be nationally remembered and observed in the schools especially."[14] Americans across the land celebrated both the equality of opportunity and mobility that Mann's school reforms were thought to embody.

The tributes came to a climax during the second week of November, when Horace Mann Day was celebrated across the land as part of American Education Week. There was more talk of Mann as the working man's champion, and the talk certainly did capture an important truth. Mann's reforms did indeed help create a pathway of upward mobility for those who did not previously enjoy it. But the speeches seemed to assume that the population Mann once championed had already come of age: the rhetoric concentrated so much on democracy and economic mobility that it rarely paused to reflect on what Mann had to say about those who were schooled, children themselves. The celebrations did not seem to realize that Mann's great and abiding interest was not in the undifferentiated masses and in the process of upward striving, but in a subsection among the masses, beginning with the most vulnerable group of all: the children of the poor.

[14] "Horace Mann," *New York Times,* Jan. 19, 1937, 22. For another, less partial, assessment, see Bixler, "Horace Mann: Mustard Seed," 25. Bixler spoke sarcastically of the "sanctified nonentity that has been created for the worship of school children."

Chapter 1

Children of the Poor

It was a steamy July day in 1837. Horace Mann, the newly called secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education, packed up his papers and books at No. 4 Court Street in Boston and hopped onto a stage headed toward Franklin, a sleepy village thirty miles to the south. Mann grew up in Franklin, and his older sister still lived there, alone, in the same two-story frame house where Mann was born and braided straw hats as a boy. Horace Mann was going home.

Three weeks before, the Board of Education had met at the state house located on Beacon Hill in Boston and cast its votes to give Mann its inaugural secretaryship, an office that functioned as the board's deputy commissioner.[1] The selection of Mann was the board's first public act after the Massachusetts legislature, earlier that spring, had created the first ever state-level, primary and secondary educational board on American soil.[2]

The interest of the nation-state in the schooling of children came relatively late in the history of the West. States took little interest in childhood during the early modern

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[1] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, June 29, 1837, Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, 1837-1863, MA; "Board of Education," *Boston Evening Transcript,* July 1, 1837.

[2] *An Act Relating to Common Schools, Massachusetts* (April 20, 1837), in *Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed by the General Court, in the Years 1837 and 1838* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1839), ch. 241, 277-78. The New York legislature created the New York Board of Regents in 1784, but its original charge included only higher education. Other states had superintendents of schools prior to 1837. Michigan, for example, appointed a Territorial Superintendent of Common Schools in 1829. Between 1825 and 1835, the secretary of state was given oversight of schools in Illinois, Vermont, Louisiana, Pennsylvania, Tennessee, and Massachusetts. Carl Russell Fish, *The Rise of the Common Man, 1830-1850* (New York: Macmillan, 1950), 220.

period, and families, along with churches, were assumed to be primarily responsible for the education of children. Especially after the French Revolution, however, states entered the field quite vigorously, voicing concern over children's health and political loyalty, which officials realized could be shaped by school curricula.[3] In Prussia, widely acknowledged as the most progressive state in the field of public education, Frederick William III started a bureau of education charged with carrying out a national program of primary instruction and in 1825 divided the state into educational provinces each presided over by a semi-autonomous *Schullcollegium* (administrative board). In France, Louis Philippe reorganized primary education in 1833 by requiring at least one school for each commune and instituting the office of inspector to oversee them.[4] Everywhere enlightened rulers and their ministers sought rationalization and systemization as a robust state arose to fill a power vacuum left by the declining influence and diminished scope of the church.

The decentralized political structure in the United States made nationalized instruction untenable. But individual states with increasingly large and unruly urban populations saw centralization as a way to get a handle on its citizens and, perhaps more importantly, provide opportunity to all. In 1833, Massachusetts became the last of the American states to withdraw support from an established church, leaving the public

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[3] Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History,* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 73-74. Until the late eighteenth century, most thinkers on education believed that schools should reinforce already-existing social hierarchies rather than undermine them. In France, for example, Bernard de Mandville attacked charity schools on grounds that the schools gave the poor ideas behind their station. Stearns, *Childhood in World History,* 74; James A. Leith, "Modernisation, Mass Education and Social Mobility in French Thought, 1750-1789," in *Studies in the Eighteen Century,* vol 2 (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1973), 223-38; Harvey Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes Toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteen-Century France* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1981).

[4] Frank Pierpont Graves, *A History of Education in Modern Times* (New York: Macmillan, 1914), 285-87, 295.

schools largely free to operate without sectarian interference. State-appointed figures like Mann arose to fill a leadership void.

Nevertheless, the appearance of state governance over public schools was not inevitable, and Massachusetts arrived at state oversight on its own unique trajectory. By a stroke of good fortune, the Massachusetts government quite suddenly found itself with a large cash surplus of several million dollars.[5] At first no one was clear on what do with the money. Eventually beneficence seemed the safest course, and in 1834, the state legislature put the money into a lucrative school fund that would be spread across the Commonwealth's three thousand public schools. The creation of the Massachusetts School Fund generated the question of oversight. In his address to the legislature in 1837, Governor Edward Everett said it would be a good thing if lawmakers created a "Board of Commissioners of Schools," to serve without salary, with authority to appoint a secretary as its one salaried officer, to be paid out of the "ample means now thrown into [the legislature's] hands."[6] The legislators complied, creating a board of eight, with the governor and lieutenant governor serving as ex officio members. The one salaried officer turned out to be Mann.

This board of education cared little for locating a secretary with abundant experience with school children. Mann was unmarried at the time of his appointment and had no children of his own. He had taught school years before during college while on

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[5] The surplus came from two sources. In 1820, the state of Maine was created from 6,000,000 acres of land previously owned by Massachusetts, and under terms of the original creation, Massachusetts was entitled to one-half the proceeds of this land. The second source was income derived from claims of Massachusetts made on the United States government for military service of past wars. Fletcher Harper Swift, *A History of Public Permanent Common School Funds in the United States, 1795-1905* (New York: Henry Holt, 1911), 302-5.

[6] Edward Everett, *Second Address* (1837), as quoted in Paul Revere Frothingham, *Edward Everett: Orator and Statesman* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 136.

holiday break, but that experience, brief as it was, hardly recommended him as an expert on teaching. Mann's commendation came in politics and law. He had served a dozen years in the state legislature, first as a representative and later as a senator, rising to become one Massachusetts's most respectable politicians. Before his election to the secretaryship, he spent the previous four years as president of the Massachusetts Senate. Having ascended to the summit of Massachusetts state politics, he seems to have been ready for a new challenge. "I do not believe," he once said, that "we were designed to remain a great while in any one spot in this universe."[7] Tall and rail thin, with a thick mop of prematurely silver hair, Mann was 41 and at the peak of his powers when he retired from the Senate to embark on this uncharted and politically risky course.[8]

Mann the politician was a member of the recently-formed Whig party, which had arisen in 1834 to contest the democratic presidency of Andrew Jackson. Relying on a coalition of former Federalists and National Republicans, the Whigs typically attracted businessmen and professionals, those who spoke the language of commerce, as well as wage earners concerned with the growth of manufacturing. In Massachusetts, the Whigs dominated the commonwealth's politics until the early 1850s, when the party splintered over the issue of slavery.[9]

During their brief existence, the Whigs largely embraced Henry Clay's American System and thus became known as the party of internal improvements. But beyond a

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[7] HM to Lydia B. Mann, undated, [1837], reel 4, HMC, MHS.

[8] Mann resigned his Senate speakership six weeks prior to his appointment as secretary, apparently under the impression that the position would be offered him. This resignation roughly coincides with his appointment as a member of the Board of Education. Upon being offered the secretaryship, he vacated his place on the board and it was filled by another member.

[9] Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999); Ronald P. Formisano, *The Transformation of Political Culture: Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1983), 268-31.

strictly economic plank, the Whigs can be characterized by a particular postmillennial Christian zealousness that inclined them to see government as an effective agent in improving the personal discipline and moral rectitude among people of all sectors of society. If the Democrats sought the quantitative expansion of American power through *space*, the Whigs seemed most passionate in its qualitative expansion through *time*.[10] Whigs supported public education as a way of inculcating classic republican virtues and thus promoting the values of an emerging middle-class.[11]

Historians have often noted that the beginnings of educational reform in Massachusetts was a Whig-driven proposition, as though Democrats either objected to reform or came along reluctantly.[12] In its most extreme form, this view amounts to a neo-Marxist argument that the Whigs, fearing their own class displacement, used schools as a tool for inculcating the bourgeoisie values that would keep the working classes in check.[13] It is true that a Whig-dominated legislature voted to use the state budget surplus towards public schools and later lobbied to create the Massachusetts Board of Education. A Whig governor signed the measure into law, and most of the original board members

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[10] Major L. Wilson, *Space, Time, and Freedom: The Quest for Nationality and the Irrepressible Conflict* (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1974), as summarized in Daniel Walker Howe, *The Political Culture of the American Whigs* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1979), 20-21.

[11] Carl F. Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic: Common Schools and American Society, 1780-1860* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1983), 77-79, 154-58.

[12] Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 13-18, 32-56; William J. Reese, *Origins of the American High School* (New Haven, Conn.: Yale University Press, 1995), 51-52; Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 209-10.

[13] This view has been championed most prominently by Michael B. Katz. See his books *The Irony of Early School Reform: Educational Innovation in Mid-Nineteenth Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1968); and *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America,* 2d. ed. (New York: Prager, 1975). For a rebuttal, see Maris V. Vinovskis, *The Origins of Public High Schools: A Reexamination of the Beverly High School Controversy* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1985).

were Whigs. But it would be a mistake to suppose that Whigs ramrodded the opposition or that school reform did not have its Democratic supporters. If Whigs felt confident in using government to improve society, Democrats could see more efficient schools as promoting their *cause célèbre:* the upward mobility of working people. Although opposition did eventually arise among Democrats as the Board of Education became more activist in its reforms, one searches in vain in the 1837 sources for accusations that the Board of Education was merely a Whig scheme. Reflecting the bipartisan appeal of reform, Governor Everett placed several Democrats on the Board of Education, and school reform in Massachusetts as elsewhere attracted a coalition of Whigs and Democrats.[14] Even in this era of political rancor, education reform could be seen as resting above party and division while promoting the interests of all.

Tellingly, criticism of the choice of Mann as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education seems to be largely absent from the public record.[15] Everett must have viewed Mann as a politically safe choice. Mann was known for moral earnestness in his speeches, which he often delivered with enviable force and eloquence. He was fearless in debate, at times given to prolixity and tediousness in an effort to overwhelm opponents. As a legislator he acquired a reputation as a defender of society's benighted and forgotten, especially in temperance reform and humane treatment of the mentally ill. Mann came to the job with unquestioned credibility among Massachusetts political power players. He had mastered the political landscape and was sure to be able to grease even

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[14] Kaestle, *Pillars of the Republic,* 78-79.

[15] Early on, the main concern in the democratic press was that the Board of Education did its business without public approval. "The people have no voice in the matter," one writer put it, and "know as little of what is going on as if the whole matter were confined to the heart of Peking." Such concerns, of course, had more to do with the Board itself than Mann specifically. "Primary Schools," *Boston Semi-Weekly Mercantile Journal,* Oct. 31, 1837, 1.

the most controversial educational reforms.[16]

Mann was thrilled with his appointment as secretary, setting it in broadly humanitarian terms. "Henceforth, so long as I hold this office," he confided in his journal, "I devote my self to the supremest welfare of mankind upon earth." He could imagine no more important labor than enlarging young minds capable of limitless potential. "I have faith in the improveability of the race," he wrote, speaking the language of human perfectibility common among reformers of his time. [17] He spoke of education as Romantic poets spoke of the depths of the soul, as a "vast & illimitable" realm that "reaches beyond time & space. Follow it to those bounds & it emerges into infinity."[18]

But the vastness of the conception did leave Mann feeling puny, shell-shocked and stunned, somewhat adrift as he contemplated the task ahead. He felt anxious in large measure because he knew the perils of the political landscape so well. The creation of the Board of Education had its opponents, even among the Whigs; the original bill proposing to create the board was defeated in the House by a wide margin and had to be watered down before it could pass both chambers. Mann knew some would be out with knives to take down the cause. He worried about the "jealousy, the misrepresentation & the prejudice, almost certain to arise" in an enterprise that of necessity had to wind its way through the halls of politics.[19]

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[16] On Mann's qualifications and habits of mind, see George H. Martin, *The Evolution of the Massachusetts Public School Systems: A Historical Sketch* (New York: D. Appleton, 1915), 158-59, and more adoringly, Mary Peabody Mann, *Life of Horace Mann,* 2nd ed. (Boston: Walker, Fuller, 1865), 59-61.

[17] HM, Journal, June 30, 1837, HMC.

[18] HM, Speech Concerning the Spending of School Funds, [1834], section 55, reel 31, HMC.

[19] HM, Journal, June 28, 1837. "I accept the office with gratitude, but, at the same time, with such a consciousness of my inadequacy." HM to George Hull and Emerson Davis, June 30, 1837, Massachusetts Department of Education, Correspondence, b. 1, f. 1, MA.

The only way to win over the critics, he concluded, would be to check his ego, to become the servant of all. "I must be a sort of fluid sort of a man," he wrote in his journal, "adapting myself to tastes, opinions, habits, manners, so far as this can be done without hypocrisy or insincerity, or a compromise of principle." He was ready, he said, to abandon all urge for applause and personal acclaim. He would become a martyr for the cause if necessary. [20]

In some European states, where the power of the state was robust, educational boards exercised considerable authority. On young republican soil the voice of the people stood preeminent. The Massachusetts Board of Education had no power to enforce its edicts, no ability to disburse funds. The new law provided that the Board should do little else other than to put information in the hands of the people, who could then use the information to enact reform through ballot initiatives carried out on the level of township and state. The secretary was empowered to "collect information of the actual condition and efficiency of the common schools and other means of popular information."[21] The circumspection of the law meant that Mann would have to muster all his imaginative powers in order to see reform in the schools.

The collection of information put great priority on the method of delivery. For reform to occur, the information would have to reach the public and move it to action. The written word would be important, but this was a time when a good speech could leave an audience swooning. Newly founded lyceums ginned up large and appreciate crowds who came out as much to be entertained as to be informed.[22] The school law

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[20] HM, Journal, June 29, 1837.

[21] *An Act Relating to Common Schools* (Apr. 20, 1837), 277-78.

[22] Tom F. Wright, *The Cosmopolitan Lyceum: Lecture Culture and the Globe in Nineteenth-Century America* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2013); Angela G.

tacitly acknowledged the potential influence of both print and oral cultures by permitting Mann and his successors to "diffuse as widely as possible throughout every part of the Commonwealth, information of the most approved and successful methods of arranging the studies and conducting the education of the youth."[23] Mann could, in other words, give as many speeches as he wanted, wherever he could get a hearing.

The energy that brought Americans out to public lectures also moved them to organize themselves into voluntary societies built around a common interest. Mann was sure he could get people out to a lecture on education, but for concrete change to occur within the schools in all parts of the states, he knew local organization would be required. For this, he turned to a familiar language: politics.

For some time the political parties in Massachusetts had assembled together in county conventions as a mechanism for transmitting information, nominating officers, and making resolutions. In an ingenious move, the Massachusetts Board of Education adapted this convention system to its own ends. The Board's first move was to ask each county in the Commonwealth to hold an educational convention later that fall.[24] But party interest could not be allowed to divide the assemblage. School teachers, school committee men, and clergy, as well as the interested public, were cordially invited to attend. Corresponding secretaries and delegates from each town were to be appointed—familiar elements carried over from the county political conventions.[25] In this way, the

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Ray, *The Lyceum and Public Culture in the Nineteenth-Century United States* (East Lansing: Michigan State University Press, 2005). The classic study is Carl Bode, *The American Lyceum: Town Meeting of the Mind* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1956).

[23] *An Act Relating to Common Schools* (Apr. 20, 1837), 277-78.

[24] Edward Everett et al., *An Address to the People of Massachusetts* (Boston: Massachusetts Board of Education, 1837).

[25] On the convention system, see Formisano, *Massachusetts Parties, 1790s-1840s*, 203-6, 210-12, 245-46, 249-50.

school conventions merged the public spiritedness of town meetings and patriotic assemblages with the reform mentality of the party rallies. School conventions were to be places where Mann, as the Board of Education's representative, could appeal "to an enlightened community, to rally for the promotion of its dearest interests."[26]

It was the preparation of a speech to "enlightened community" that Mann would deliver at these school conventions that brought him to Franklin for "rustication."[27] For the next four weeks, fifteen hours a day on average, Mann labored over an hour and a half speech that sought to win over even the most apathetic and skeptical in his crowds.[28] The problems were obvious enough to Mann, but the solutions had to be worked out on paper. Everyone could see that the common schools needed fixing. How was this to be done?

From the 1630s on, Massachusetts citizens had taxed themselves for the maintenance of schools for all the children in their own towns. These schools seemed to satisfy their various towns so long as the people who patronized them were neither rich nor poor and communities relatively religiously homogeneous.

But seismic structural changes in the transatlantic world over the course of the eighteenth century made the town schools seem inadequate to many. As Puritan hegemony over cultural life in Massachusetts began to disintegrate, alternative schools multiplied like wild flowers on a hillside. A multiplicity of options seemed both necessary and fitting.

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[26] HM, "Means and Objects of Common School Education" (1837), in *Lectures on Education* (Boston: Ide & Dutton, 1855), 12.

[27] HM, Journal, July 19, 1837.

[28] HM, Journal, July 19, 21, 23; Aug 21, 1837. Mann later said that from the day he accepted secretaryship until his resignation in May 1848, he averaged "not less than fifteen hours a day" in work and did not take a single day off. *Eleventh Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the Eleventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1848), 150.

Farmers who had once sewn seeds simply to subsist now grew for distant markets as well, thus creating more disparity between rich and poor. Some could afford to send their children to tuition schools that catered to their patrons' increasingly refined and urbane tastes.[29] These economic changes inevitably changed the purposes of schooling. Schools became less a place to gain the basic literacy required to read the Bible and write a legal contract and more a stepping stone for social advancement. People began calling the town schools "common," indicating an education fit for commoners and implying, of course, the existence of schools not so common.[30]

The large-scale immigrations of the first half of the nineteenth century further opened the fissure between the common schools and all the rest. Common schools charged no tuition, and for that reason, they naturally attracted the children of immigrant families who could not afford alternatives.

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[29] On the disintegration of Puritanism, see the essay review of Charles L. Cohen, "The Post-Puritan Paradigm of Early American Religious History," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d ser., 54, no. 4 (Oct. 1997): 695-722. On the spread of refinement culture, see Richard Lyman Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Knopf, 1992). There is great debate on just when the so-called "market revolution" occurred and what that revolution meant for social and cultural institutions. See, for example, Charles Sellers, *The Market Revolution: Jacksonian America, 1815-1846* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994); John Lauritz Larson, *The Market Revolution in America: Liberty, Ambition, and the Eclipse of the Common Good* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Christopher Clark, *The Roots of Rural Capitalism: Western Massachusetts, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1990); Winifred Barr Rothenberg, *From Market-Places to a Market Economy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992).

[30] For an example of the multiplication of schooling options, see Rebecca R. Noel, "Salem as the Nation's Schoolhouse," in *Salem: Place, Myth, Memory,* ed. Dane Anthony Morrison and Nancy Lusignan Schultz (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004), 129-61. On the use of schools and education as tools of advancement, see Reese, *Origins of the American High School*; Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge Is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), esp. 82-109, and Melanie Archer and Judith R. Blau, "Class Formation in Nineteenth-Century America: The Case of the Middle Class," *Annual Review of Sociology* 19 (Aug. 1993): 17-41. On the common school, see Lawrence Arthur Cremin, *The American Common School: An Historic Conception* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1951). For criticism of the curricular division between schools (largely public) with basic subjects and schools (largely private) with "frills," see Merle Curti, *Social Ideas of American Educators* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935), 28-29.

By the 1820s ethnic tensions flared with increasing frequency, especially within the urban spaces that attracted a kaleidoscope of elbows that jostled up against one another. The Irish settled in Massachusetts in record numbers, lured by the prospect of cheap land, rich soil, and a chance to escape an often oppressive penal code. They fled a country where mere survival was all most people could afford to think about, a place where half of the population could neither read nor write.[31]

Nativists often depicted their Irish counterparts as dirty, brutish, almost sub-human, in the crudest depictions pairing them with blacks. It was often assumed that the Irish were responsible for much of the crime in Massachusetts.[32] But the parents of children who came from more established New England families need not be nativist in either word or sensibility in order to be concerned over the potential dangers of exposing their dependents to children of the poor—children who, it could be readily observed, had acquired habits of speech and behavior that middle-class parents had taught their children to avoid. If the children of the Irish patronized common schools, as they quickly did, where would the children of more respectable families go?

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Mann's hypothetical case for how a common school became run down went like this. "A few persons in a village or town, finding the advantages of the common school in

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[31] Oscar Handlin, *Boston's Immigrants, 1790-1880: A Study in Acculturation,* rev. and enl. ed. (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 1991), 26-27, 38-46.

[32] Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999); Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995); Dennis P. Ryan, *Beyond the Ballot Box: A Social History of the Boston Irish, 1845-1917* (Rutherford: Fairleigh Dickinson University Press, 1983), 21-23, 57-58.

adequate to their wants, unite to establish a private one."[33] They then transfer their children from the common school to the private school. "The heart goes with the treasure," and the parents who transfer their students to the private school cease interest in the common school. They decline to serve as committee men. They have no personal motive to vote for or advocate any increase of the town's school appropriation; they may even to vote against it.[34]

The loss of patronage damages the common school. The loss of talent destroys it. Often parents willing to start a new school are parents who have invested in their children from an early age. Their children are among the "best scholars" at the school. These top students have a disproportionate influence, says Mann. "All children, like all men, rise easily to the common level. There, the mass stop; strong minds only ascend higher. But raise the standard, and, by a spontaneous movement, the mass will rise again and reach it." With the top students removed from the common school, the more average students are not so easily motivated. "The lower classes in a school have no abstract standard of excellence, and seldom aim at higher attainments than such as they daily witness."[35]

In this depressed state, another portion of the parents find the school inadequate, "and, as there is now a private school in the neighborhood, the strength of the inducement, and the facility of the transfer, overbalance the objection of increased expense." These parents may not be as well to do as the first group, but their concern for their children is no less strong. They remove their children from the common school. Thus begins a cycle of "silent, but rapid corrosion" until the common school "is left to

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[33] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the First Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 49.

[34] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 49.

[35] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 49-50.

the management of those, who have not the desire or the power either to improve it or to command a better."[36]

As he contemplated this state of affairs in the quiet of his boyhood home, Mann realized what kind of speech he must write. He must lift his hearers above particularity, above individual concern of tribe. He must preach the common good. He must write a speech arguing why parents should not go off and found a private school. Why should a fourth-generation American parent send his child to a school where Irish immigrants could be found across the aisle? What made children of different backgrounds more alike than dissimilar? What did children everywhere share?

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Horace Mann well understood the internal conflicts many parents felt, for he knew them from his own history. Most of what we know about Mann's early life comes from an autobiographical sketch he produced in 1852, after he had retired from the Board of Education and long after he had become a famous person.[37] Mann did not volunteer the sketch. He was approached to write it by a New York lawyer for a collection of life sketches called *Portraits of Eminent Americans*, and contemplating a run for the

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[36] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 50. In some cases, not even the children of the poor remained with a school when it had been stigmatized. Cyrus Peirce, later principal of the Lexington Normal School, noted that "public schools"—probably tuition-free schools—were first set up at Nantucket in the late 1820s. "Their enemies called them 'Charity Schools' or 'Charitable Institutions,'" Peirce recounted, an "epithet [that] well nigh proved their ruin. Many parents, even among the poorer classes of citizens, as today—laborers and wood sawyers, declared they would not receive 'such Charity, and refused to send their children. And though our Public Schools have survived, they have not entirely out-grown this shock." Cyrus Peirce to HM, June 4, 1839, reel 5, HMC.

[37] On Mann's world-wide reputation, see George W. Bungay, *Crayon Sketches and Off-Hand Takings: Distinguished American Statesmen, Orators, Divines, Essayists, Editors, Poets, and Philanthropists* (Boston: Stacy and Richardson, 1852), 20.

governorship of Massachusetts, Mann must have felt that the time was right to get his own story down on paper before someone else did.[38]

Mann devoted very little of the sketch to his years prior to age twenty. The sketch says nothing about his ancestry, nothing about how his family came to live in Franklin, Massachusetts, where Mann was born in 1796.[39] Other sketches in the collection mentioned long family trees or noble accomplishments, noting Pilgrim or Puritan ancestry, ancestors who fought in the Revolutionary War, or illustrious descendants who held public or ministerial offices. Mann's family had all those things, but he never said a word about them. After the Revolution, pedigrees became something that men of ambition tried to avoid, vestiges of the Old World aristocracies the new republican nation was trying to leave behind. Politicians were better advised to fashion themselves as rustics, muting any special advantage or privilege. William Henry Harrison, who was

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[38] John Livingston, a New York attorney and editor of the *United States Law Magazine*, asked Mann to contribute to a series of life sketches he self-published published under the title *American Portrait Gallery: Containing Portraits of Men Now Living,* 4 vols. (New York: [John Livingston], 1852-54). While that run was still being carried out, a second, much larger print run was undertaken with a new publisher and under a different title: *Portraits of Eminent Americans Now Living,* 4 vols. (New York: Cornish, Lamport, 1853-54). The Mann sketches in each are identical, but I have used the one in volume 4 of *Portraits of Eminent Americans* due to its accessibility, and have cited it by the designation "[HM], 'Horace Mann.'"

Mann called his history published in Livingston "authentic & satisfactory to my friends, & I would rather that would be the basis of any other." HM to A. S. Dean, December 26, 1853, typescript, S-M. Mann was proud of this history, purchasing 300 imprints to pass out to friends, and later, whenever people inquired about the particulars of his past, he referred them to this history without hesitation. HM, Receipt, Feb. 28, 1855, HMC; HM to C. Scribner, Dec 14, 1854, Duyckinck Family Papers, New York Public Library; HM to Henry Barnard, Nov. 3, 1856, Barnard Papers, New York University. A biographical sketch produced with Mann's cooperation and published shortly after his death redacted the Livingston sketch and added no new details about Mann's early life. "Horace Mann," *Journal of American Education* 15 (Dec. 1858): 611-14; HM to Henry Barnard, Oct. 23, 1858; and HM to Henry Barnard, [1859], both in Barnard Papers.

Other life sketches of Horace Mann published during his lifetime drew exclusively on the Livingston for details of Mann's early life while departing from it when treating his years of public service. James Spear Loring, *The Hundred Boston Orators Appointed by the Municipal Authorities and Other Public Bodies, from 1770 to 1852,* 3rd ed. (Boston: John P. Jewett, 1854), 598-609.

[39] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:178.

born on a large Virginia plantation and studied Latin and French as a child, fashioned himself a log cabin-living commoner when he campaigned for the presidency in 1840.[40]

Mann's history was more than merely an attempt at self-fashioning for political office. He seems to have believed that his ancestry could not explain how he got to be a successful person. By the time Mann wrote in the 1850s, American life histories had already fallen into a familiar pattern. They were primarily narratives of progress, the story we recognize today in the mythos of the self-made man. They were the Ben Franklin story.[41] Many sketches in *Portraits of Eminent Americans* presented families that started out in humble, even primitive, circumstances and through diligent exertion steadily ascended into higher social circles over time. Respectability and influence was gained, not lost.

Horace Mann's family didn't work like that. The earliest Mans ("Mann" after the 1770s) arrived in the New World in the great Puritan migration of the 1630s. William Man settled near Boston, in Cambridge, and sent his only son, a boy named Samuel, off

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[40] Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 230; Gordon Wood, *The Radicalism of the American Revolution* (New York: Vintage Books, 1993), 240-41. Mason Weems, author of the famous biography of George Washington, published in 1800, never mentioned Washington's large inheritance through marriage. In Weems' telling, Washington was an ordinary mechanic who moved ahead through dint of his own sweat, not his personal connections. Gordon Wood, *Empire of Liberty: A History of the Early Republic, 1789-1815* (New York: Oxford University Pres, 2009), 353-54. Jefferson and Adams, however, both began their autobiographies by referring to ancestry. Susan Clair Imbarrato, *Declarations of Independency in Eighteenth-century American Autobiography* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1998), 88, 90.

[41] Stephen Carl Arch, *After Franklin: The Emergence of Autobiography in Post-Revolutionary America, 1780-1830* (Hanover, N.H.: University of New Hampshire Press, 2003), 171-89; James Goodwin, *Autobiography: Self Made Text* (New York: Twayne, 1993), 25-44; Gordon S. Wood, *The Americanization of Benjamin Franklin* (New York: Penguin Books, 2004), 242-46; Daniel Walker Howe, *Making of the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009).

to Harvard College to be trained for the ministry.[42]

Samuel Man, Horace Mann's second great-grandfather, was the star of the Mann family. After graduating from Harvard in the class of 1665, he taught school at Dedham, and in 1672 accepted the invitation to move away from the comforts of society to preside over sixteen families who comprised a tiny community called Wollomonopoag, soon to be incorporated as Wrentham, twenty miles south of Dedham not far from the road running between Boston and Providence.[43] Man was devoted to his parish and stuck with the community through thick and thin, even when he might have left for easier or more lucrative appointments. During King Philip's War, he was forced to flee to Dedham with his congregation, their homes burned to the ground. Undaunted, he led a return and ended up serving as pastor of the church in Wrentham for the next forty years.[44]

Samuel Man represented the pinnacle of the Mann family. By all outward measures, none of his children reached his level of success. None of his seven sons went on to college even though their father might have prepared them for admission.[45] Several

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[42] George Sumner Mann, *Mann Memorial: A Record of the Mann Family in America: Genealogy of the Descendants of Richard Mann* (Boston: D. Clapp & Son, 1884), 3; S-M, 1; Robert Straker, "A Gloss Upon Glosses," Antiochiana, Antioch College, 52. Straker's conclusions are based on Benjamin Pickman Mann's (son of Horace Mann's) notes of his family genealogy.

[43] Jordan D. Fiore, *Wrentham, 1673-1973: A History* (Boston: Thomas Todd for Town of Wrentham, 1973), 10-14.

[44] John Langdon Sibley, *Biographical Sketches of Graduates of Harvard University, in Cambridge, Massachusetts: Volume II: 1659-1677* (Cambridge, Mass.: Charles William Sever, 1881), 191-92; Mortimer Blake, *A History of the Town of Franklin, Mass.* (Franklin, Mass.: By the Committee of the Town, 1879), 20-22; S-M, 7-8. Samuel Man seems to have been a kindly and beloved shepherd in his community, not the steely cold personality moderns imagine Puritans to be. Never "engage in the cares of the day," he once advised his children, without first praying to God for "good counsel to such as ask it, or attendance upon the sick at a neighbor's house, or a call for the right of hospitality at home." Louise Hall Tharp, *Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953), 18.

[45] *Quinquennial Catalogue of the Officers and Graduates of Harvard University, 1636-1905* (Cambridge, Mass.: By the University, 1905), 701; *Historical Catalogue of Brown University, 1764-1914* (Providence: By the University, 1914), 739; Fiore, *Wrentham,* 32-33. One

of the sons, including Horace Mann's direct line ancestor, farmed the land in and around Wrentham. But none ever became a gentleman; so far as the records show, none acquired independence from the farm or became freed from daily toil. The sons show up in town records in the background, not in the forefront as Samuel Man did: they were petition signers, not office holders or discussion leaders.[46] More the products of Samuel Man's success than trail blazers in their own right, their modest farm plots grew out of a generous bequest of land given to Samuel Man by the church trustees in Wrentham.[47]

The family's relationship to the church followed a similar pattern of decline. Only three of Samuel Man's children were admitted into the church, indicating that most of the family either did not profess conversion or declined to take upon themselves the church covenant their father drew up for congregants to "give up ourselves, bodies & souls" to the Lord Jehovah, to "love him, fear him, trust in him, & yield obedience to him in all things all the days of our lives."[48] Like so many other Puritans of the second and third generations, Samuel Man's sons were "halfway" members who had their children baptized in the church but resisted full association.[49] The wedge widened across the

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grandson, Hezekiah Man, son of Samuel's son William, did graduate from Harvard in 1731. Blake, *History of the Town of Franklin,* 22.

[46] See, for example, Franklin Town, Records, Vol. 1, June 2, 1736; May 23, 1739; Aug. 21, 1769, and passim, Franklin Town Clerk's Office, Franklin, Mass.

[47] Thomas Vose et al to Samuel Man, June 6, 1700; Samuel Man to Nathaniel Man, Apr 10, 1717; Samuel Man to Pelatiah Man, May 6, 1719, all in Suffolk County Deed Record, 19:391-92; 31:136-37; 33:266-67, MA. The deed record lists no land purchase by Thomas Mann, Horace Mann's great grandfather, until 1727, when he was already forty-four years old. Yet it shows him *selling* land long before that time. Thomas Man to Samuel Daves, May 1, 1718; John Whitting to Thomas Man, 11 Feb 1727, in Suffolk County Deed Record, 51:2; 62:177.

[48] "Records of the Church of Christ in Wrentham," 1692-1843, 3, 7-17, Original Congregational Church, Wrentham, Massachusetts. Of Samuel's children, only Mary (Apr 18, 1702), William (Aug 24, 1707), and Theodore (Oct 31, 1703) were admitted to the church.

[49] "Records of the Church of Christ in Wrentham," 44-58. On the halfway covenant, see David D. Hall, *Worlds of Wonder, Days of Judgment: Popular Religious Belief in Early New England* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1989), 152-55. Four of Samuel Man's daughters-in-laws joined the church: Lipporah, wife of Samuel (June 2, 1706); Abigail, wife of Theodore

generations as it did for other lapsed Christians. Horace Mann's grandfather, Nathan Mann, withdrew from the Congregational Church of Wrentham after a doctrinal conflict with the minister in 1763.[50] By the time Horace Mann was born, the Manns had broken free of even token sacramental observance. Neither Horace nor his siblings were ever baptized.[51]

Mann could find nothing useful in this history. By the time he wrote his life sketch, his religious faith looked nothing like the Calvinist covenant subscribed to by Samuel Man's congregation. There was no point in saying he hailed from a "direct line" of Puritans, as other sketches in the series did, or highlight his relation to the famed Wrentham preacher and town founder Samuel Man.[52] To convey that his family soared at the beginning and fell back to earth over time defied the formula. A story of declining family influence did not illustrate the idea that "honor and station are the sure reward of continued exertion." Mann's ancestral history was more easily buried than highlighted.

The revolution in popular authority that shaped Horace Mann's father's family bore down on his mother's side as well. The Stanleys, like the Manns, were farming people. Mann said no more about them in his history than he did his father's family, probably because the Stanleys followed the same trajectory of decline.

The Stanleys first arrived in Attleborough (now Attleboro), the town adjoining

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(Oct. 31, 1703); Hannah, wife of Thomas (Nov. 8, 1713)—Horace Mann's direct line ancestor; and Jemimah, wife of Pelatiah (Nov. 26, 1727). Only one of the couples, Theodore and Abigail, were both church members.

[50] Wrentham 2nd Church, Minutes, Oct. 16, Nov. 2, 1763; Dec. 21, 1767, in Franklin Congregational Church Records, 1738-1887, The Congregational Library, Boston.

[51] Record of Baptisms, volume 2, in Franklin Congregational Church Records, 1737-1887.

[52] Livingston, *Portraits of Eminent Americans,* 3:29.

Wrentham to the south, along the Rhode Island border, around 1707. Bristol County had recently opened up to settlement and white settlers were rushing in, muscling in on Native peoples' land. Three Stanley brothers migrated south from Topsfield and found land on both sides of the Ten Mile River.[53] They set up a saw and a grist mill and started farming the soil. Although not educated—the men signed their names with an "X"—they worked hard and moved ahead.[54]

The family reached its highest eminence with Horace Mann's maternal grandfather, William Stanley. William's father had amassed one hundred acres in farmland and another quarter right to the mills. Aided by his fortunate birth order as a son much younger than his older brothers, William Stanley inherited the entire family estate upon his father's death in 1750. That benefaction allowed him to marry Zilpah Daggett, who hailed from one of Attleborough's most prominent families. Together they had eight children. The fifth child, a girl named Rebekah, was born in 1761. Rebekah Stanley was Horace Mann's mother.[55]

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[53] John Daggett, *Sketch of the History of Attleborough, from Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Dedham, Mass.: H. Mann, 1834), 68, 94; John Daggett to Thomas Stanley and Jacob Stanley, Jan. 3, 1748, Deed Record 36:362, Bristol County Deed Record, Northern Bristol County Registry of Deeds, Taunton, Mass.

[54] John Stanley et al. to Mayhew Dagget, Deed Record 17:157, Bristol County Deed Record.

[55] Jay Mack Holbrook, comp., *Massachusetts Vital Records: Attleboro, 1694-1890* (Oxford, Mass.: Holbrook Research Institute, 1986), Book I, 9, 112; S-M, 14. William and is brother David Stanley jointly inherited all of the Thomas Stanley's farmlands; they are called "youngest sons" in the will. [William later gained sole possession by outliving David.] William Stanley to Thomas Stanley, March 14, 1801, Deed Record 79:543-44, Bristol County Deed Record; Thomas Mann Will, March 17, 1748/49, Probate Record 12:224-25, Bristol County Registry of Probate, Fall River, Massachusetts. There is variation in the spelling of Rebeckah Stanley's name. In Attleborough town records, the name is spelled "Rebekah" (birth record) and "Rebecka" (marriage record). In legal papers she signed her own name "Rebeca Mann" in one instance and "Rebeca Man" in another. Her son Stephen spelled it "Rebeka." Horace spelled it "Rebecca." Lydia Mann and Horace Mann, Statement of Guardianship, Sept. 5, 1809, Probate Court Docket, 12214; and Stephen Mann, Statement of Guardianship, Oct. 18, 1809, Probate Court Docket, 12242, both in Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court, Canton, Mass;

William Stanley's wealth marked him as a man of authority within the community.[56] He was soon addressed by the newly republicanized title of "gentleman," a powerful term to eighteenth-century ears signifying traits we might today associate with a liberal arts education: reasonableness, tolerance, fairness, and most of all, virtue.[57] Like Samuel Man, William Stanley was a figure whose opinions commanded great respect. Townspeople appointed him to moderate over local disputes, and twice they chose him to represent Attleborough in the Massachusetts legislature.[58]

William Stanley's rise to respectability illustrates the fluidity and fragility of the social structure of early American life. Lacking the sturdy and entrenched gentry of the British motherland, the decentralized colonial arrangement allowed plain farmers like William Stanley to ascend into modest leadership roles.

But this fluidity also implied fragility within the system. William Stanley passed on to his children few of the accoutrements usually associated with gentility in the Old World. Whatever dowry he gave his daughters did not translate into long-term material security. Horace called his parents' farm "small" and their financial circumstances "narrow," suggesting that his maternal grandfather played no discernable role in the family's fortunes.[59] Learning was imparted haphazardly among the Stanleys and not more uniformly as was the case for most children of the gentry. Only one Stanley son went to college, and Horace Mann's mother, like a sizable percentage of American women born

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HM to Dear Family, July 16, 1817, reel 2, HMC.

[56] By 1771, his annual worth put him in the top 15% of Attleborough residents. Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, ed., *The Massachusetts Tax Valuation List of 1771* (Boston: G. K. Hall, 1978), 546-47. The judgment is based on the "annual worth of real estate" of 312 Attleborough property owners.

[57] Daggett, *Sketch of the History of Attleborough,* 76; Wood, *Radicalism of the American Revolution,* 194-97;

[58] Daggett, *Sketch of the History of Attleborough,* 72-73, 75-76, 99.

[59] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:178-79.

before about 1780, seems to have been not fully literate.[60] Rebekah may have read a little but probably never learned to write much more than her own name.[61] Horace Mann never admitted his mother's illiteracy publicly, perhaps as much out of deference to her as his own embarrassment. In his history, Mann downplayed his mother's limitations while highlighting the "flash of intuition" she possessed. "She was able to impart but little of the details of knowledge," he explained, euphemistically, "but she did a greater work than this, by imparting the principles by which all knowledge should be guided."[62]

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[60] On women's literacy in the colonial period, see Laurel Thatcher Ulrich, *Good Wives: Image and Reality in the Lives of Women in Northern New England, 1650-1750* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1982), 43-44; Joel Perlmann and Dennis Shirley, "When Did New England Women Acquire Literacy?" *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3rd Ser., 48 (Jan. 1991): 50-67; E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Literacy Instruction and Gender in Colonial New England," *American Quarterly* 40 (March 1988): 18-41. In her study of colonial literacy in three Massachusetts counties, Gloria Main has found that the percentage of widows (68%) who could sign their name on court documents between 1735 and 1744 is higher than that of girls (54%) for the same period. She hypothesizes that some women who had not learned to write as girls later acquire at least some elements of written literacy (e.g., the ability to write a signature) at some point in their adult lifetimes. Glora L. Main, "An Inquiry into When and Why Women Learned to Write in Colonial New England," *Journal of Social History* 24 (Spring 1991): 579-89.

[61] Rebekah Mann's illiteracy, which has not been observed by historians, is a circumstantial case. Horace Mann retained copies of every scrap of paper he owned—schoolwork, receipts, bills, letters from cousins and siblings. Yet nothing appears from his beloved and much praised mother, a woman he called closer to "a portion of my own existence than a separate and independent being." Mann, *Life of Horace Mann,* 23. Indeed, I have found but one letter in the collection addressed to her (HM to "Dear Family," July 16, 1817, is addressed to "Wid. Rebecca Mann. Franklin"), while dozens letters are addressed to Mann's sisters. Neither does anything in her hand appear in the biography of Horace Mann written by his wife, a book which is filled with long excerpts of correspondence to and from family members. The Mann papers retains dozens of letters Mann wrote to his sister Lydia, who resided with their mother before the matriarch's death in 1837. Not one of these letters tells his mother to write or refers to a letter written by his mother. Yet, in a revealing letter to Lydia written soon after Horace left home for college, he complains about not getting mail: "I wonder [why] you do not write. You seem to treat it as though it were a task, like the pilgrimage to Mecca, and not to be performed but once in a lifetime….In your next letter, put in some sentences of mother's *just as she spoke them: let her say something to me."* Mann, *Life of Horace Mann,* 22 (emphasis mine). The only evidence of writing comes in a signature she left in her children's guardianship papers signed after Thomas Mann's death; in one place she signs "Rebeca Mann" and in another, "Rebeca Man." Lydia Mann and Horace Mann, Statement of Guardianship, Sept. 5, 1809, Probate Court Docket, 12214; and Stephen Mann, Statement of Guardianship, Oct. 18, 1809, Probate Court Docket, 12242, both in Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court.

[62] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:180.

The gentle rolling hills of southeastern Massachusetts where Horace Mann came of age contained some of the most productive farmland in all of New England. Largely devoid of the rocky, uneven soil that undulated across large parts of western Massachusetts, Norfolk County benefitted from its relative proximity to seaports and major markets. Situated mid-way between Boston and Providence, not more than thirty-five miles in either direction, Wrentham farmers had ready markets for their surpluses.[63] Thomas Mann's farm stood four miles west of the town's center, along a major road where peddlers and merchants passed between Worcester and Taunton.

When Wrentham divided in 1778, the new township of Franklin was formed out of the western most precinct. Thomas Mann's property fell within Franklin's boundaries, and it was here that Rebekah and Thomas bore and raised their five children to maturity. Horace was the third son and the fourth child overall. Franklin was scarcely more than a village and never exceeded 1,500 residents all the years that Horace lived there. It was essentially a stop on the way to somewhere else. Horace referred to it as an "obscure country town."[64]

Mann always thought of his parents' farm as small, leading some biographers to mistakenly conclude that he grew up poor.[65] The family was more likely middling.[66] His

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[63] Bettye Hobbs Pruitt has found that a band of six southeastern Massachusetts towns including Wrentham rank in the top ten in farm "prosperity" among the 131 Massachusetts town tax valuations she examined as part of the 1771 commonwealth census. Bettye Hobbs Pruitt, "Agriculture and Society in the Towns of Massachusetts, 1771: A Statistical Analysis" (Ph.D. diss., Boston University, 1981), 69-70 and Map 4.

[64] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:180.

[65] George Allen Hubbell, *Horace Mann in Ohio: A Study of the Application of His Public School Ideals to College Administration* (New York: [Columbia University], 1900), 3; E. I. F. Williams, *Horace Mann: Educational Statesman* (New York: Macmillan, 1937), 1-2, 4; B. A. Hinsdale, *Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States* (New York:

parents owned ninety-eight acres of farmland and another twenty-five in woodland and meadow, far less than the wealthiest farmers but four to five times more than New England's poorer sort.[67] The family was also surrounded by a safety net. Thomas' only brothers, Elias and Nathan, farmed their own land adjoining his on either side. Eventually the three brothers owned about 300 acres between them.[68] The Mann brothers likely increased their efficiency by borrowing each others' tools and engaging in a triangle trade for goods and commodities, augmenting the usual barter and exchange that went on among village farmers.[69] It is impossible to imagine anyone in the family ever going hungry.

None of this came out in the history Horace Mann told of his own life. He begins a long paragraph on his life on the farm with this conclusion: "I regard it as an

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Charles Scribner's Sons, 1900), 77.

[66] An inventory of Thomas Mann's belongings, taken in 1809, does put him squarely in the category of small farmer: he owned but one horse, one yoke of oxen, and a single iron rake. Thomas Mann's middling status is further confirmed by his ownership of a larger number of animals than would usually be required for mere subsistence: four beef cows, one milk cow, seven pigs, and a small number of sheep, geese, and hens. Thomas Mann, Estate Inventory, Sept. 1, 1809, in Probate Court Docket, June 5, 1810, Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court.

[67] Daniel P. Jones, *The Economic & Social Transformation of Rural Rhode Island, 1780-1850* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 1992), 223; Jackson Turner Main, *Society and Economy in Colonial Connecticut* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1985), 208-17; Alan Taylor, *Liberty Men and Great Proprietors: The Revolutionary Settlement on the Maine Frontier, 1760-1820* (Chapel Hill: For the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 256; Robert A. Gross, "Culture and Cultivation: Agriculture and Society in Thoreau's Concord," *Journal of American History* 69 (June 1982): 42-61, esp. 44, 56.

[68] Horace Mann mentions sewing corn in HM to Mary Mann, May 25, 1850, HMC. Thomas Mann's will stipulated that his widow be provided with ten bushels of corn annually, the only crop mentioned. The estate inventories of Elias Mann and Nathan Mann mention surpluses in oats, flax, rye, and barley. Thomas Mann, Probate Court Docket, June 5, 1810; Nathan Mann Sr., Probate Court Docket, Nov. 3, 1818; Elias Mann, Probate Court Docket, Nov. 3, 1829, all in Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court.

[69] For an example of how triangulation could work, see Naomi R. Lamoreaux, "Rethinking the Transition to Capitalism in the Early American Northeast," *Journal of American History* 90 (Sept. 2003): 437-61, esp. 441.

irretrievable misfortune that my childhood was not a happy one."[70] The Manns owned pigs, sheep, geese, hens, and other farm animals; they had an apple orchard; they owned forested land with tall oak trees into which a child could slip away and investigate. Was this not a child's paradise? What was there to be unhappy about?

Historians have rightly emphasized the difficult lives led by enslaved black farm children living in early America. But the history largely overlooks the difficult lives of free white farm children during the same period.[71] Most accounts tend to idealize the family economy, projecting onto it pastoral longings for simpler times when everyone knew their role and was pleased to carry it out in behalf of the larger collective.[72] Mann's history entertains no such illusions. When he said his childhood wasn't happy, farm labor came to his mind first.

Mann remembered doing all the usual work a boy typically did: planting seeds,

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[70] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:180.

[71] The most extreme example is Alice Morse Earle, *Child Life in Colonial Days* (New York: Macmillan, 1909), 307, where children's farm life scarcely figures, and when it does, it is called "busy." The modern literature typically highlights the difficulty of indentured children, slave children, and factory workers while having little to say about the challenges of the children from yeoman farming families. Paula Fass and Mary Ann Mason, eds., *Childhood in America* (New York: New York University Press, 2000); James Marten, ed., *Children in Colonial America* (New York: New York University Press, 2007); Joseph E. Illick, *American Childhoods* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2002). Farmers figures only in passing in Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (New York: Knopf, 1977), 215, 252-53.

[72] The nostalgia for rural life has a very old history. Raymond Williams has traced it back to the early modern period. See Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973). Closer to Mann's time, the French-American essayist J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur rhapsodized over the American wives and children who "fat and frolicsome, gladly help their father to clear those fields whence exuberant crops are to arise to feed and clothe them." *Letters from an American Farmer* (Nantucket, Mass.: Dent, 1782), 55. Jefferson, of course, called those who labor in the soil "the chosen people of God." Thomas Jefferson, *Notes on the State of Virginia* (London: Printed for John Stockdale, 1787), 274. The tendency for post-industrial children who grew up on farms to look back on their rural childhood as mirthful and carefree can be observed in Elliott West, *Growing Up with the Country: Childhood on the Far Western Frontier* (Albuquerque: University of New Mexico Press, 1989).

plowing fields, raking hay.[73] He never questioned the value of children laboring or even the right of parents to compel it.[74] The issue was not work; it was over-work. He felt too much was expected of him as a child, and too soon. Horace was already plowing the fields at age six or seven and chopping wood before he was strong enough to swing an axe.[75] He worked from morning till night, the labor encroaching on his sleep. There was little time for play or school. Mann said he never attended more than more than eight or ten weeks as a child.[76] Standing on the edge of the transition from the child as economic asset to the child as economic liability, Mann felt his own contribution to his family's economy had not been worth the cost. It had deprived him of the childhood he felt he deserved.

Mann's complaints highlight the pressures many small farmers felt to maximize their production as America transitioned into a full-blown capitalist economy.[77] After the Revolution, markets and household production became increasingly intertwined as small

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[73] HM to Mary Mann, May 25, 1850, HMC.

[74] Mann accepted the basic structure of his English inheritance, which organized labor around the unit of the household and gave parents rights over the labor of their children. On the English inheritance, see Daniel Vickers, "Working the Fields in a Developing Economy: Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1675," in *Work and Labor in Early America,* ed. Stephen Innes (Chapel Hill: For the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1988), 50-69, esp. 50-51; Jacqueline L. Pfeffer, "The Family in John Locke's Political Thought," *Polity* 33 (Summer 2001): 593-618.

[75] HM to Mary Mann, May 25, 1850. Daniel Vickers argues that colonial farm boys began to acquire a "workman's identity" of their own at around the age of ten as they were asked to do "heavy work." Daniel Vickers, *Farmers & Fishermen: Two Centuries of Work in Essex County, Massachusetts, 1630-1850* (Chapel Hill: For the Institute of Early American History and Culture by the University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 65.

[76] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:180-81.

[77] For the old view of small farmers, see, for example, Clark, *Roots of Rural Capitalism*, and Allan Kulikoff, *The Agrarian Origins of American Capitalism* (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 1992). The consensus view has been driven primarily by the work of Winifred Barr Rothenberg, most comprehensively in her *From Market-Places to a Market Economy*. For a review of the debate between the so-called moral-economy historians and more their market-thesis critics, see Lamoreaux, "Transition to Capitalism," 437-61, esp. 438; and Richard Lyman Bushman, "Markets and Composite Farms in Early America," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d Ser., 55 (July 1998): 351-74.

farmers like Thomas Mann looked to propel their families forward by capitalizing on the new commercial opportunities available to rural parts increasingly connected to larger markets. The work young boys were once expected to do to help the family subsist became bound up almost imperceptibly in the dual end of helping to purchase extra goods and comforts. Horace was expected to work hard not because the family was poor, but because Thomas Mann was trying so hard to get ahead. His sons' labor allowed the family to enjoy a more comfortable lifestyle than they would have otherwise.

The hard work manifested itself in the trappings that middling people elsewhere enjoyed. The Mann homestead was a two-story framed house, not the crude two-room log cabin of the poorer sort.[78] By the time Horace was twelve, the family was eating with knives and forks on pewter, not wood. Thomas Mann owned satin and velvet waistcoats in addition to the usual wool and deerskin. The family also possessed a little silver—teaspoons and a watch—which had long been a symbol of urbane taste.[79]

The refined pleasures the Manns enjoyed did little to make the parents ease up the labor. If anything, the objects motivated the family to work harder. Instead of selling the family silver to pay for his son's schooling, Thomas Mann had Horace pay for his own schoolbooks by braiding straw that was sewn into bonnets and sold for a profit.[80] Despite

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[78] A picture of the Mann homestead, drawn from memory by Horace Mann's niece, is reproduced in Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1972), betw. 296-97. The design appears to be a variation on an older hall and parlor design used by the gentry. See Bushman, *Refinement of America*, 251-52.

[79] The household items are listed in Thomas Mann, Probate Court Docket, June 5, 1810. On silver, see Bushman, *Refinement of America,* 78, 184, 186; and Cary Carson, "The Consumer Revolution in Colonial British America: Why Demand?" in *Of Consuming Interests: The Style of Life in the Eighteenth Century,* ed. Cary Carson, Ronald Hoffman, and Peter J. Albert (Charlottesville, Va.: For United States Capitol Historical Society by University Press of Virginia, 1994), 483-697, esp. 528, 530.

[80] Mann, *Life of Horace Mann,* 20. On the craze with straw hats in the region of Wrentham and Franklin, see Blake, *History of the Town of Franklin,* 112-13.

the hardships, Mann did not blame his parents for the strain he endured. They did not act out of malice or cruelty. "My parents sinned ignorantly," he said.[81]

The few weeks out of the year when Horace Mann attended the common school in Franklin seemed no more pleasant than the farm labor. I "belonged to the smallest district, had the poorest schoolhouse, and employed the cheapest teachers, in a town itself both small and poor."[82] Mann described the schoolhouse in the crudest terms: leaky roof, broken windows, backless seats, and a room so cold in wintertime that the ink in his pen congealed while writing. What few schoolbooks could be found were "meagre and miserable." Everything about his experience was privative, at least as he later recalled it. His school was probably not open any longer than the eight to ten weeks a year he said he attended.[83]

With conditions like this, Mann must have realized how fortunate he was to have escaped the circumstances of his birth. How many others were not so fortunate? How much unrecognized talent fell unheard and unnoticed on the cold and uneven floors of rickety old school houses?

In keeping with the standard life history, Mann crafted his own history as a narrative of progress. He started from humble beginnings and negotiated every hazard in order to rise up and do great things. In Mann's telling, the schools gave him nothing; whatever eminence he attained he had to earn. His own unhappy history left him all the more determined to not permit the same tale of woe to repeat itself in the lives of Massachusetts children. The arduousness of adult work should not be heaped upon their

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[81] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:180.
[82] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:179.
[83] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:181.

shoulders too soon. They were, after all, children.

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Mann's speech to the various county conventions of Massachusetts in the fall of fall of 1837 assumed a kind of universal child that was rather unique for the period. He implicitly denied at the outset the most potent argument on the part of the parents who had pulled their children from the common schools, namely, that the Irish were deficient by nature and hence, inevitably, a drag on the education of their own children. Mann framed his argument not in terms of relative hierarchies involving racial or ethnic or national groups, as nativists often did, as though some groups were superior to others and ought not to be educated together. Mann never mentioned the Irish or any other group by name. Rather, he framed his discussion around universal categories that transcended the level of the group.

Mann took as a premise that the children of one ethnic group were no more likely to misbehave, by nature, than the children of any other group. Lawlessness, Mann argued, did not result from inherent weakness or corruption. Criminals were surely made and not born, generated "because of their vicious or defective education, when children."[84] Nor did this defective early education come as a choice made on the part of children. Children were dependents, at the mercy of the decisions of parents and other providers. Children who came from defective instruction in the home should not be blamed for inadequate opportunity not of their own making. They were *sufferers*, Mann said, suffering not only for the "iniquities" of their parents, but "for their neglect and even for their ignorance."[85]

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[84] HM, "Means and Objects of Common School Education" 13.
[85] HM, "Means and Objects of Common School Education," 17-18.

Strip away the education children received when young, Mann seemed to be saying, and children were more the same than different.

But the proper assignment of blame only partially answered the problem that many parents who had abandoned the public schools must have been feeling at the time. Mann summarized their concerns in a statement to the legislature some months later. "Some of the children in the public school are so addicted to profanity or obscenity, so prone to trickishness or to vulgar and mischievous habits," he said, repeating the arguments he had heard from parents, "as to render a removal of their own children from such contaminating influences an obligatory precaution."[86]

Were these fears justified by practical experience? Mann must have known many men and women who had been heard such talk during their younger years in the common schools but had apparently not been the worse for it as adults. And, as one whose early schooling was by his own account deprived, Mann may have counted himself among this group. But his main answer to these parents was that they had more power to improve the schools than they realized and should not abrogate their power or cede it to others. If "such objectors bestow that guardian care, that parental watchfulness upon the common schools, which an institution, so wide and deep-reaching in its influences, demands of all intelligent men, might not these repellent causes be mainly abolished?"[87] By invoking "parental watchfulness" as a way of ridding the school of "repellent" behaviors, Mann suggested that middle-class parents—and by extension their children—had at least as much power to influence and inspire others to adopt their own habits of mind, as their own real or imagined objects of fear had to pull down or degrade. If bad examples had

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[86] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 54.
[87] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 54-55.

brought on undesirable behavior, could not good examples yield the opposite? If homes had generated ignorance, might schools show the better way? If surrounded by the right influences, Mann argued, children could be cured of their "mischievous habits."

Mann was not above invoking the fear of the mob, an old and trusty argument that had been trotted out by republicans for a generation or more. The cost of an unenlightened citizenry, it was often said, was the downfall of the republican experiment.[88] Mann updated the argument for his present setting, advising parents who had abandoned the common schools to consider the long-term implications of their actions. The long-term outcome would not be savory. Students cast to the side and abandoned to their own vice would one day take over the ballot box, he warned. "After a few swift years, those children, whose welfare they [i.e. parents] now discard, and whose associations they deprecate, will constitute more than *five sixths* of the whole body of that community, of which their own children will be only a feeble minority, vulnerable at every point, and utterly incapable of finding a hiding-place for any earthly treasure, where the witness, the juror and the voter cannot reach and annihilate it!"[89]

Mann must have noticed that many of the newer private schools bore a denominational stamp. Founded in the ferment of the religious awakenings of the early nineteenth century, these schools delighted in inculcating students in the religious creed of a particular church or sect. Mann was fine with churches sponsoring colleges, but he

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[88] Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of the People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996).

[89] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 55. Mann also made a financial argument for returning to the common schools. By 1837, one-sixth of Massachusetts school children were being educated in private schools. These students paid in aggregate $328,000 for their tuition. For the five-sixths educated in the common schools, taxation generated $465,200. Mann believed that the common schools would dramatically benefit materially were this private school tuition invested in the common schools. *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 57-58.

worried that their influence on primary education would divide the common good.[90] It was not right for children to learn to view their neighbors as foes before they could first see them as friends.

It is sometimes assumed that Unitarians, of which Mann was one, feared a loss of status in making arguments along these lines. After all, the churches that seemed most enthusiastic about denominational education were also those in numerical ascendancy during this period—the Methodist and the Baptists. Mann showed no particular animosity toward any particular church in any of his writings, and it is doubtful that his views were motivated by religious prejudice. He was more concerned with hard feelings, bickering, and putting others down, and thought that private denominational schools, in their zeal to draw converts to their side, were particularly susceptible to such conflicts. Instead of a school where children were taught general morals like civility and decency and love of neighbor, denominational school students "are taught, from their tenderest years to wield the sword of polemics with fatal dexterity; and where the gospel, instead of being a temple of peace, is converted into an armory of deadly weapons, for social, interminable warfare."[91] The one sure preventative for this dystopian future was schools where harmony, unity, and the common good prevailed.

Dystopianism struck Mann as a useful rhetorical tool, but it was not what truly animated his speeches on education. They spent more time on the presences of education than on its absences; more on the glorious heights it could lift human potential than on

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[90] Mann's approval of denominational colleges can be found in *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 56. On Mann and the common good, see William J. Reese, "Public Schools and the Elusive Search for the Common Good," in *Reconstructing the Common Good in Education: Coping with Intractable American Dilemmas*, ed. Larry Cuban and Dorothy Shipps (Stanford, Calif.: Stanford University Press, 2000), 13-31, esp. 15-23.

[91] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 56-57.

the benighted depths its absence might sink the state or the nation. Fear, he knew from experience, might motivate temporarily, but it could not sustain a person's action. Mann thought that parents might come around if they came to see that the immigrant in the classroom was capable of far more than they realized. "We are not to regard children according to what they are," Mann argued, but "to what they are capable of becoming."[92] Even boys who swore or got into trouble had the potential to do great things. He knew from his own experience that the "spirit of genius" could be found anywhere, in any class of people, if only it could be properly cultivated.[93]

"The first subject of education is the minds of children," Mann once said in a speech dating to the mid-1830s. The formulation essentially disembodied children, relegating heredity, race, religion, and culture to the background. Only a "mind" capable of enlargement was left for consideration.[94]

To strike the right tone, Mann tied the destinies of the nation to its children, not so much to show what terrors might befall the county as to show what the nation—and indeed the world itself—might become if the sum of human intelligence were truly harnessed. "I look upon every new mind that comes into the world," he said, "as the addition of new energy to the power of the world. Were education what it should be, the new minds that are coming into life would be an augmentation of the public resources, an enlargement of the national capacity, new material out of which welfare & happiness for

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[92] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [7-8], section 55, reel 31, HMC.

[93] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 55-56.

[94] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [7-8], HMC. Europeans frequently spoke about the object of schooling in terms that highlighted the needs and interests of the state. When Mann explained the object of the Massachusetts schools, he placed the concerns of children at the center. The purpose of common schools, he said, was "to give to every child in the Commonwealth a free, straight, solid path-way, by which he could walk directly up from the ignorance of an infant to a knowledge of the primary duties of man." *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 24.

mankind might be wrought."[95] For the Revolutionary generation, education had primarily a defensive function: it protected the great republic experiment against collapse. For Mann, education had an offensive function as well: every educated child added to the "welfare & happiness of mankind" and thus "the power of the world."

It followed that children were a great source of national wealth, though not by using them as an asset in the family economy, as had been the case in Mann's own life. "The minds which are constantly emerging into existence," Mann argued, "ought to be regarded with the eye of a statesman, as a natural & ever-springing source of public prosperity & grandeur. Why contend for a narrow strip of territory or a barren island & yet neglect the mighty resources of aggrandizement which lie in the human mind?" States and nations were ignoring resources right under their noses. We strive to develop agricultural and mineral searches, he said, but disregard "the inexhaustible riches of intellect & of genius, which lie buried in the human soul."[96]

Talk of "inexhaustible…genius" tapped into debates about the perfectibility of the human race found everywhere in America in the 1830s. Mann did not elect some children to success and others to failure, as his Calvinist forefathers did. He accepted the basic presupposition of the Enlightenment that every human being was endowed with the capacity of rationality and thus enlargement. But Mann went beyond mere reason and spoke in more Romantic terms in granting to every child the possibility of great heights of creativity. "Every child has a portion of that inventive genius, which [might] become mightier than the power of any earthly king," Mann said. There was a "slumbering ocean

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[95] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [7-8], HMC.
[96] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [7-8], HMC.

in every bosom."[97] Advocates for human perfectibility were more likely to see the church or voluntary associations as the answer than Mann was. He thought the state was better equipped to help all people, especially the weakest and most vulnerable among them, the little children.

Mann's point was that no one, prior to the work of educating, knew for sure the heights to which "inventive genius" could go. He willingly acknowledged that some minds are naturally more gifted than others, that one child might be more capable than another. But these were differences in individuals, not class. "By what authority does any one class or calling in our social organization assent its original superiority over any other?" Mann asked his fellow legislators. "What right has any man, who represents the average of his class or vocation in life, arrogantly to tell me that if I had enjoyed their advantages I should still have been inferior to them[?] What right has any man to say, that the Creator has lavished superior natures upon his class, but stunted mine with a scant[y] measure of endowments"?[98] Children should not be judged as members of an ethnic class with "superior" or "inferior" natures. Every child was innocent in the beginning.

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Horace Mann lived in an era where the image of the innocent child was starting to enter into public consciousness. At the same time that Mann was galloping all over Massachusetts giving his speech in defense of children, a reformer of a different stripe was churning out lightning-fast prose across the Atlantic in London. Charles Dickens was

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[97] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [9, 16], HMC.
[98] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [11], HMC.

then thick into writing what has been called the first novel written with a child as its central character. *Oliver Twist* was a tale about an orphan boy who, though "cuffed and buffeted through the world," rises above it through pluck, steely will, and, yes, education.[99]

Oliver Twist, of course, is partly autobiographical, based loosely on Dickens' experience of spending time in a blacking factory when he was a child. Mann never knew the poverty that Dickens knew when he was young. He never faced the indignity of abandonment or the fear and confusion of not knowing where his next meal would come from. But as a boy who felt himself overworked, perhaps even mistreated, Mann was more conscious of the poor—and the children of the poor—than most of his colleagues. He and Dickens shared the same urge to reach out and protect children from unfortunate circumstances. Dickens' "sympathies went out to children everywhere—to the lonely, the misunderstood, the mistreated."[100] Mann said he spent time thinking about those who were "scantily fed, or insufficiently clothed, or coldly sheltered, or subjected from necessity to life-wasting toil, or debarred from the pleasures of social intercourse & the means of moral & religious instruction."[101]

Mann and Dickens both embraced a view that affirmed the child's native innocence and goodness, an image that had entered into public discourse by the mid-eighteenth century, had spread diffusely to influence artists and writers, philosophers and clergyman, and politicians, and was, by the 1830s, entering into middle class discourse

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[99] Adrian Arthur, *Dickens and the Parent-Child Relationship* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 1984), 72. Dickens serialized *The Adventures of Oliver Twist, or the Parish Boy's Progress* in *Bentley's Miscellany* between February 1837 and April 1839, with breaks in June and October 1837 and September 1838. Paul Schlicke, ed., *Oxford Reader's Companion to Dickens* (Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press, 1999), 429.

[100] Arthur, *Dickens and the Parent-Child Relationship*, 13.

[101] HM, unpublished speech [undated], [1], section 54, reel 31, HMC.

and sensibility.[102] It is not clear that either Dickens or Mann read Rousseau, the great articulator of the image of childhood innocence, but they didn't have to, for the innocence of children could be derived after Calvinist original sin and predestination had been sloughed away.[103] Dickens' children often appear as "little newcomers from a pre-lapsarian world," bewildered and confused as they try and make their way through a dark, forbidding, and often corrupt adult world.[104] Mann's creed was that "God made of one blood all the children of men, & that circumstances have caused the diversities among them." Those "now stamped with inferiority are all capable of rising to the common level; & of ascending too, if that level ascends."[105]

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[102] The classic work on this image is Peter Coveney, *The Image of Childhood: The Individual and Society: A Study of the Theme in English Literature,* rev. ed. (Middlesex, UK: Penguin Books, 1967). The influence of the Romantic image of the innocent child on children's literature in the eighteenth and early nineteenth century is far more developed than it is on nineteenth-century school reform. See, for example, James Holt McGavran Jr., ed., *Romanticism and Children's Literature in Nineteenth-Century England* (Athens: University of George Press, 1991); Hugh Cunningham, *The Children of the Poor: Representations of Childhood since the Seventeenth Century* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1991); James Holt McGavran Jr., *Literature and the Child: Romantic Continuations, Postmodern Contestations* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1999); Andrew O'Malley, *The Making of the Modern Child: Children's Literature and Childhood in the Late Eighteenth Century* (New York: Routledge, 2003). For an argument on the influence of Romanticism on school reform, see William J. Reese, "The Origins of Progressive Education," *History of Education Quarterly* 41, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 1-24.

[103] There is no evidence that Dickens suffered from Calvinist teaching as a child, but it is clear from his adult fiction that he rejected Calvinist tenets. Angus Wilson, "Dickens on Children and Childhood," in *Dickens 1970: Centenary Essays*, ed. Michael Slater (London: Chapman & Hall for the Dickens Fellowship, 1970), 195-227, esp. 215, 217. On the influence of Rousseau's innocent child, more generally, see David Grylls, *Guardians and Angels: Parents and Children in Nineteenth-Century Literature* (London: Faber and Faber, 1978), 31-36.

[104] Malcolm Andrews, *Dickens and the Grown-up Child* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 1994), 9-10.

[105] HM, unpublished speech [ca. 1834-35], [11], HMC. Mann is paraphrasing Acts 17:26. The image of Romantic childhood innocence has more recently come under attack. Some have argued that it corresponds "less to the reality of childhood than to the adult's need of a comforting or inspiring mythology." Penny Brown, *The Captured World: The Child and Childhood in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing in England* (New York: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1993), 181. The more recent literature tends to emphasize the point that nineteenth-century writers were ambivalent about childhood innocence and did not fully embrace a single overarching view. Marah Gubar, *Artful Dodgers: Reconceiving the Golden Age of Children's Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009). On the extreme end, some deny that a cult

Mann did not blame the condition of the poor on chronic institutional failures the way Dickens did. English reformers pined for common schools of the kind of Massachusetts had even before Mann came along. Mann did concern himself with needless suffering, some of it brought on unwittingly by those who were better off. "Some [of the poor] suffer in their feelings," Mann said, "because they are hourly conscious of not being treated with the respect, which they see accorded to others."[106]

It must have been difficult for the children of the poor to observe the children of the rich abandon the common school for private schools. Many others "suffer in their minds, because they are ignorant, or, what is worse than ignorance, they are a little instructed upon one side only, of all the great questions of life." Still others "suffer in their manners & habits, because thro' the pressure of outward circumstances, they have become less observant of the common decencies & proprieties of life."[107]

The poor were not destined to remain poor, according to Mann; they were not born to their station as an act of providential fate. Their hardships were "not nature's appointment." God had not foreordained them to privations, "which I do not believe involved in the system of Divine Providence." Nevertheless, the poor needed the rich; they needed their patience and their longsuffering, they needed the rich to not give up on them, to see the great potential the poor had within themselves. Invoking the language of natural philosophy, Mann held that all men, by nature, were designed for "happiness."[108] Common schools, he believed, were part of Providence's design of the happiness of children everywhere.

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of childhood innocence ever existed. James R. Kincaid, *Child-Loving: The Erotic Child and Victorian Culture* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 73.

[106] HM, unpublished speech [undated], [1-2], section 54, reel 31, HMC.

[107] HM, unpublished speech [undated], [1], section 54, reel 31, HMC.

[108] HM, unpublished speech [undated], [2], section 54, reel 31, HMC.

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Mann's rhetoric of inclusion raises the question of the scope of his vision. How far did the potential for "inventive genius" extend? Were African American children to be included in the common school Mann sought to enshrine? Because he never argued for an end to the desegregation of schools on the basis of race while he was secretary of the Board of Education, Mann has been accused of backwardness on questions of racial integration. Mann's common school, these critics suggest, was not for all children; it was only for white children.[109]

It must be said at the outset that there is nothing in Mann's writing that speaks derogatorily of black people. Mann seems to have been fairly typical of educated northerners who came of age in the New Republic in condemning slavery as a moral evil. In one early college essay, Mann argued that American "self-government" must oppose "subjugation, slavery, and consequent degradation and ignominy."[110] Slave owners were not the only party Mann singled out for condemnation. Another early essay criticized the hypocrisy of northern merchants who perpetuated the very culture they condemned. "Lord we thank thee we are not like other men," who are guilty of "enslaving their fellow beings whose only crime is complexion," Mann mocked, alluding to the Pharisee's prayer in the Gospel of Luke.[111] In reality, these modern Pharisees, "by their consumption of the produce, and traffick of it," enable "every lash that brings so deep a groan" from

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[109] For criticism of Mann, see George A. Levesque, *Black Boston: African American Life and Culture in Urban America, 1750-1860* (New York: Garland, 1994), 213-14.

[110] HM, "Government," Apr. 25, 1817, reel 2, HMC.

[111] "God, I thank thee, that I am not as other men are, extortioners, unjust, adulterers." Luke 18:11 (KJV).

slaves.[112]

Mann saw the enslavement of black people as deeply unjust. But he did not stand idly by, as many others did, indifferent to suffering. He cared enough about the condition of blacks to get involved in antislavery reform in an aggressive way. Early in his political career, he was one of the founding members of the Massachusetts Colonization Society, which like its parent organization, the American Colonization Society, sought a solution to the problem of slavery by encouraging manumitted freed people to move to Africa.[113]

It is true that colonization is an idea that has not aged well, offending our sense of inclusion. But for a time the movement attracted some of America's most perspicacious minds—Jefferson, Madison, the early Lincoln, and African Americans like Marcus Garvey. Colonization seemed the master key to the intractable problem of what to do with do with a large population that enjoyed neither full political participation nor social integration nor the promise of either.[114] Mann saw colonization in utilitarian and largely benevolent terms: "reducing the sum of human misery, & of augmenting the sum of human happiness."[115]

Like many colonizationists, Mann hewed closely to the rule of law when it came to slavery. He acknowledged that slavery was an "appalling evil," one that had no place among civilized societies. But he broke with immediate emancipationists when he reminded his fellow colonizationists that northerners had no legal jurisdiction over

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[112] HM, "The Blessings of New England" [1817-19], reel 2, HMC.

[113] On colonization, see Joanne Pope Melish, *Disowning Slavery: Gradual Emancipation and "Race" in New England, 1780-1860* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 192-98; George M. Frederickson, *The Black Image in the White Mind* (New York: Harper and Row, 1971), 1-42.

[114] Daniel Walker Howe, *What Hath God Wrought: The Transformation of America, 1815-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), 260.

[115] HM, untitled speech fragment, on back of letter from C. Hovey to HM, Dec. 24, 1829, reel 2, HMC.

southern states. They "are to us *foreign States*," their laws, however detestable, requiring respect.[116] Moreover the U.S. Constitution recognized the legality of slavery, Mann pointed out; it expressly provided that, wherever they were found, the fugitive slave "shall be delivered up, on application, to his master."[117] The law thus put strictures on what abolitionists could legitimately do. "We cannot go, we have no right to go, directly to the slave, and tear off his fetters," Mann said, countering the firebrand rhetoric of immediate emancipationists like William Lloyd Garrison. "We must go to the master, and adjure him, by all the sacred rights of humanity, by all the laws of natural justice….to raise the slave out of his abyss of degradation."[118] If radical abolitionists spoke the language of moral indignation, colonizationists spoke the language of moral suasion. "The tone for us to assume," Mann said, "is not one of command, but of persuasion."[119]

Mann's support for colonization should not be used as evidence that he believed in racial separation in the social sphere. There is no evidence that followed the most radical proposals to banish prohibitions against interracial marriage. Still, at the same time that he was arguing for colonization, he also argued privately that black children should sit alongside their white peers in the same school classrooms. In a little noticed 1833 letter to his friend Elizabeth Peabody, Mann contended that "blacks had been so long & so universally sacrificed to the whites, it would be no departure from even handed justice for once to adjust the balance between them." Blacks and whites, he said, should

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[116] "Address of Mr. Mann," *Colonizationist and Journal of Freedom* 1 (April 1833): 14-15.

[117] "Address of Mr. Mann," 15.

[118] "Address of Mr. Mann," 15.

[119] "Address of Mr. Mann," 15. Mann also argued against radical abolition on grounds of the sanctity of property. "Let us be watchful that we do not trample on one man's rights," Mann said in one of his colonization speeches, "while hurrying forward with impetuosity to vindicate those of another." "Address of Mr. Mann," 15.

attend the same schools despite the fear of race mixing on the part of some parents.[120]

Mann was part of a group of northern reformers who had come to see blacks as sharing a common humanity with whites. By the 1830s, antislavery advocates drew on a new language of humanitarianism to highlight the pain endured by enslaved blacks on emotional and sympathetic grounds.[121] Mann's contribution to this genre reflects the same sensibility in terms of children. In his 1833 letter to Peabody, Mann argued that black and white children are more alike than different: "alike in the capabilities of enjoying physical pleasures or suffering physical pain" and possessing "attributes, which are common to both & which by the same means may be such in the depths of moral pollution & wretchedness, or by the same means, may be made to soar to glory by the path of virtue." At one point, Mann seems to suggest that the sine qua non of the Romantic spirit—imagination itself—is the defining feature of all children, black and white alike. "To be alike, & to know & feel that we are alike in all these things—is it not enough" to see beyond "any diversity of color or form or circumstances"?[122]

Expansive views like these filled Mann's private conversation with trusted, like-minded reformers such as Elizabeth Peabody. But little trace of them can be found in his public speeches in the 1830s and early 1840s. Upon his appointment as secretary of the Board of Education, Mann seems to have moved deliberately toward a rhetoric that sought to stand above the most divisive issue of the day. As a politician who understood the halls of power, he must have known that the vitality of public school reform required

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[120] HM to Elizabeth Peabody, Aug. 24, 1833, reel 3, HMC. Mann was speaking specifically about the New England Asylum for the Blind, where he served on the board of directors. But there is little doubt that Mann's views on this semi-public institution held for other public schools of the state.

[121] Margaret Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

[122] HM to Elizabeth Peabody, Aug. 24, 1833.

the widest possible coalition of advocates and supporters. School desegregation, he surely believed, threatened the greater good for the greatest number.

But this position of deliberate and calculated distance did not generate opposition for much of Mann's career. One searches in vain for public criticisms of Mann's silence on the question of school segregation in the 1830s. No one in a position of power seemed to think that desegregation should be a priority at the beginning of the common school movement. Even the most progressive school committees, when presented with proposals to end segregation, failed to acquire the votes to do so.[123] Given this failure, it seems doubtful that Mann would have had the ability to convert large groups of segregationists to the desegregationist cause, even had he had the political will to do so.

The criticisms of Mann's silence of school integration do not begin to appear until the mid-1840s, after slavery had begun to become closely aligned to party politics, fracturing the Whig party and making abolitionism a more politically viable position. Even then, the criticisms of Mann suggest political opportunism, as though radical Whigs sought to use the schools as a wedge to galvanize more moderate Whigs in the fight against their Democratic opponents.[124] The Massachusetts state legislature did not seem especially eager to act on school integration. Not until 1855, following the demise of the Whig party and the polarization of racial politics along sectional lines, did the legislature vote to outlaw segregation in the state's public schools.[125]

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[123] On denial of the Boston School Committee of various petitioners to integrate Boston's public schools, see Levesque, *Black Boston,* 165-229; Carlton Mabee, *Black Freedom: The Nonviolent Abolitionists from 1830 Through the Civil War* (London: Macmillan, 1970), 168.

[124] Mann's fiercest critic on this issue was the radical abolitionist and Garrisonian Wendell Phillips. James Brewer Stewart, *Wendell Phillips: Liberty's Hero* (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 99-100. For Phillips attacks of Mann, see *Liberator,* Aug. 28, 1846; Dec. 24, 1847; Feb. 4, 1848; May 25, 1853.

[125] Donald M. Jacobs, "The Nineteenth-Century Struggle over School Segregation in

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Between the end of August and the middle of November 1837, Mann delivered his speech in twelve of the thirteen counties in Massachusetts. (Suffolk County, home of Boston, was the exception.) His final speech of the season came in Concord, Middlesex County, on November 14. It started out as "a charmer of a day," Mann wrote, before a great storm arose, making the convention small in numbers, "tho' exceedingly respectable in character." A young Ralph Waldo Emerson, then in his early thirties, braved the rain to be there, and Mann slept the night at Emerson's home, "by special invitation."[126]

On the whole, the conventions exceeded Mann's expectations. There was great energy and good will at most of his stops, and many of the counties passed resolutions pledging to reform common schools along specific lines.[127] Except for two counties, all the conventions had a large attendance. "The character of the conventions for intelligence and moral worth has probably never been surpassed," Mann reported. Partisan politics was absent, and "harmony and unity" abounded.[128]

"The labor is done," Mann recorded the day following the Concord convention,

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Boston," *Journal of Negro Education* 39 (1970): 76-85; James Brewer Stewart, *Abolitionist Politics and the Coming of the Civil War* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2008), 22. By contrast, legally-segregated black public schools were "at their peak strength" in New York state through the 1870s, and the state legislature did not abolish such schools until 1938. Carlton Mabee, *Black Education in New York State: From Colonial to Modern Times* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1979), 192, 281. Segregated black schools did not end in Philadelphia until 1937. Vincent P. Franklin, *The Education of Black Philadelphia: The Social and Educational History of a Minority Community, 1900-1950* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1979), 59.

[126] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 22; HM, Journal, Nov. 15, 1837.

[127] See, for example, "Common School Convention," *Greenfield Gazette and Mercury,* Oct 3, 1837, [2-3]; "The Cause of Education," *Salem Observer,* Nov 11, 1837, [2];

[128] *First Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 22-24.

upon returning to Boston. “With much weariness, with almost unbounded anxiety,--with some thwartings, but, on the whole, with unexpected & extraordinary encouragement, the work is done.”[129]

The work, however, was just the beginning.

[129] HM, Journal, Nov. 15, 1837.

Chapter 2

Teachers for the Young

Mann's speeches before the county conventions called to mind the enhanced cultural status that children in America had begun to enjoy by the 1830s. Mann could speak of children as "more wonderful" than the globe and "more glorious" than the sun and find appreciative audiences willing to at least consider the proposition. Yet, for all his perorations, Mann must have realized the tenuousness of his own rhetoric. Speeches could all too easily vanish into thin air, the enthusiasm of the moment soon turning cold. What good were words if they never translated into concrete action? What Massachusetts needed, he realized, was some kind of institutionalized monument to children, places where their interests could be parsed, measured, and discussed—and for generations to come. What was needed were places where teachers could learn about children's ways and be trained in teaching methods that would reach them more effectively.

In the century immediately after the American Revolution, all the great humanitarian movements on American soil, often following European models, generated some lasting institution to the oppressed populations the movements aimed to help. Advocates on behalf of the poor developed the almshouse as a more humane alternative to debtor's prison. Champions of the mentally ill persuaded state legislatures to found asylums. Advocates for women and blacks promoted their causes in the public lyceum, which would become the hotbed for liberation advocacy—women's suffrage and slavery emancipation. Teacher-training schools emerged as the institutionalization of humanitarian reform for children. Unlike other humanitarian movements, teacher-training

schools were not places frequented by their oppressed population. Yet the institutions did seek indirectly to improve the condition of children by helping teachers to understand children on their own terms: how children learned, what teaching methods could best reach them, and what classroom environment augmented the best learning among children. All these ideas became central planks of the reform movement on behalf of children.[1]

Mann was not, of course, the first or the only one who believed that teacher training schools could help children thrive. The lucrativeness of the Massachusetts School Fund fueled the imaginations of citizen reformers who wondered if arguments for the founding of entirely new institutions might finally get a hearing. During the 1837 legislative session, several groups asked that funds be allocated for training teachers. Delegates from Plymouth and Norfolk counties, citing the excellence of teacher training in Prussia, asked for the legislature to fund teachers' seminaries in every county in Massachusetts. The request was largely upbeat and positive. We "cheerfully & gratefully acknowledge, that our town schools have shed inestimable blessings on successive generations," the petitioners wrote. These blessings ought to be extended to many more people.[2] The American Institute of Instruction, a group of teachers and intellectuals based in Boston, spoke in darker, more apocalyptic terms. Many teachers were "wretchedly

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[1] Christopher J. Lucas, *Teacher Education in America: Reform Agendas for the Twenty-First Century* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997); James W. Fraser, *Preparing America's Teachers: A History* (New York: Teachers College, Columbia University, 2007), and Donald H. Parkerson and Jo Ann Parkerson, *Transitions in American Education: A Social History of Teaching* (New York: RoutledgeFarmer, 2001).

[2] Petition of a convention of Delegates from the Town of Plymouth Co and a Part of Norfolk, Jan. 24, 1837, Massachusetts Legislative Dockets, 1837, Ch. 241, MA; for a published version, see Henry Barnard, *Normal Schools, and Other Institutions, Agencies, and Means Designed for the Professional Education of Teachers* (Hartford, Conn.: Case, Tiffany, 1851), 85-91.

prepared" and "deplorably incompetent." Students were sinking. The legislators had to do something before it was too late.[3]

Memorials like these were not entirely new to the legislative halls of Massachusetts; they came after years of failed attempts at persuading the state to help take responsibility for educating teachers in their craft. James G. Carter, a schoolteacher from Lancaster who is often credited with being the first on American soil to argue for the need for formally trained teachers, brought the subject before the public eye in a series of articles written for the *Boston Patriot* in 1824.[4] Three years later, Carter memorialized the state legislature for aid to establish a seminary specifically for the education of teachers. The bill was defeated. Carter opened his seminary anyway on the strength of appropriations from his hometown, but opposition to the extra taxation soon developed, funding withdrew, and Carter retreated to tutoring young teachers privately.[5]

Carter's difficulty in finding a ready audience for his proposals illustrates the challenges posed by American political institutions to public-spirited reformers in the New Republic. No one in Massachusetts or any other state could make headway persuading the government to take on the financial commitment of founding schools exclusively for teachers.[6] As local tax burdens increased, towns like Lancaster became

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[3] Memorial of the Directors of the American Institute of Instruction, Jan. 14, 1837, Massachusetts Legislative Dockets, 1837, Ch. 241, MA. The actual language in the memorial is "deplorable incompetency."

[4] The letters were expanded in Carter's *Letters to the Hon. William Prescott, L.L.D. on the Free Schools of New England, with Remarks on the Principles of Instruction* (Boston: Cummings, Hilliard, 1824), and in his *Essays upon Popular Education* (Boston: Bowels & Dearborn, 1826).

[5] Frank W. Wright, "The Evolution of the Normal Schools," *Elementary School Journal* 30 (Jan. 5, 1930): 363-71, esp. 364-65; "School for Instructors," *Salem Observer,* March 24, 1827, [2]. As a member of the Massachusetts House of Representations, Carter later drafted the bill that created the state board of education in 1837. Lawrence A. Cremin, *American Education: The National Experience, 1783-1876* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 135-36.

[6] In 1834 the New York legislature provided some state subsidies for classes in teacher

increasingly sensitive to the problem of increasing demands on public funds. The desire to avoid a money pit was really enough. The main problem, though, touched a very old nerve. The country had been founded on the premise that centralized authority endangered free institutions. For many, teacher training looked like a consolidation of power in the government and away from the people, thus inciting longstanding fears that America was doomed to the degree it slouched towards what many derogatorily referred to as "the Old World."

These concerns were increasingly aggravated by the perception that the divisions between rich and poor were widening. During the same year in which Carter published his letters in the *Boston Patriot*, the Massachusetts legislature struck down a law requiring towns to keep a grammar school because, as many in the legislature argued, the schools benefitted mainly the rich at the expense of the poor. The premise of the change was that locals should be able to decide on educational matters without state interference.[7] In the same way, teacher-training schools struck many as an imposition on rather than an aid to the poor.

Horace Mann became convinced quite early in his new duties that towns and families lacked either the money or the resolve to do something for teachers. Locals had to be helped. Mann's concerns were heightened soon after taking over as secretary, when

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training to be provided in private academies within the state. Other states soon followed that lead. Lucas, *Teacher Education in America*, 16-20.

[7] Some argued that this reasoning was flawed, pointing out that the grammar schools were supported mainly by property taxes, which were paid disproportionately by the rich. Moreover, these critics said, the rich could afford to send their children to grammar schools or academies outside the town. The poor could not. "The [new] law therefore, stops the poor man's child at the threshold." "Public Schools," *Boston Weekly Messenger,* Oct. 21, 1824, [3]. The demise of grammar schools coincided with support for public high schools, which began in Boston in 1821 and were pitched as non-classical education for the commercial classes. William J. Reese, *The Origins of the American High School* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 1-15.

he inquired about the practices of schools in a questionnaire sent out to the school committees of every town in Massachusetts. Were the committees following the school law that required them to examine prospective teachers for their literary qualifications and their capacity to manage a classroom? Much to his dismay, Mann learned that these examinations were not taking place in many instances. Ill-prepared teachers were being hired, just as the American Institute of Instruction had warned, and no one was doing anything about it. Mann came away with the impression that of the 6,000 teachers working in the Massachusetts schools, barely 200 considered teaching their permanent profession.[8]

The results of the survey made existing conditions untenable. Mann realized that the next round of legislative debates had to involve the problem of teacher-training. In the early weeks of 1838, as legislators began streaming in from across the Commonwealth, the Board of Education resolved to recommend "the passage of a law, providing some plan qualifying school teachers more perfectly, for their arduous and difficult duties."[9]

But Mann well knew that memorials and speeches alone would not be enough to found entirely new institutions. Those tactics had been tried in previous years and had come up wanting. In order to move past the inertia that had grounded such proposals as James G. Carter's, the Board of Education would have do something extraordinary. It somehow had to convince a skeptical public that it was in their interest to make a long-term financial investment in children.

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[8] "I am led to believe, that in a majority of instances, the examination is either wholly omitted or is formal and superficial." *First Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the First Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 28-29; Richard Kollen, *Lexington, Massachusetts: Treasures from Historic Archives* (Mount Pleasant, S.C.: History Press, 2006), 50.

[9] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, Jan. 2, 1838, MA.

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Historians often link the beginnings of teacher-training schools in the trans-Atlantic world to the rationalization of the nation-state in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries.[10] There is no denying that the task of making teachers more efficient had a state-building function or that European kings saw in teacher-training schools a way of keeping their subjects in order. But that view misses the mark by exaggerating the importance of political context and underplaying an equally significant intellectual context. The first teacher-training school *(Lehrseminarien)* in Europe opened in Berlin, in 1756, long before the French Revolution provided rulers with a case study of democracy run amok. In the mid-eighteenth century, the conception of human beings as rational beings helped give steady rise to the state-supported network of teacher-training institutions that flourished across Europe. By the end of the eighteenth century, Prussia could boast over forty teacher-training schools, each with between fifty and a hundred pupils.[11]

These schools were founded in a century in which Enlightenment ideals were taking hold across the Western world. John Locke's *Essay Concerning Human Understanding* (1689) helped launch an Enlightened theory of human nature that provided the starting point for many later writers on education, including Rousseau.

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[10] For sources that make this point, see António Nóvoa, "The Teaching Profession in Europe: Historical and Sociological Analysis," in *Problems and Prospects in European Education,* ed. Elizabeth Shermon Swing, Jürgen Schriewer, and François Orivel (Westport, Conn.: Praeger, 2000), 45-71, esp. 49-50.

[11] Mary Jo Maynes, *Schooling in Western History: A Social History* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1985), 64. Some of the teacher training institutions in the mid-eighteenth century arose through private gifts, not government funding. Charles DeGarmo, "The German System of Normal Schools," *Science* 10 (Dec. 23, 1887): 302-4.

Locke, of course, denied that the infant child had any innate ideas at birth. The mind was a *tabula rasa,* and knowledge could be obtained only through sensation and the subsequent reflections the mind gave to them. The belief that knowledge began with sensation gave the education of children a new sense of urgency. Which sensations should be presented to a child and which should be avoided? Many intellectuals concluded that the order of presentation could make sensations and thus ideas more clear and distinct. Enlightened *philosophes* across Europe embraced Locke's sensationalist psychology and became deeply engrossed in the task of using the mechanism of the state to make education more rational, more systematic, and more precise. In France, where Lockean psychology took hold, teacher training schools *(écoles normales)* opened in the 1790s, and additional schools were founded after Napoleon's reign.[12]

Enlightened ideas about education took a somewhat different form in the German states. During the late eighteenth century, Prussian intellectuals sought new principles of social cohesion within a social order that had replaced royally-decreed social orders consisting of mutual dependents with individuals of equal standing before the law.[13] Having freed themselves from the ideological clutches of the church, many German intellectuals came to glorify the human, speaking of its works and creations and possibilities in ecstatic terms. "The Greeks deified Humanity," Johann Gottfried von Herder observed, but the Germans "elevated the divine in man to deity."[14] Even those who couldn't go that far believed, with Locke and Rousseau, that man was primevally

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[12] For a discussion of Locke's influence on eighteenth-century France, see Harvey Chisick, *The Limits of Reform in the Enlightenment: Attitudes toward the Education of the Lower Classes in Eighteenth-Century France* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1981), 38-45.

[13] Matthew Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism: The Transformation of Prussian Political Culture, 1806-1848* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 29.

[14] William S. Learned, *The Oberlehrer: A Study of the Social and Professional Evolution of the German Schoolmaster* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1914), 33.

good and ought to be rescued from the corruptions of society. For German Idealists, each human person was a flower, unfolding in its own way and requiring society's utmost respect. Even the lowliest human creature was rationally endowed and could benefit, therefore, by a systematic rather than haphazard education; indeed, to not attempt systemization could be viewed, in some quarters, as a crime against the natural order of things. Beginning in 1819, the Prussian government established teacher-training schools on a large scale, facilitating the self-regulation of the social order by rationalizing the instruction of uniquely fashioned human beings.[15]

Within this ideological context, the Prussian schools became the envy of the age. In 1830, after revolution toppled Charles X's regime, French officials sought refinement in their educational system not by looking internally but by sending Victor Cousin, the French minister of Public Instruction and Ecclesiastical Affairs, to study the schools in Prussia and other German states.[16] Cousin spent six weeks touring schools and interviewing teachers and government officials. He came away deeply impressed, and wrote up his observations in his *Rapport sur l'état de l'Instruction Publique dans quelques pays de l'Allemgane* (1833). The report caused a sensation among reformers on both sides of the Atlantic and was soon translated into English in multiple editions.[17]

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[15] Robert Anchor, *Germany Confronts Modernization: German Culture and Society, 1790-1890* (Lexington, Mass.: D. C. Heath, 1972); Levinger, *Enlightened Nationalism,* 29. See also Christopher Clark, *Iron Kingdom: The Rise and Downfall of Prussia, 1600-1947* (Cambridge, Mass.: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

[16] On normal schools in France, see Anne T. Quartararo, *Women Teachers and Popular Education in Nineteenth-Century France: Social Values and Corporate Identity at the Normal School Institution* (Newark: University of Delaware Press, 1995), 23-35.

[17] David Phillips, *The German Example: English Interest in Educational Provision in Germany* (London: Continuum, 2011), 34-36; Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 35. Sarah Austin translated and published report into English in 1834. Wiley & Long, a New York publishing house, published an edition of Austin's translation in 1835.

Cousin's main point was that teacher-training in Prussia was not really a luxury or a flourish; it was the key element of Prussian schooling, "the very life blood" of the entire system of public instruction. No teacher in Prussia could have been called "incompetent," as the American Institution of Instruction called Massachusetts teachers, because incompetent teachers could not get a school committee to hire them. Prussians considered teaching a profession requiring special training and skill. Each teacher had three years of training in a teacher's seminary and underwent rigorous exams, in both the theory and the practice of teaching, before being permitted to teach. Follow-up observations in the classroom certified that teachers were proficient in managing and disciplining students.[18]

The success of the Prussian schools were much discussed in intellectual circles on both sides of the Atlantic. Charles Brooks, a young Unitarian clergyman from Hingham, Massachusetts, became the schools' chief expositor on American soil. In the summer of 1834, while traveling across the Atlantic on the way home from a literary soiree in London, Brooks became engrossed in conversation with Dr. Henrich Julius of Hamburg, who had been sent by the king of Prussia to examine American schools, hospitals, and prisons, much as Tocqueville had done for France a few years before. Brooks and Julius spent forty days as roommates on the boat. Julius explained the Prussian public school system, and Brooks was never the same after that. "I fell in love with the Prussian system," he later wrote. "It seemed to possess me like a missionary angel. I gave myself to it, and in the Gulf Stream I resolved to *do* something about *State* normal schools."[19]

Brooks came home to Massachusetts and soon began touting the virtues of

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[18] Victor Cousin, *Report on the State of Public Instruction in Prussia,* trans. Sarah Austin (London: Effingham Wilson, 1834).

[19] John Albree, *Charles Brooks and His Work for Normal Schools* (Medford, Mass.: J. C. Miller, 1907), 16.

Prussian teacher training. He lectured on the subject wherever he could get a hearing, standing before audiences in churches and town halls all over the New England states.[20] In the winter of 1837, he explained the Prussian system in a lecture given to the Massachusetts legislature.[21] Brooks was, in fact, the author of the memorial sent that season from the Plymouth and Norfolk counties, the document asking for a teacher-training school in every county. The memorial quoted long passages from the Cousins report and lobbied idealistically for a seminary for the training of teachers to be founded in every county in the state.[22]

Brooks' memorial said nothing about making the state more secure against the dangers of the democratic mob. Rather, Brooks argued on child-centered grounds that contained echoes of the aspirational language we sometimes hear today: every child, he said, should have "the chance of making the most of himself." He set teacher training within a sensationalist psychology reminiscent of John Locke's *Essay.* "We think the object of education," Brooks wrote, "is to develop all the powers, faculties & affections of human nature in their natural order, proper time & due proportion, so that each one may occupy the exact place in the grown-up character which God at first ordained in the infant constitution. Education we take to be the natural continuation of the process of

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[20] Herbst, *And Sadly Teach*, 21; "Lectures on Education," *Boston Evening Transcript,* Jan. 26, 1838, 2. Brooks also wrote newspaper articles lauding Prussian teacher training. See, for example, A Friend to Improvement, "Common School Education," *Norfolk [MA] Advertiser,* Nov. 25, 1837, [2], and C[harles] B[rooks], "Victor Cousin," *Christian Register and Boston Observer* 17 (Aug. 18, 1838): 130. Calvin Stowe, husband of the famous American novelist, spent several years in Europe and wrote an influential report, published in 1837, on the Prussian schools for the state of Ohio. He too recommended Prussian teacher training.

[21] Albree, *Charles Brooks and His Work for Normal Schools*, 24.

[22] Other U.S. states offered similar proposals. As early 1827, New York's governor recommended that a "central school on the monitorial plan ought to be established in each county [in New York] for the education of teacher." "Governor Clinton," *Boston Commercial Gazette,* Jan. 11, 1827, [2].

creation, taking up the process just where the Deity left it." How could teachers know how to develop all the "powers, faculties & affections" of children, in their natural order and proper time, without being guided in the task? Something this important, Brooks argued, paraphrasing Cousin, should not be left to chance. The state should not permit the "whole nature of man" to go underdeveloped.[23]

Brooks urged his audiences to start thinking of teaching as a profession, a life-long vocation, something that required great skill, as the Prussians believed. The American Institute of Instruction wholeheartedly agreed, emphasizing in its memorial to the Legislature the problems with a radically decentralized structure that encouraged towns to hire the cheapest teacher possible. The result, the Institute said, was teachers who were "exceedingly incompetent, in many respects": young men who were between college terms, teaching merely out of necessity; artisans who were in between jobs; and "persons who have failed in other callings and take to teaching as a last resort." None of these groups had plans to stay in teaching long-term and thus had little incentive to improve.[24]

The system was clearly broken. Something had to change, and soon.

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[23] Petition of a convention of Delegates from the Town of Plymouth County and a Part of Norfolk, Jan. 24, 1837. Brooks' argument about developing the "whole nature of man" echoed the writings of George Combe, the English phrenologist, who was widely read in Boston intellectual circles in the early 1830s. See Combe's *The Constitution of Man Considered in Relation to External Objects* (1828; Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon and Webb, 1841), 11, 43.

[24] Memorial of the Directors of the American Institute of Instruction, Jan. 14, 1837.

Horace Mann knew from his own experience what good teaching looked like. At age nineteen, he was stuck managing the family farm in Franklin with no hope of escape. His father had died six years earlier, and Horace was the only son in the family left at home, leaving responsibility for the family's income largely on his shoulders. And then, as though manna from heaven, Mann's routine was broken up. An itinerant schoolmaster named Samuel Barrett suddenly appeared in the neighborhood. Barrett moved to nearby Wrentham around 1815 and opened a school for advanced pupils.[25]

Peddlers of all varieties coursed up and down New England with their wares during the early nineteenth century. Barrett sold what restless adolescents like Mann wanted most, college preparation. Poor, rural young men entered college in record number between 1800 and 1850, prompted by depressed farm prices, exploding populations, and expanding professions. Young men who lived in bigger towns could get college preparation at academies; smaller towns like Franklin and Wrentham had no choice but to rely on itinerants like Barrett.[26]

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[25] There is disagreement about where Samuel Barrett actually taught. Mann says he came into the "neighborhood." [HM], "Horace Mann," in *Portraits of Eminent Americans Now Living,* 4 vols., ed. John Livingston (New York: Cornish, Lamport, 1853-54), 4:184. Mortimer Blake, the Franklin town historian, interpreted "neighborhood" to mean Franklin, and most have followed his authority. Mortimer Blake, *A History of the Town of Franklin, Mass* (Franklin, Mass.: By the Committee of the Town, 1879)*,* 166. But Mann signed his geometry textbook from this period "The Property of Horace Mann, Wrentham Feb. 3rd, 1816." HM, Geometry Copybook (1816), Antiochiana, Antioch College. I think it more likely that Barrett was in the larger town of Wrentham, not the smaller Franklin, filling the niche occupied by the on-again, off-again Wrentham Academy. Mann's attendance in Wrentham also helps explain the late observation of Mann's niece, Eliza Wilbur. According to Wilbur, Mann's mother told her that "Uncle H. used to walk four miles to avail himself of a few weeks more schooling after the school in their district had closed." The distance between Wrentham and Franklin is four miles. Eliza Scott Mann Wilbur to Benjamin P. Mann, Nov. 30, 1896, Benjamin Pickman Mann Papers, Antiochiana, Antioch College.

[26] David Jaffee, "Pedlers of Progress and the Transformation of the Rural North, 1760-1860," *Journal of American History* 78 (Sept. 1991): 511-35; J. M. Opal, *Beyond the Farm: National Ambitions in Rural New England* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2008), 96-125; David F. Allmendinger, *Paupers and Scholars: The Transformation of Student*

Mann remembered Barrett as an eccentric person, "abnormal both in appetites and faculties." He had trouble holding down a job, and sometimes went out in public intoxicated, which gained him few friends. But he was also a genius, able to recite page after page of Latin verse from memory, and Mann admired him for that. "Not the sentiments only, but the sentences, in the transposed order of their words, were as familiar to him as his A, B, C," Mann recalled.

Mann's mother must have worried over who would provide for the family in the event her son spent too much time away from the farm. She risked public castigation by permitting Horace to associate with a known drunkard. Yet, with his mother's "reluctant consent," Mann began preparing himself for college under Barrett's guidance.[27] Walking three miles to and from Barrett's school every day, Mann crammed an academy-level education into nine months. He promptly passed college entrance exams in Greek and Latin and was admitted directly into the sophomore class at Brown University, skipping his freshman year on the basis of his high marks on the exams.[28]

Looking back, Mann realized how lucky he was to have found Barrett, whose appearance in Wrentham was nothing less than a "fortunate accident." Mann could see that his rise to respectability would have been impossible without Barrett. After graduating from Brown, Mann parlayed his degree into a law career, heading off first to law school in Connecticut, clerking for a time, and then passing the Massachusetts bar.

Life in Nineteenth-Century New England (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975).

[27] Mrs. Mann may have also worried about who would provide for her livelihood in Horace's absence. Exactly who took care of the Mann farm during Mann's absence with Barrett or his later years in college remains a mystery. Mann's study with Barrett seems to be correlated with his younger sister Lydia's entry into the workforce as a teacher, which would have provided Mann's mother with income. It is also possible that Mrs. Mann rented the farm out to tenants after her sons left home.

[28] HM to Nahum Capen, June 13, 1850, Mann Papers, Brown University; [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:185.

Mann's great success in Boston as a lawyer in turn made his political career possible. Still, it was not Barrett's creation of fame and fortune that Mann emphasized in his history. Mann seemed most impressed by Barrett's expertise as a teacher, which had the effect of drawing out all the young student's exertions. "When I encountered a difficulty either in translation or syntax, and was ready to despair of success in overcoming it," Mann recalled, "the mere thought *how easy that would be to my teacher,* seemed not only to invigorate my effort, but to give me an enlargement of power, so that I could return to the charge and triumph."[29]

Mann's description highlighted the contingency and the fragility of children and their potential—and how crucial good teachers were to unlocking that potential. Had Samuel Barrett been any less of an expert in his subject matter, would Horace Mann's heart failed him when the classical languages became difficult? Without Barrett there to lift and inspire, Mann might never have seen an "enlargement of power." He might have faltered in the languages and thus never been admitted to college. His life might have turned out very differently than it did. Mann's "triumph," as he called it, seemed dependent on his coming into contact with a teacher who was expert in his craft.

As much as Barrett's expertise mattered, his manner was just as important. Barrett was genial, jolly, and forgiving. He seemed to understand the fears and anxieties of children. He well appreciated the challenge of trying to learn an unfamiliar tongue. When a student recited poorly, Barrett corrected the passage "in the most soothing and motherly voice." Mann never forgot the power of a teacher, expert and exuberant, to inspire and transform. Mann well knew that Samuel Barrett had redeemed his life.

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[29] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:184.

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Samuel Barrett was one of a kind, sui generis. His teaching gifts seemed more inborn than acquired, partly the result of personality and temperament. Not everyone could be a Samuel Barratt, but could something like Barrett's lightning be bottled up and distributed? Could teachers who had lesser gifts enhance them through education and training? Could teachers be taught how to teach?

Mann began actively thinking about such questions in the early 1830s, soon after the death of his first wife, Charlotte Messer Mann, who passed away of consumption just a year and a half into their marriage. Distraught, rootless, and anxious to make a new beginning, Mann sold his home in Dedham and moved into a boarding house on Somerset Court in Boston, which now became the center of his legal practice. There, quite by chance, he was introduced to two other boarders in the same house, the extraordinary Peabody sisters, Elizabeth and Mary.

The circumstances that brought these three brilliant minds together underscore the social reconfigurations that flowed from industrial (and thus demographic) change in antebellum America. Between 1830 and 1840, the population of American cities grew over 60 percent as people flocked to urban spaces in search of jobs in factories and offices. Many of these new residents were unmarried men and women who sought escape from rural life and welcomed more expansive social and intellectual opportunities. During the 1830s alone, as many as five thousand single women lived in Boston—over 5% of the total population—and perhaps 1/3 of the adult male population in Boston were

unmarried.[30]

In the 1830s, most single women worked as domestic servants in the same homes as the people who employed them. Educated women like the Peabody sisters—school teachers in their twenties—were among the minority of boarders. The growth of cities was still so new that sex-segregated dormitory-style boarding houses were not yet widely available, with the result being that, in the 1830s, men and women frequently boarded together, as in the case of Mann and the Peabodys. As Megan Marshall, who has chronicled the lives of the Peabody sisters, points out, "for the first time in American social life, an emerging class of upwardly mobile single men and women lived in homes together, sharing daily meals and evenings of conversation with unprecedented freedom and informality."[31]

Raised in nearby Salem, Elizabeth and Mary benefitted from having bookish parents and a determined, feminist mother. Tutored in Latin and Greek and largely self-taught in Italian, Spanish, German, and French, the sisters became prodigious intellects.[32] They read everything they could get their hands on as they closely followed intellectual currents on both sides of the Atlantic. Elizabeth would go on to help launch the Transcendentalist movement. Mary would become a leading exponent of Friedrich Froebel, the German pedagogue. A younger sister, Sophia, painted beautiful landscapes and ended up marrying Nathanial Hawthorne.[33]

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[30] Megan Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 242.

[31] Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters*, 242.

[32] Elizabeth, alone, had facility with Greek (Emerson was her tutor). Mary, alone, read and spoke Spanish.

[33] On the lives of the Peabodys, the classic study is Louise Hall Tharp, *The Peabody Sisters of Salem* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1950). See also Josephine E. Roberts, "Horace Mann and the Peabody Sisters," *New England Quarterly* 18, no. 2 (June 1945): 164-80. The best recent

Mann boarded with Elizabeth and Mary Peabody between December 1832 and the summer of 1833. The sisters spent considerable time consoling him in his bereavement, which was for years raw, unusually deep, and even today, difficult to explain.[34] But on lighter evenings, the group chatted for hours about everything under the sun. Mary found Mann "intolerably witty" around the dinner table as they bantered back and forth.[35] Mann filled the women in on the legal cases he was working on, and the women briefed him on their days in the classroom. The three debated history, religion, and politics. They talked late into the night about metaphysics and fate and the mysteries of the universe. And they also talked, naturally, about pedagogy.

Boston in the 1830s provided a stimulating intellectual backdrop for conversations of this kind. In contrast to its more commercially-oriented neighbors to the south, Philadelphia and New York, Boston had long enjoyed a reputation for intellectual culture and cutting-edge social reform stretching at least as far back as its protests leading to the American Revolution. Benefitting from its location near America's oldest college, Harvard, Boston prided itself on being the learned conscience of the young nation, the "Athens" of America. It was home to countless booksellers, newspapers, and publishers, many of whom published the latest news from European intellectual circles. European visitors often thought of Boston as somewhat small and provincial, a city of just 40,000

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studies are Bruce A. Ronda, *Elizabeth Palmer Peabody: A Reformer on Her Own Terms* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1999), Monika M. Elbert, Julie E. Hall, and Katharine Rodier, eds., *Reinventing the Peabody Sisters* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2006), and especially Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters.*

[34] There may have been romantic feelings involved in the sisters providing consolation to Mann. Cassandra A. Good, *Founding Friendships: Friendships Between Men and Women in the Early American Republican* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2015), 60-61. For an exploration of Mann's grief, see Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1972), 160-72.

[35] Norman K. Risjord, *Representative Americans: The Romantics* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 2001), 164.

residents in the 1830s, but the high concentration of literacy probably helped Boston emerge as a laboratory for many of America's most lasting social experiments.[36]

Boston newspapers often carried reports of pedagogical innovations on the European continent. Elizabeth and Mary Peabody were attuned to these innovations and became deeply immersed in Romantic thinking that emphasized the child's inherent goodness and natural capacity for growth and development. Elizabeth found kinship with Wordsworth and wrote the English poet long letters about her teaching.[37] In 1830, she produced a translation of Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando's *Self-Education,* a text deeply indebted to Rousseau.[38] In their classrooms, the Peabodys did much the same that Samuel Barrett did, adapting the subject matter to a child's nature and ability, drawing out from students their own ideas, never "taking children out of their childhood," as Elizabeth put it.[39] By instinct and disposition as much as by self-will, these two women soon found themselves on the cutting edge of Boston school reform.

In those days, much of the reform talk centered around Johann Heinrich Pestalozzi, the innovative Swiss school teacher and humanitarian whose schools found disciples across Europe and had only recently attracted the attention of Americans. The Prussian normal schools had already begun to implement his theories.[40] The Peabody

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[36] Thomas H. O'Connor, *The Athens of America: Boston, 1825-1845* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 2006); Jacqueline Barbara Carr, *After the Siege: A Social History of Boston, 1775-1800* (Boston: Northeastern University Press, 2004).

[37] In one of these letters, Elizabeth asked Wordsworth to write a volume of poetry specifically for children. He gracefully declined. Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters*, 162, 165-66, 183, 542.

[38] Peabody is anonymous in the translation: Baron Joseph-Marie de Gérando, *Self-Education; Or, the Means and Art of Moral Progress,* 2d ed. (Boston: Carter and Hendee, 1832).

[39] Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters*, 166.

[40] Gerald Lee Gutek, *Joseph Neef: The Americanization of Pestalozzianism* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 1978); Jurgen Herbst, *And Sadly Teach: Teacher Education and Professionalization in American Culture* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1989), 41.

sisters, along with James G. Carter and Charles Brooks, were proponents of Pestalozzi and actively tried to put his ideas into circulation.[41]

Pestalozzi stood at the cross-section of a bewildering whirlpool of social, political, and intellectual cross-currents that engulfed Europe in the second half of the eighteenth-century: feudal-democratic, Protestant-Catholic, rural-urban, rational-utilitarian. Born in Zurich in 1746, Pestalozzi showed an early propensity for innovation, as a young man founding a country school for poor children that sought to combine work with learning. The Swiss government eventually called him to direct an orphanage and poor school at Stans, and Pestalozzi later founded additional schools where he enjoyed the freedom to experiment with his educational principles. [42]

Pestalozzi is best known today for his theory of object teaching, which held that children learn best from experience with real, tangible objects, experience the teacher can in turn build upon to introduce more abstract ideas. The basic foundation of the Pestalozzi's theory, however, was largely unoriginal and came by implementing Rousseauean ideas in a formal school setting.[43] Pestalozzi most important published

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[41] Two years before she met Mann, Elizabeth Peabody had anonymously written and published *First Lessons in Grammar on the Plan of Pestalozzi.* The school she later taught in Boston with Bronson Alcott was "permeated" by Pestalozzianism. Wesley T. Mott, "Education," in *The Oxford Handbook of Trancendentalism,* ed. Joel Myerson, Sanra Harbert Petrulionis, and Laura Dassow Walls (New York: Oxford University Press, 2010), 153-71, esp. 158; Will S. Monroe, *History of the Pestalozzian Movement in the United States* (Syracuse, N.Y.: C. W. Bardeen, 1907), 154-55; Stanley K. Schultz, *The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 271.

[42] Kate Silber, *Pestalozzi: The Man and His Work* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1960), and Gerald Lee Gutek, *Pestalozzi & Education* (New York: Random House, 1968). For reprints of Pestalozzi's main work, *How Gertrude Teachers Her Children,* as well as other of his educational writings, see Daniel N. Robinson, ed., *Psychometrics and Educational Psychology: Volume II: J. H. Pestalozzi* (Washington D.C.: University Publicans of America, 1977).

[43] "My visionary and highly speculative mind was enthusiastically seized by this visionary and highly speculative book," Pestalozzi said of Rousseau's *Emile.* Johann H. Pestalozzi, *How Gertrude Teachers Her Children,* trans. L. E. Holland and F. C. Turner (Syracuse, N.Y.: Bardeen, 1900), xvi.

work, *How Gertrude Teaches Her Children* (1801), accepted a number of Rousseauean ideas: (1) children are naturally good; (2) evil lies within a corrupt social environment rather than within the child; (3) education can be used to prevent corruptions within the environment from taking hold in the child; (4) human physical and mental growth proceeds gradually within several well-defined stages; (5) the natural world provides superior and abundant sources for educative experiences.[44]

Pestalozzi's work with orphans helped convince him that children learn best when they are in an emotionally safe environment. Corporal punishment, rote memorization, and other unnatural or stress-inducing features disrupt the ability of a child to learn and therefore ought to be discarded. As with John Locke, sensory experience was primary for Pestalozzi. By teaching children with objects they can feel and touch and see, the teacher ensured that clear and distinct sensory experience provides a foundation for more complex ideas formed later on. The teacher's task is to link the tangible to the intangible, known to the unknown, the familiar to the unfamiliar, in this way making the child's experience—rather than the subject matter—the starting point for all educational activity.

By the late 1820s, Pestalozzi's ideas had begun to be introduced in rarified American educational circles.[45] Whether the Peabody sisters introduced Mann to Pestalozzi is a matter of conjecture. Mann had already served on a town school committee by 1832 and had involved himself in other kinds of reform in Boston. He could have learned about Pestalozzi simply by reading the newspaper.[46] Still, it seems likely that the Peabody sisters piqued Mann's interest through their own study and

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[44] Gutek, *Pestalozzi & Education,* 11.

[45] Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education, Society, and Economic Opportunity: A Historical Perspective on Persistent Issues* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995), 20-21, 31-32.

[46] "Pestalozzi," *American Traveler (Boston),* Sept. 26, 1828, [1]; "New Publications," *Boston Recorder,* Aug. 3, 1831, 123.

writing about Pestalozzi prior to Mann moving to Somerset Court. Mann later praised Pestalozzi's formula in his writings and seemed fully persuaded by its basic approach of child-centered and object-centered teaching.[47]

The larger point is that Mann left Somerset Court with the realization that school teaching could and probably did need to be reformed along more child-centered lines. He came away with a deep appreciation for innovative classroom work of these two sisters and maintained an abiding friendship with them down to the end of his life. If he could then see promise in reforming schools along Pestalozzian lines, he would one day conclude that Pestalozzi offered what Samuel Barrett did not: a distinct method that could be identified, isolated, and taught.

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By the late 1830s, it would have been clear to anyone with aspirations to reform Massachusetts schools that the chief obstacle to reforming the training of teachers was not the acceptance of a child-centered pedagogy. The main problem was money. Progressive young teachers like Elizabeth and Mary Peabody attracted students to their private school in Boston because parents were impressed with the results and could afford to pay for them. Elsewhere, less well-to-do parents had little choice but submit to whomever the town school committees hired. No one denied that problems existed among the teaching ranks of Massachusetts. No one stepped up to praise the excellencies

[47] "Words, Words, Words," *Common School Journal* 1, no. 2 (Jan. 15 1839): 18-21, esp. 19. Mann's most extensive praise for Pestalozzian methods in later school reports, after a tour of European schools in 1843. Thomas A. Barlow, *Pestalozzi and American Education* (Boulder, Colo.: Este Es Press, 1977), 57-67.

of the Massachusetts schools the way Victor Cousin and Charles Brooks did the Prussian schools.[48] The American Institute of Instruction's excoriation of Massachusetts teachers went unanswered in the public press as though it was a point that had to be conceded. The question always was who would pay for the training to take place.

Governor Edward Everett, who appointed the members of the Massachusetts Board of Education, seemed to realize that money might become an important factor in reforming the state's schools. Although most of the eight members of the Board of the Education were clergymen or educators, one man stood out as the exception. Edmund Dwight was a merchant. And not just any merchant. Dwight was one of the wealthiest men in Boston.

The son of a gentleman farmer and storeowner from Springfield, Dwight followed the usual path for a child of American gentry. He entered Yale College in 1790s around the time his cousin, the illustrious theologian Timothy Dwight, became its president. After graduation Edmund read law under the celebrated Federalist from Dedham, Fisher Ames. Then Dwight did what other young men from privilege had the resources to do. He asked his father for his inheritance and spent the next two years meandering around Europe on the Grand Tour.[49]

His time in Europe helped Dwight realize, more than ever before, that the professions that dominated the eighteenth century—law and the ministry—held no allure for him. What he really wanted to do was to make a lot of money like his father. The

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[48] After the failed memorials of 1837, Mann told Brooks to "keep lecturing on Normal Schools until they were secured. I told him they were already secured, and no power could stop them." Brooks continued to lecture on the Prussian system during that year. Robert Ulich, *A Sequence of Educational Influences* (Cambridge, U.K.: Cambridge University Press, 1935), 59.

[49] Francis Bowen, *Memoir of Edmund Dwight* (reprint, American Journal of Education, 1857), 6-8.

advent of large-scale manufacturing in New England in the 1810s opened the way. Dwight married into an elite family, moved to Boston, and started up a cotton mill, machine shop, and a calico-printing factory, eventually employing thousands of people.[50] By the 1830s this "merchant prince" had become a railroad promoter, all the better to ship his many manufactures rapidly and cheaply.[51]

Having made his money, the next step for members of Dwight's social caste was to find a cause to patronize. Dwight first became attracted to school reform after reading the American edition of Victor Cousin's report on the Prussian schools. "Henceforward," his biographer wrote, Dwight "gave his whole energies to the work" of reforming Massachusetts schools.[52] He started getting men who believed as he did together for discussion, and in 1837 the group proposed to the legislature a plan that partook of Prussian centralization while preserving control of school within the localities: schools would receive centralized direction in the form of a statewide, voluntary Board of Education that would have power to do little more than to collect information and make recommendations to the popularly-elected legislature.[53]

Mann thought of Dwight as a good friend and a stalwart supporter. Dwight was the one who, over dinner one day, first suggested that Mann serve as secretary of the Board of Education, a suggestion that both surprised and flattered Mann. "I never had a sleeping nor a waking dream that I should ever think of myself, or be thought of by any other, in relation to that station," Mann wrote in his diary. As the unofficial leader of the

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[50] Bowen, *Memoir of Edmund Dwight*, 11-12; John Michael Cudd, *The Chicopee Manufacturing Company, 1823-1915* (Wilmington, Del.: Scholarly Resources, 1974), 13, 16-17; Anne Kelly Knowles, *Mastering Iron: The Struggle to Modernize an American Industry, 1800-1868* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012), 119-20, 122-23.

[51] Bowen, *Memoir of Edmund Dwight*, 5.

[52] Bowen, *Memoir of Edmund Dwight*, 14.

[53] Bowen, *Memoir of Edmund Dwight*, 15.

board, Dwight delivered the news to Mann that he had been voted in as secretary.[54]

Dwight's Boston home became a place where members of the board and other reform-interested men met to discuss their schemes. One Saturday night in March 1838, while the Massachusetts Legislature was still in session, Mann was at Dwight's home discussing the prospect of petitioning the legislature for a grant-in-aid to establish teacher-training schools. Knowing the history of failure regarding such a proposition, Dwight pitched a new idea. After the crowd dispersed, Dwight took Mann aside and gave him authority to inform the legislature that an anonymous donor would give $10,000 for the foundation of these training schools if it would match the sum. Dwight would be the anonymous donor.[55]

Mann's ecstasy knew no bounds. "This appears to be glorious!" Mann wrote in his journal that night. "Let the stars look out for my head!"[56]

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The genius of Edmund Dwight's benefaction was that it did not actually legislate any new schools into existence. Mann's letter to the president and the senate and the speaker of the house simply asked for $10,000 in matching funds, the two gifts "to be drawn upon equally, as needed, and to be disbursed, under the direction of the Board of

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[54] HM, Journal, May 6, June 29, 1837, reel 33, HMC.

[55] HM, Journal, March 10, 1838. Dwight put the proposal in writing that night, and Mann formally addressed the Massachusetts Senate on the subject two days later. Edmund Dwight to HM, March 10, 1838, reel 5, HMC; "Massachusetts Legislature," *Boston Semi-Weekly Courier,* March 15, 1838. Dwight requested anonymity but his identity eventually leaked out in the press, and newspapers were identifying Dwight as the donor within just a few weeks of the legislature authorizing the matching donation. "The Donor of the $10,000," *Boston Semi-Weekly Courier,* April 16, 1838. By early 1839, Mann was publicly crediting Dwight with the bequest. "Normal Schools," *Common School Journal* 1 (Feb. 1, 1839): 33-38, esp. 33.

[56] HM, Journal, March 13, 1838.

Education in qualifying teachers for Common Schools."[57] The legislature could more easily assent because it was not being asked to make a perennial financial commitment. All the legislators had to do was to authorize the Governor, as a member of the Board of Education, to draw from the state treasury the lump sum of $10,000, which they did on April 19. In return, the Board of Education was asked to come back every year, until the bequest was exhausted, and report on how they had used the funds.[58]

The funding of teacher training generated little opposition in the public press and seemed to unleash considerable good will. The measure passed by unanimous vote in the Massachusetts House and but one opposing vote in the Senate, attesting to popularity of the measure across party lines.[59] The old republican fears of centralization seemed to dissolve in the face of the initiative, probably because the combination of private and public benefaction muted the force of the criticism. It helped that many did not consider the funds as supplying a permanent endowment but rather a "provision for a fair and satisfactory experiment" on the subject of teacher training.[60] Dwight's bequest looked reasonable and not so large after all when compared with what former U.S. president and then-Massachusetts Congressman John Quincy Adams called the "vast sums" of money allocated to teacher-training schools in Europe. In public discourse, Americans like Adams had long associated schooling as essential to the preservation of republican government. Now he subtly extended the same logic to teacher training. *"Shall we be*

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[57] HM, Journal, March 13, 1838.

[58] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, April 19, 1838; *Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed by the General Court, in the Years 1837 and 1838* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1839), 737-38.

[59] HM, "Special Preparation, a Pre-requisite to Teaching," in *Lectures on Education,* 75; "Popular Education," *Boston Daily Advertiser,* March 15, 1838, 2; "Massachusetts Board of Education," *Boston Morning Post*, June 2, 1838, 2.

[60] "Normal Schools," *Boston Daily Advertiser,* June 9, 1839, 2.

outdone by Kings? Shall monarchies steal a march on republics in the patronage of that education on which a republic is based?" Quincy's answer was a resounding no. "On this great and glorious cause," he urged, "let us expend freely, yes, *more* freely than on any other."[61]

Permitting the Board of Education—rather than the Massachusetts legislature—to spend freely allowed the Board the advantage of having virtually unlimited control over deciding how the money would be disbursed.[62] The downside was that they weren't sure what to do with the money and had to spend much time over the coming months carefully plotting their course. Mann admitted that the board was in uncharted territory. It seemed a foregone conclusion that the extensiveness of the Prussian system—teacher-training schools in every county—would not or could not be replicated, and therefore it offered no guidance. Massachusetts had to carve out its own path. "We have none of the lights of experience," Mann reflected, and "must throw the light of judgment & common sense forward as far as we can."[63] Mann told friends that he was anxious during the months after the money was secured from the legislature. He must have known that a misstep could torpedo the possibility of future grants and set back the cause of teacher training in Massachusetts a generation or more.

The Board at first considered providing training classes that could be attached to state-funded grammar schools or private academies. Other states, most notably New York, had tried this with some modest success. In the end, however, Mann and his mates

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[61] "Meeting of Friends of Education," *Portsmouth [NH] Journal,* Sept. 29, 1838, [1].

[62] The minutes of the Board of Education, taken down by Mann, said that the matching donations would be disbursed "under the direction of the Board." Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, April 19, 1838.

[63] HM to Thomas Robbins, April 27, 1838, Connecticut Historical Society, Hartford.

concluded to go for it all by starting several new institutions from the ground up.[64] Having "none of the lights of experience" meant that even new terms would have to be invented. The board voted to call the schools "normal schools," anglicizing the French term for its own ends and thus introducing a new term into American vernacular.[65]

A town stood to make a lot of money by being selected as the site for such a school, and delegations jockeyed quickly for the upper hand. Taking a lesson from the state legislature, the Board of Education freed itself of responsibility for a sinkhole by giving preference to sites that could use standing school buildings and boarding houses and by asking local trustees to put the property in their own names. The way to make the funds go as far as possible was for towns to step up and do their part. The state would pay the teachers' salaries and perhaps some of the teaching apparatus, but the towns were expected to provide most of the infrastructure.[66]

Mann spent much of the rest of the year visiting potential sites for the schools and fielding offers from various town delegations. At least a dozen proposals came in.[67] The

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[64] The minutes of the Board of Education spoke of giving aid "towards the establishment of schools for the education of teachers" quite early in the process—May 3, 1838—though a later committee did investigate the possibility of either appointing a roving professor of pedagogy to work in the academies or grafting special classes onto already-existing secondary schools. Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, May 3, Sept. 1, Dec. 26, 1838.

[65] Massachusetts Board of Education, June 1, 1838. There is no adequate history of normal schools in the United States. Most of the recent scholarship on the history of normal schools is embedded with larger studies of the history of teaching. See Richard J. Altenbaugh and Kathleen Underwood, "The Evolution of Normal Schools," in *Places Where Teachers Are Taught,* ed. John I. Goodlad (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 1990), 136-86; Lucas, *Teacher Education in America,* 22-37; Fraser, *Preparing America's Teachers*, 43-60; Parkerson and Parkerson, *Transitions in American Education,* 70-71.

[66] The Board of Education sought to avoid legal wrangings over property. The physical property was to remain in the name of the local board of trustees, Board of Education member Robert Rantoul explained, so that in the school discontinued, "the property of same should revert to the original donors, and not vest in the Board in the Commonwealth." Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, May 30-31, 1838.

[67] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, May 30, July 10, Aug. 31, Sept. 1, Dec. 5, 26, 1838.

town of Lexington made an appealing presentation, offering the school buildings of the defunct Lexington Academy. On December 28, the Board voted to accept their offer and Mann wrote into the margin of the board minutes: "Normal School at Lexington."[68] The first school on American soil founded exclusively for the training of teachers had been conceived.

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The plan to train teachers started Mann thinking about how to advertise the message. Talented young prospects had to be found and motivated to take up teaching as their life's work. Meanwhile, teachers already employed in the common schools could be buoyed up and perhaps encouraged to appropriate new, more child-centered methods. Mann told his fellow members of the board that he once considered a periodical merely a useful tool in the cause of reform. Dwight's gift and the legislature's matching grant, however, now made it an "indispensible [sic] auxiliary" to the task of training teachers. Few teachers could be trained in Lexington, but all could benefit from a journal discussing improved methods and curriculum.[69]

Mann was too busy locating a site for a new school during the summer and fall of 1838 to do anything about a periodical. In August, Henry Barnard, Mann's friend and fellow school reformer in Connecticut, published the first issue of his own periodical, the

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[68] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, Dec. 28, 1838. In addition to use of the Lexington Academy buildings, the Board of Education asked the town to provide $1,000 for the purchase of apparatus and library HM to Jared Sparks, Jan. 12, June 18, 1839, MS Sparks 153, Houghton.

[69] HM to Edward Everett and the Board of Education, Apr. 18, 1838, Massachusetts Department of Education, Correspondence, box 1, f. 4, MA.

Connecticut Common School Journal. Mann did not want to be outdone. By November, when Lexington was beginning to emerge as the site for a normal school, Mann sent out a prospectus announcing a new periodical to be published in Boston. *The Common School Journal* mirrored Barnard's title, but, by omitting the state name, Mann seemed intent on taking a leadership role and attracting a larger readership.[70]

As noted in chapter 1, Mann thought of himself as a champion of interests of the most vulnerable in society, especially those of poor children. Historians have sometimes imagined that Mann saw in his reforms a way of reshaping the class structure of society.[71] Mann, however, did not frame his journal as an effort to reform the problems of class structure. "The great object of the work will be the improvement of Common Schools and other means of Popular Education," he said.[72] The word *improvement* evoked the world of internal improvements that had generated good will among people across class and party over the previous two decades—the world of canals and railroads, post offices and newspapers, almshouses and lending libraries. Mann's journal did not call to mind radical reform experiments like Owenism or Fourierism. "Common Schools" were an already-existing structure, not a new form that regenerated from the ground up. Mann's stated object suggested a gradual, meliorative program in which knowledge dripped gradually and incrementally upon a willing and largely grateful public.[73]

Mann's most lasting contribution in founding the *Common School Journal* was

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[70] "Prospectus," *Common School Journal* 1, no. 1 (Nov. 1838): 1.

[71] Merle Curti, *The Social Ideas of American Educators* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1935).

[72] "Prospectus," 1.

[73] Mann's language seemed to suggest a newspaper more than an opinion magazine. "It will not be so much the object of the work to discover, as to diffuse knowledge. In this age and country, the difficulty is not so much that but few things on the subject of education are known, as it is that but few persons know them." "Prospectus," 1.

not so much in making the case for radical reform but in addressing a new audience. Few educational journals were published in the United States prior to 1838, and those that were typically presumed an adult readership.[74] But Mann self-consciously addressed his journal to "children and youth," as well as to "all parents, guardians, teachers, and school officers, [regarding] their respective duties towards the rising generation."[75] Children and youth, "the rising generation"—this was a chief object of Mann's concern.

The journal aimed to disseminate already-existing knowledge about children, knowing that the public might not be aware of its existence. It sought to impart "all intelligible motives to obey the laws of physical health, to cultivate 'good behavior,' to strengthen the intellectual faculties, and enrich them with knowledge; and to advance moral and religious sentiments into ascendancy and control over animal and selfish propensities."[76] Mann sounded like a children's book writer, desiring to pass along the moral habits that would help guide a child through an increasingly complex, urban landscape.

Mann would publish the *Common School Journal* twice a month, sixteen pages per issue, for the next ten years of his life. He was the sole editor and provided most of the content. He published his annual reports to the state legislature in the journal, as well as providing original material on pedagogy. The Board of Education covered the overhead, but Mann made no money from sales of the journal and received no extra

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[74] Henry Barnard, who edited a similar journal in Connecticut, set forth his "leading object" as one that sought to "promote the elevated character, the increasing prosperity, and the extensive usefulness of the Common Schools of Connecticut." "To the Public," *Connecticut Common School Journal* 1, no. 1 (Aug. 1838): 1. Barnard said nothing about addressing children or their behavior.

[75] "Prospectus," 1.

[76] "Prospectus," 1.

compensation for his efforts. It was all, he said, "for the good of the cause."[77]

Besides publishing reports and items on pedagogy, Mann also used the *Common School Journal* to pass along news pertaining to Massachusetts schools. In the third issue, published on February 1, 1839, Mann announced that Lexington had been chosen as a site for the state's first normal school. The town was favorably situated in the northeastern part of the state, he explained, and the liberality of the town's donation could not be exceeded. Mann also announced the maturation of plans for two other normal schools: a school at Barre, in the western part of the state, and another at a location yet to be determined. (It would eventually be located in the southeastern part of the state, at Bridgewater.) Edmund Dwight's bequest and the matching grant from the Massachusetts state treasury would end up funding the operations of these three schools.[78]

The entrance requirements were modest by today's standards and, yet, the mere existence of standards represented a dramatic break from the past. Mann explained the regulations of these new schools to his reading public. Candidates had to be seventeen years of age, if male, and sixteen years of age, if female, slightly older than in Prussia. Each candidate for admission had to pass an entrance exam and "declare it to be their intention to qualify themselves to become school teachers." The minimum term of study was fixed at one year, lower than in Prussia. If the student's marks were good, the candidate could exit the school after one year with a credential—a "certificate of qualification."[79]

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[77] HM to John F. Brooks, Nov. 26, 1839, John F. Brooks Papers, Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, Springfield, Illinois.

[78] "Normal Schools," 36-37.

[79] "Normal Schools," 37. Nevertheless, the Board of Education issued a statement saying that a "complete course," though not mandatory, would entail three years of study, mirroring the requirement at Prussian teacher training schools. "School at Lexington," *Boston Courier,* March

The curriculum, Mann explained, would include the standard branches taught in the common schools of Massachusetts: orthography, reading, writing, grammar, geography, and arithmetic—all subjects children in New England had long studied. But the schedule, which Mann must have worked out with help from the Board of Education, also contained more advanced studies necessary for teaching in secondary schools, in this way giving teachers of the primary grades a store of knowledge they otherwise might not have had: algebra, geometry, bookkeeping, navigation, and surveying; astronomy and national philosophy, and "statistics and general history." Other required studies bore the mark of Victor Cousin's report: physiology, music, and "the science and art of teaching."[80]

This curriculum evoked a new-found concern for children and represented a dramatic break with the past. For the first time, health education was integrated into the formal teaching apparatus of American schooling. By learning above the grade level of their actual classroom work, teachers were effectively invited to become masters of their subject matter, inspiring their pupils in the same way Samuel Barrett once inspired Horace Mann. The "science and art of teaching" sought to impart of the psychology of children and age-specific methods rather than impart from the older method of rote memorization. And non-traditional studies like music should now be taught simply because they added to the "welfare & happiness" of children, not because of any great utility they brought to a child's education.

The change was welcomed in Massachusetts as elsewhere. The founding of

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7, 1839, [1].

[80] "Normal Schools," 38. Tuition was free for those who declared their intention to teach and $10 for all others. *Circular and Register of the State Normal School, at West Newton, Mass.; from Its Commencement at Lexington, July, 1839, to Dec., 1846* (Boston: William B. Fowle, 1846), 17-18.

normal schools in Massachusetts set off a gradual chain reaction across the country. Reformers seized upon Massachusetts as the enlightened and humane course that their own states ought to emulate. In time, many states did follow Massachusetts's lead.[81]

Even before the normal schools opened their doors, Mann predicted such events. These three schools were "the first system of Normal Schools, properly called, to be founded in his country," he wrote in the *Common School Journal.* He thought it probable that other states would follow Massachusetts' "noble example" by founding permanent institutions for the training of teachers and thus "adopting the most direct course to make a wiser, a better and a happier people."[82]

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Mann had a terrible time finding principals for the normal schools. His first choice to take the job in Lexington was Jacob Abbott, a schoolteacher and Congregational clergyman from Boston. Abbott declined when he realized that Lexington didn't have a church that welcomed the conservative theology his conscience required him to preach. For months Mann searched in vain for the right person to take the job. "I believe I counted all the men in New-England over, by tale, before I could find any, who would take the schools, without a fair prospect of ruining them."[83]

He eventually offered the job to Cyrus Peirce, a Harvard graduate, Unitarian

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[81] "Memorial of the School Committee of Portland, on the Subject of the Board of Education," *Portland [ME] Weekly Advertiser,* Feb. 12, 1839, [2]; Barnard, *Normal Schools*.

[82] "Normal Schools," 38.

[83] HM to George Combe, Sept. 11, 1839, George Combe Papers, National Library of Scotland, Edinburgh.

clergyman, and longtime teacher in Nantucket.[84] Peirce, forty-nine, had given up the pastorate years before when it became clear that he loved teaching more than preaching. Now he willingly traded a comfortable job teaching high school in Nantucket by moving his family to Lexington for a chance to mentor young teachers in an art and science few knew well. Here was a man who lived to teach, a man for whom teaching was a profession, a man who longed to inspire children and those who would teach them.[85]

Peirce opened Lexington Normal School on the first Wednesday of July, 1839. A huge cloud burst over the town that day, and only three candidates for admission showed up. Mann was there to sit and wait for those who did not come, only the pitter-patter of rain breaking the silence. "This is not a promising commencement," he wrote in his journal. But he had little choice but to go on. "What remains but more exertion, more & more! until it must succeed."[86]

Ten weeks later Mann was back in Lexington to observe Peirce's school. The school now had twelve students, the largest attendance so far. "They seem industrious & interested," Peirce wrote of his little band of students, "and nearly every one of fair capacity. But many of them are yet backward; and I apprehend it will require more than one year's Instruction to qualify them to teach. They want language—they want the

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[84] Mann recommended hiring Peirce, and others on the Board of Education followed the recommendation. Edward Everett to Jared Sparks, June 6, 1839, reel 5, HMC.

[85] "The Public High School," *Nantucket [MA] Inquirer,* June 26, 1839, 6. For Peirce's biography, see *The First State Normal School in America: The Journals of Cyrus Peirce and Mary Swift*, intro. by Arthur O. Norton (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1926), xxv-xxvi.

[86] HM, Journal, July 3, 1839. In addition to the poor weather, misinformation may have also been responsible for the low turnout. The opening was originally scheduled to open in April but had to be pushed back to July until Mann found a principal. HM to the Editor of the Bunker Hill Aurora, June 12, [1839], Horace Mann Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor. Other potential students expressed apprehension about the pledge to teach, thinking they were pledging for life. Mann denied that the pledge meant that. HM to Jared Sparks, Cambridge, Sept. 14, 1839, MS Sparks 153, Houghton.

power of generalization, and of communication."[87]

Mann was surprised by what he observed that day. It was not the students. It was Peirce. Mann seen Peirce teach before, but not until he saw him in front of a group of prospective teachers did he fully realize the excellence of "Father Peirce," as his students called him. "I had appreciated his talent," Mann wrote, but "he surpassed the ideas I had formed of his ability to teach, & in that prerequisite of all successful teaching, the power of winning the confidence of his pupils. This surpassed what I had ever seen before in any school."[88]

With Mann looking on, Peirce taught a lesson on colors. Earlier that year Mann had praised the Pestalozzian method of object-centered instruction in the *Common School Journal.*[89] On this day, Peirce held a prism in his hand and used the natural light streaming in from the windows to protect a spectrum on the wall.

Mann loved prisms, thinking of them as a way of doing many things at the same time: teaching the nature of light, the changing colors of the dew drop, and the "gorgeous light" of the sunset all at the same time. He spoke of prisms in romantic terms. They led children, in Mann's view, to a "love of pure and beautiful things, and led upward towards the angel, instead of downward toward the brute."[90]

Feeling happy and upbeat, Mann made his own contribution to the lesson. In the Pestalozzian tradition of linking abstract to concrete, Mann taught from experience,

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[87] Cyrus Peirce, Journal, Sept. 9, 1839, in *The First State Normal School in America*, 7.

[88] HM, Journal, Sept 14, 1839, reel 33, HMC. "I never was in a school before, where the business of education was advancing so systematically, so perfectly, so rapidly." HM to Sparks, Sept. 14, 1839.

[89] "Words, Words, Words," 19.

[90] HM, "Means and Objects of Common School Education" (1837), in *Lectures on Education* (Boston: Ide & Dutton, 1855), 32.

telling the students the story of the time when he stood on top of a tall mountain and saw a rainbow crest out of the mist and discovered, much to his amazement, that at all the colors blurred together.[91]

Standing before his little class of twelve, a prism in his hand reflecting the colors of the rainbow outward across the room, Peirce sought to inspire his charges with a love of teaching and a sympathy for the children they would one day teach. Would these teachers-in-residence be able to inspire students with, in Mann's words, a "love of pure and beautiful things," as Peirce was then doing before their eyes? For a moment, Mann may have imagined Johann Pestalozzi standing before him in Peirce's form. Or was it rather Samuel Barrett? The task of training teachers to interest children, to find the latent potential in every one, had begun.

[91] Mary Swift, Journal, Sept 12, 1839, in *The First State Normal School in America*, 110-11.

Chapter 3

Libraries for the Country

For all its innovativeness, the reform of teaching training in Massachusetts was a relatively benign political proposition. The founding of normal schools was widely viewed as an "experiment" that entailed no permanent financial commitment on the part of the state. Heavily subsidized by Edmund Dwight's private earnings, the experiment established three small normal schools whose operations were largely out of the public eye. No one proposed to overhaul the methods of all the teachers in Massachusetts en masse; those already in the classroom were free to come to their own conclusions after reading the progressive, reform-minded editorials and articles in the *Common School Journal.* When teachers who never intended on making teaching their career dropped from the teaching ranks, as they did with high frequency, Mann's hope was that local school committees would first consider hiring a graduate from one of the normal schools of Massachusetts. But he had no power to compel the committees to do that, and he took no aggressive steps to promote graduates of the new normal schools over other qualified candidates. A revolution in teacher training, he well knew, had to be as gradual, silent, and as painless as possible, the work of the people and not the central board.

The same was true of a reform of schoolbooks, a political minefield of the first magnitude. Town school committees had long enjoyed the legal right to select the books that would fill the shelves of the schools under their oversight. Any attempt to curtail that right could be framed as a direct attack on their freedom. Moreover, anyone who tried to restrict schools to one set of texts over another could be seen to be challenging one of the

most cherished principles in American self-definition: the freedom of the press. The Board of Education intervened in schoolbook reform at its own peril.

Horace Mann might have set aside the thought of attempting a reform anything having to do with books. He did not. The same week in which the Board of Education decided to award Lexington the first normal school on American soil, Mann finished writing his second annual report to the Massachusetts legislature. He spent most of his pages bemoaning the way in which reading was normally taught in the common schools. Near the end of the report, almost in passing, Mann turned briefly to schoolbooks. He mentioned a circular he had sent to the town school committees prior to heading out on his tour of the county conventions in the fall of 1838. One of the questions he posed to the committees was this: "Would it be generally acceptable to the friends of Education in your town, to have the Board of Education recommend books for the use of schools?"[1]

The simplicity of the question masked the cleverness of the construction. On this thorny issue, Mann knew he had to be careful not to be perceived as encroaching on the authority of the local district school committees. And in this is political acumen was on full display. Rather than engage the committees directly, Mann posed the question to "the friends of Education," implying that the will of the people should be the determining factor and thereby undercutting any charge that the state was usurping legally constituted authority. The word "recommend" was soft and squishy, something people could easily take or leave. It was far more welcoming than "prescribe" or "mandate." Mann mentioned "books"; he did not say whether he meant "library books" or "text books."

The results of Mann's survey revealed how jealously some Massachusetts school

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[1] *Second Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the Second Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1839), 76.

committees guarded their autonomy. Of over three hundred towns in the Commonwealth, only one town said that it would like the Board to both recommend and prescribe specific schoolbook titles (and only then, this town's representatives said, if the Board were authorized by the state legislature, which was legally deputized to carry out the will of the people). Twenty towns said they would not care for any recommendations at all. But the most interesting finding came from the vast group of towns in between. By far the majority said they would welcome recommendations on schoolbooks from the Board of Education. The finding spoke highly of the trust the school committees placed in the judgment of board members, but it also suggested a feeling of insecurity on the part of town school committees. Overwhelmed with choices and probably pressed for time, the committees welcomed guidance from people who might be more qualified than themselves in adjudicating the merits of textbooks. On the basis of his survey, Mann told the legislature that he believed that "more than seven-eighths of the population of the State, are in favor of having the Board of Education *recommend* books for the use of the Schools."[2] In light of Mann's conclusions, one wonders if he wrote an intentionally vague question in order to elicit the very answer that would sanction the very reforms he wanted.

Curiously, Mann's second annual report itself made no recommendations concerning schoolbooks. The survey data was left dangling, more a curiosity than a pretext for some course of action. Mann actually went out of his way to avoid recommending anything on the matter of schoolbooks. "The expediency of a *recommendation*, by the Board, of class books for the schools, leaving it optional with the committees to adopt such recommendation or not, is a question so exclusively within the

[2] *Second Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 77.

competency of the Board, that I shall not presume to express any opinion concerning it."[3]

What Mann didn't say in his report was that the Massachusetts Board of Education had already approved plans to publish its own set of books for use in the common schools of Massachusetts. Eight months earlier, the Board had resolved to put into circulation "a series of well-chosen books, in the School Districts of the towns."[4] Mann had already contracted with the printer by the time of his second annual report to the legislature, and many of the authors had already been contacted about participating in the project. Out of the participants, few people knew of this publication project. For good reason, the Board of Education felt it best if the project were not announced until it had sufficiently matured.[5]

Part of the reason for silence surely involved concern that the project could be easily misconstrued in the public press as a abridgement on the rights of people and their local school committees. Even so, the plan to publish "well-chosen books" was not in fact as controversial as it appeared on the surface. These books would not be the regular textbooks intended for daily classroom use. The plan was instead to provide a carefully selected and vetted collection of books for the foundation of a school library that could, upon recommendation of local committees, be made available to the schools under their purview. Still, the issue of schoolbooks was such a delicate one that the Board of Education thought it best to guard their doings as long as possible, not wanting the project to be framed in the press as a wild-eyed scheme designed to challenge the

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[3] *Second Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 77. Mann's use of the words "class books" seems to be intentional. Those were the words used in the statute giving school committees to decide classroom texts.

[4] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, April 18, 1838, MA.

[5] HM to Nahum Capen, April 19, 1838, Massachusetts Department of Education, Correspondence, MA.

hallowed tradition of local school governance. In time Mann, in private and in public, would have to explain and defend the board's strategy in one of the most difficult and emotionally wrenching of all the reforms he undertook during his secretaryship. When he made that defense, Mann put sidestepped the debates about local and central governance and instead put children and their interests at the center of the argument.

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The problem that brought the Massachusetts Board of Education to prepare its own library for publication begins with a simple distinction: city and country. In Mann's day, as in ours, most schoolbooks were published in cities. Publishing houses located in cities had the resources to make small or large print runs, depending on need and demand, which were most frequently and aggressively analyzed by people who lived and worked in cities. After the technique of stereotyping was developed in the 1810s, publishing houses could publish much larger runs at a fraction of the labor cost. Books flooded cities, and competition between presses helped to drive down the cost.[6]

The result was that city schools almost always had more books in them than country schools. The city schools had greater access to books and could, often by eliminating extra costs, more easily afford them. Some books made their way into the country, in an uneven and rather haphazard way, through peddlers and hawks who bought

[6] Ronald J. Zboray, *A Fictive People: Antebellum Economic Development and the American Reading Public* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993), 9-10; Rosalind Remer, *Printers and Men of Capital: Philadelphia Book Publishers in the New Republic* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1996), 125-48; John Hruschka, *How Books Came to America: The Rise of the American Book Trade* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2012), 61-69.

books from large publishing firms and went out into the towns and sold them to school committee members and other interested persons.[7] Sometimes townspeople donated the few volumes they owned to form a social or lending library. But overall, libraries in the country schools were far smaller than those in the cities, and often libraries in the country schools were nonexistent.[8] This being the case, the perfectly legitimate democratic move of putting libraries within reach of people who didn't currently have them motivated the Massachusetts Board of Education to produce an inexpensive series of books. This move extended a movement begun near the end of the eighteenth century, when towns across the countryside started lending libraries of their own, making books accessible to people to common people who previously didn't have access to them. By proposing to enrich libraries in the public schools, the Massachusetts Board of Education in effect made the state an advocate of library philanthropy on behalf of children—not just adults—for the first time in American history.

But scarcity was not the only problem that brought about the Board of Education's library plan. There was also the opposite problem: the flood of print in the early republic, brought on by improvements in printing, literacy rates, transportation, and

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[7] J. C. Barnes, paper read at the Publishers' Board of Trade, summarized in "The Abuses in the School-Book Business," *American Educational Monthly* 7 (June 1870): 217-222, esp. 217; Richardson Wright, *Hawkers and Walkers in Early America* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1927); J. R. Dolan, *The Yankee Peddlers of Early America* (New York: Clarkson N. Potter, 1964); John Tebbel, "A Brief History of American Bookselling," in *Bookselling in America and the World: Some Observations & Recollections: In Celebration of the 75th Anniversary of the American Booksellers Association,* ed. Charles B. Anderson (New York: Quadrangle/The New York Times Book Co., 1975), 3-25, esp. 9. The most celebrated of these traveling book salesmen turned out to be Noah Webster.

[8] Mann thought it "very rare" to find a social library in country towns. In the schools of such towns, libraries were nonexistent. "The Utility of School Libraries and Apparatus," *Worcester Palladium,* Aug 30, 1837, [2]. A New York editor agreed with Mann's assessment: "At present, the opportunities for reading, to the young, are extremely limited in most parts of our state. There are few social libraries, and very few bookstores except in the cities and villages." "Common School Libraries," *Cultivator* 2 (Feb 1836): 159.

a capitalist economy that widened the literacy gap between rich and poor even as it encouraged entrepreneurship in new, hitherto untapped literary fields.[9] The explosion of new school and children's books delighted the reading public, but it also made it harder for school committees to make decisions, as the committees seemed to imply by their response to Mann's questions. The committees doubtless welcomed recommendations from the Board of Education precisely because they felt overwhelmed by the number of choices available to them within the exploding textbook market of the New Republic. While a handful of writers soon came to monopolize the textbook field, the selection of library books involved far more choices and was thus more bewildering for school committees.[10]

If the contentions of Mann and other reform-minded contemporaries are any guide, many of these new books for children were intended by author and publisher to entertain more than to edify. The main goal was to make money. For that reason, Mann and other school reformers of his time worried that most books lacked the moral rigor

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[9] For printing and distribution networks by Bible and tract societies, see Creighton Lacy, *The Word-Carrying Giant: The Growth of the American Bible* Society (1816-1966) (South Pasadena, Calif.: William Carey Library, 1977); Lawrence Thompson, "The Printing and Publishing Activities of the American Tract Society from 1825 to 1850," *Papers of the Bibliographical Society of America* 35 (1941): 81-144; Edwin Bronner, "Distributing the Printed Word: The Association of Friends, 1816-1966," *Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography* 91 (1967): 342-54; David Paul Nord, *The Evangelical Origins of Mass Media in America, 1815-1835,* no. 88 of *Journalism Monographs* (1984).

[10] Charles Monaghan and E. Jennifer Monaghan, "Schoolbooks," in *An Extensive Republic: Print, Culture, and Society in the New Nation, 1790-1840*, ed. Robert A. Gross and Mary Kelley, Vol. 2 in The History of the Book in America (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2010), 304-17. In his first annual report, Mann referred to schools where there was "a standing invitation to every book-pedlar [sic] and speculator to foist in his books, which may be new, or they may be books whose sheets have been printed for years, but garnished with a new title-page bearing a recent date." *First Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the First Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 34-35.

required for use in the schools.[11] Unfortunately, all too often school committees were seduced by cheap texts, unfamiliar with what Mann and others took to be morally dubious content. The books found their way into the hands of school committees, especially those located far away from population centers, after having arrived, Mann said, "rather by chance than by design" and ranging between "very good and very bad." Rarely could Mann find in these towns a book on the object and nature of good government, general ethics, the science of agriculture or the useful arts.[12] Often he found far less. Mann thought many of the books that found their way into schools were more or less trash liable to blunt if not damage the moral sensibilities of children.[13]

Mann thus conceived of the plan for the Board of Education to publish a school library as a way of helping people find their way through this deluge of print—a way of separating wheat from chaff, of cultivating taste in good writing and moral uplift while leaving drivel behind. The plan was an early effort at a "great books" library for children before such a term ever gained currency. The need for a canon seemed especially pressing after 1827, when the Massachusetts legislature passed an act declaring that no schoolbook "calculated to favor any particular religious sect or tenet" should be used in any public school. As a substitute for teaching sectarian religion, the act enjoined teachers to communicate "the principles of piety, justice, and sacred regard to truth, love of country, humanity, and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry, and frugality, chastity, moderation, and temperance," as well as any other virtues that were the

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[11] Peddlers often had "doubtful character," some argued, leading to concerns about the moral quality of the books they sold. "Common School Libraries," 159.

[12] *Third Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the Third Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1840), 47-48.

[13] A large portion of the small picture books now in circulation were "miserable trash, if not positively immoral in their tendency," said Boston schoolteacher Samuel Pettes. "Discussion on School Libraries," *American Annals of Education* 6 (Dec 1836): 549-54, esp. 549.

"ornament of human society, and the basis upon which the republican constitution is founded."[14]

That was a long list of words, and the day-to-day grind of teaching arithmetic, reading, and spelling seemed perfectly calculated to frustrate inculcating such high-minded ideals. But the Board of Education had their hands tied. They could not introduce new texts into the classroom for fear of violating the school law. Libraries, however, fell into a slightly different category as Mann well knew. Library books were not, in the language of the law, "class books." With this distinction in mind, the Board of Education ventured on an uncertain and potentially damaging path of recommending titles for a library in the hopes that the imprimatur of the Board of Education would lead school committees to trust the board's judgment in selecting those books to be published. The survey question asking school committees whether they would favor books "recommended" by the Board of Education thus constituted a way of gauging whether the books planned by the board would sell. As Mann would discover, however, not everyone would grant the board that trust.

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Mann felt the twin problems of the scarcity of books in country towns and the flood of print keenly. They came together in his own early life. Mann did not come from a particularly bookish family, who, like most rural families living in Massachusetts at the

[14] *The Revised Statutes of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, Passed November 4, 1835* (Boston: Dutton & Wentworth, 1836), 219; Bob Pepperman Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy: The Educationa of Democratic Citizens* (Lawrence: University Press of Kansas, 2010), 47.

time, owned only a handful of books. His father's estate inventory listed just a few titles: Appleton's sermons, Adams's history, a dictionary, twenty-eight separately published sermons, twenty-two pamphlets, and a copy of the Constitution. Thomas Mann did not even own a Bible.[15]

Precisely because of their own limited learning, Mann's parents respected well-read people and acknowledged the power of books to command attention. The monarchial world in which Thomas and Rebekah Mann came of age encouraged respect for learned people, and they retained that system of deference, acknowledging learned people as in some sense their superiors, down to the end of their lives. Mann remembered his parents always speaking of learned men with "a kind of reverence." Horace said he grew up caring for the few books the family did possess "as though there was something sacred about them."[16]

The local district school where Horace attended as a boy had no library. And yet, just as good fortune brought Samuel Barrett into his neighborhood, Horace Mann was lucky enough to have been raised in a town with a lending library of uncommon resources. After the Revolution, libraries spread like wildfire as reading became "a necessity of life," an opportunity for self-improvement and social advancement and not merely a road to putting one's soul right before God.[17] Over 260 village and social library

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[15] Thomas Mann's estate inventory also included issues of the *American Apollo;* whether that was the Boston newspaper published between 1792 and 1794, or the Republican newspaper published out of Norwalk, Connecticut, between 1801 and 1802, is unknown. Thomas Mann, Estate Inventory, Sept 1, 1809, Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court, Canton, Massachusetts. Samuel Man's library was divided among his eleven surviving children upon his death, meaning few books if any would have been passed on to Thomas Mann. Samuel Man, Will, 1718, Suffolk County Probate Court, Docket 21:439-40, MA.

[16] [HM], "Horace Mann," in *Portraits of Eminent Americans Now Living,* comp. John Livingston, 4 vols. (New York: Cornish, Lamport, 1853-54), 4:178-223, esp. 181.

[17] David D. Hall, "Introduction: The Uses of Literacy in New England, 1600-1850," in

associations were founded in New England in the 1790s alone, four times the number established in all the years prior.[18]

The library in Mann's hometown was unusually well supplied. The town had been fortuitously named after Benjamin Franklin, and, at the height of his fame, townspeople wrote Franklin asking if he would donate a bell to their new meetinghouse. Having reaped great benefit from the lending library he and his friends started as a young man in Philadelphia, Franklin responded by offering books instead, supposing, he said, that the people of Franklin would "prefer sense to sound." Franklin had his friend Richard Price select titles that would be "most proper to inculcate principles of sound religion and just government."[19] Sixty-seven titles arrived in Franklin in 1786. The town library association set the annual subscription fee at 6 shillings, and with the money that came in they purchased additional volumes. By 1812 the library had swelled 241 titles.[20]

Printing and Society in Early America, ed. William L. Joyce et al. (Worcester, Mass.: American Antiquarian Society, 1983), 1-47, esp. 1, 22-26; William J. Gilmore, *Reading Becomes a Necessity of Life: Material and Cultural Life in Rural New England, 1780-1835* (Knoxville: University of Tennessee Press, 1989); Richard D. Brown, *Knowledge is Power: The Diffusion of Information in Early America, 1700-1865* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989), 132-59; Richard D. Brown, *The Strength of a People: The Idea of an Informed Citizenry in America, 1650-1870* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); David Jaffee, "The Village Enlightenment in New England, 1760-1820," *William and Mary Quarterly,* 3d Ser., 47 (July 1990): 327-46.

[18] Jesse H. Shera, *Foundations of the Public Library: The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1949), 68-69.

[19] Margaret Barton Korty, "Benjamin Franklin and Eighteenth-Century American Libraries," *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society,* New Ser., 55, no. 9 (1965): 1-83, esp. 67.

[20] A list of the original sixty-seven volumes can be found in Mortimer Blake, *A History of the Town of Franklin, Mass.* Franklin, Mass.: By the Committee of the Town, 1879*,* 70-71, and reproduced in Korty, "Benjamin Franklin and Eighteenth-Century American Libraries," 75. All 241 titles are listed in *A Catalogue of Those Books in Franklin Library, which Belong to the Town* ([Franklin, Mass.]:n. p., 1812). At first Nathanael Emmons tried to tightly control the books, claiming they were intended for the parish library and not a public library. The town ordered him down by 1790, though he apparently kept his own record of retrievals as late as 1794. John T. Dahlquist, "Nathanael Emmons: His Life and Work" (Ph.D. diss., Boston Univeristy, 1963), 106-8.

Thomas Mann took a share in the library, which gave his family the right to check out books.[21] Horace described the collection as consisting of "old histories and theologies" best fitted to the tastes of adults more than children.[22] Still, hungry for learning and moved by the ambition of the times, he devoured the holdings, especially the volumes on history and war. Mann remembered having read all ten volumes of Charles Rollin's *Roman History* by age nine or ten.[23] Mann later came to regret reading some of these titles, fretting that he had come to "glory in war" as a child, and that he read often for adventure rather than moral betterment. He wished that the titles available to him had been more decorous, more innocent, more suited to the lives of children. A child of nine or ten was too young to be introduced to the horrors of war.[24]

Mann biographers have paid little attention to the role of the Franklin lending library in shaping his later reforms of school books, just as they have ignored the influence of Samuel Barrett on Mann's later reforms of teacher training.[25] But the local lending library rivaled Barrett for influence on the person Mann would one day become. The library contained a copy of William Blackstone's *Commentaries*, which, from an early age inspired in Mann a love for logical, reasoned exposition and stirred his interest in the legal profession.[26] The holdings probably also colored Mann's religious views.

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[21] Thomas Mann, Estate Inventory, Sept 1, 1809, Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court, Canton, Massachusetts.

[22] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:181.

[23] Charles Rollin, *The Roman History from the Foundation of Rome to the Battle of Actium,* 3d ed., 10 vols. (London: Printed for J. Rivington et al., 1768), noted in HM to Mary Mann, May 25, 1850, HMC.

[24] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:181-82.

[25] The standard account of Mann's life, for example, never mentions Mann's patronage of the Franklin lending library. Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972).

[26] Knowledge of Blackstone's *Commentaries* is evident in a short satire called "The Country Justice" that Mann wrote when he was fourteen. HM, "The Country Justice," Jan. 18, 1811, reel 2, HMC.

Because Richard Price was a religious liberal, he sent along the works of Unitarians and Separatists. Mann later said that, while still a boy, he began to "construct the theory of Christian ethics" that replaced the orthodox Calvinism of his early upbringing. In the Franklin lending library, he had access to a Christian ethics that rejected original sin and accepted the original innocence of children.[27]

Years later, when Mann wrote the history of his life, the thrill of discovery in the Franklin lending library still remained with him. He wanted every child to have the benefits that he had enjoyed by geographical accident. "Had I the power, I would scatter libraries over the whole land, as the sower sows his wheat field"![28]

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It seems obvious to us today that every school should have a library—and not just any library, but one composed of well-stocked shelves of carefully selected books. As late as the 1830s, however, the idea of school libraries was not an uncontested moral good and was still under debate in educated Massachusetts circles. Schoolteachers were split on the matter, some favoring libraries as a way of cultivating taste and inculcating moral tone, and others opposing them on the premise that they dissipated the energies and concentration required of children in their daily studies. Convinced that most print aimed at children was either too silly or moral indecorous, some teachers even questioned whether enough good books could be found to comprise a library. One teacher said "he was afraid of filling [students'] minds with that useless mass of stuff with which the

[27] In addition to five volumes of Price's own works, he also included books by religious liberals like Joseph Priestly and Theophilus Lindsey.

[28] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182.

world was now deluged."[29] Just as child-centered arguments could be generated on behalf of libraries, so could child-centered arguments be made against them.

The question of school libraries was ultimately pressed into decision by pecuniary interests and clever marketing. As early as 1825, British publishers were experimenting with the idea of publishing books as part of a self-contained series. These "libraries," as they were called, had the advantage of moving slow sellers by grouping them with new and exciting titles. In 1830, Harper Brothers became the first American publisher to try the idea of grouping books together into a library. They were delighted with the response: the Harpers Family Library, which contained largely British biography, travel, and history, proved to be a big hit.[30]

The financial viability of the box set library got the Harper brothers thinking: If the library worked in families, might it also work in schools? They began putting together what they called the District School Library, which started with fifty volumes and sold for $20. The Harpers lobbied John Spencer, the New York Superintendent of Common Schools, for his endorsement, which Spencer readily provided, and in 1838 the New York Legislature joined the coterie by allocating $45,000 for towns to purchase school libraries. For the first time, self-contained libraries were being placed in schools. Harpers was deluged with orders.[31]

New York's District School Library was criticized for lacking American authors and for omitting practical works on agriculture, horticulture, and farming, something the

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[29] For debate on the question, see "Discussion on School Libraries," 549-54.

[30] John Tebbel, *A History of Book Publishing in the United States: Volume I, The Creation of an Industry, 1630-1865* (New York: R. R. Bowker, 1972), 272.

[31] Eugene Exman, *The House of Harper: The Making of a Modern Publisher* (1967; New York: Harper Perennial, 2010), 11, 20, 23; "Common School Libraries," *Farmers' Register* 6, no. 6 (Sept 1, 1838): 357-59. An early advertisement for the District School Library can be found as an insert in the back of *Barbary States* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1835).

Harpers remedied in later years as they expanded it to include 212 titles.[32] Some of its titles were frivolous and breezy. But the larger problem identified by conscientious reformers was that the Harpers seemed to lack an organizing principle. A library with that many titles seemed to replicate the problem that a more select group of titles was invented to remedy. Profit, more than anything, seemed to drive the selections.

As might be imagined, the District School Library spurred the imaginations of reformers across the country.[33] The Harpers' corner on the New York schools suggested the possibility of another entry rushing into other states. Mann was well aware of what had been done in New York, and the Massachusetts Board of Education's scheme to create a library likely grew out of observing the enthusiasm the state's residents showed for Harper's product.

Harper's library represented the influence of the profit motive on the school catalog, but it could not satisfy everyone's wishes. With its concern for moral instruction, the Massachusetts Board of Education staked out more of a middle ground along an ideological spectrum. There was room yet for a more overtly religious motive on the other end, opposite the profit motive. That niche was filled by the American Sunday School Union, which in 1838 began advertising a "Common School Library" of 120 titles. Organized in Philadelphia in 1824, the Sunday School Union was a conscious amalgam of representatives from high and low church denominations, and it proved to be one of the great Christian evangelical publishing arms in the early republic. Its mission

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[32] John D. Pierce, "Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction," Dec. 30 1840, in *Documents Accompanying the Journal of the Senate, at the Annual Session of 1841: Volume 1* (Detroit: George Dawson, 1841), 312-23, esp. 318.

[33] For one example, see R. Gowdey, "Report of Committee on Libraries for Common Schools," [undated] in *Journal of the House of Representatives of the State of Vermont, October Session, 1839* (Montelier: E. P. Walton & Sons, 1839), Appendix, 51-52, esp. 52.

was to provide Sabbath instruction for children everywhere, especially for the working poor in cities or in places where civilizing agents were thin or absent, like the frontier regions. The Sunday School Union shared with Mann a faith in the power of reading—in the union's case, a free library filled with Christian books and periodicals for all who would study them.[34]

The Sunday School Union's attempt to expand publications into the common schools represented an aggressive new move. The Bible had long been used in schools in New England, but evangelicals in the 1820s and 1830s increasingly complained that the Bible had fallen into disuse, or was read without comment. The Sunday School Union's publications taught a more coherent, self-consciously evangelical theology. Did a publication approved by a committee of representatives of all the main Christian churches constitute sectarianism, or did it not? Did the publications of the American Sunday School Union violate the Massachusetts statute forbidding school books that "favor any particular religious sect or tenet"?

It was the uncertainty of the answer that brought the Sunday School Union into contact with Horace Mann. Frederick A. Packard, the Sunday School Union's recording secretary, may have sought Mann's endorsement in the way that Harper's had sought that of the superintendent of the New York schools. In early March 1838, Packard wrote from Philadelphia with a question: Would Mann kindly examine John Abbott's *The Child at Home* and provide his opinion on whether the book was fit to be used in the common schools of Massachusetts?

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[34] David Paul Nord, *Faith in Reading: Religious Publishing and the Birth of Mass Media in America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 81-82; Candy Gunther Brown, *Word in the World: Evangelical Writing, Publishing, and Reading in America, 1789-1880* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2004), 36, 39.

John Abbott's *Child at Home* was not an overtly theological work. It represented a new wave of children's devotional literature that aimed to help teach children the consequence of bad behavior by drawing upon the sentimental and emotional attachments of child to parent. The book contained fictional depictions of children who, after starting out well, broke their parents' hearts by descending into a life of crime, one poor choice at a time. "Persons never become so very wicked all at once," Abbott wrote. "They go from step to step, in disobedience and ingratitude, until they lose all feeling, and can see their parents weep, and even die in their grief, without a tear."[35]

Abbott aimed to show that children who did wrong brought sorrow to their self-sacrificing parents. That alone should be enough to persuade a child not to sin.[36] But as Mann soon found, Abbott mixed natural affection with more traditional motives for right behavior. He called the child who destroys the peace of his parents a "viper"—the word once used by Jonathan Edwards to describe unconverted children—who invited on himself punishment. "God will not forget the sins of such a child. His eye will follow you to see your sin, and his arm will reach you to punish."[37]

For generations, New England Christians had permitted texts with theological content to be used as readers in their schools. Mann, however, couldn't imagine texts like these being used in the public schools of the Massachusetts. And one reason for that was that the texts were all too reminiscent of a very real wound on Mann's early life. He was sure that books like Abbott's would only bring children a pain he had known too keenly as a child.

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[35] John S. C. Abbott, *The Child at Home* (New York: American Tracts Society, 1833), 10.
[36] Abbott, *The Child at Home*, 12.
[37] Abbott, *The Child at Home*, 12-13.

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All of Horace Mann's biographers have assumed that Mann descended from rather traditional Congregational ancestry and that his parents and family immediate family culture had unthinkingly adopted this tradition as an unbroken legacy. The truth is more complicated than that. On Mann's paternal side, the family were lapsed Congregationalists, as noted earlier. On his mother's side, the same rebellion against orthodoxy that led the Mann family to separate themselves from the Congregational church led the Stanleys to its chief rival—the Baptists.

Mann's grandfather, William Stanley, was himself a lifelong and ardent Congregationalist. He had his children baptized in the church and later he served as trustee of the Congregational Society of Attleborough (today Attleboro), the town just south of Wrentham.[38] But others in the family took another path. Elihu Daggett, Horace Mann's great uncle, was the founding pastor of the Second Baptist Church of Attleborough.[39] When it came time to say their marriage vows, Horace's parents spurned ancient tradition for the more oppositional upstart. They married in 1786 in the Baptist church that Rebekah Stanley's uncle had founded.[40]

Horace Mann never referred to his family's Baptist past anywhere in print. Nor have his biographers mentioned it, probably because Horace's mother later returned to

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[38] "A Book of Records of the Incorporated Congregational Society in the 1st Precinct of Attleborough, May 19th 1794," 6, First Congregational Church, North Attleboro, Massachusetts.

[39] John Daggett, *Sketch of the History of Attleborough, from Its Settlement to the Present Time* (Dedham, Mass.: H. Mann, 1834), 67-68. Further fracturing the family, Daggett's wife was a Stanley, a cousin of William Stanley.

[40] Jay Mack Holbrook, comp., *Massachusetts Vital Records: Attleboro, 1694-1890* (Oxford, Mass.: Holbrook Research Institute, 1986), Book 3, 33 (fiche 5). Many contemporaries, however, including a number of Stanley cousins, married in the Baptist church. See Book 3, 13, 15, 16, 37 (fiche 5-6).

the Congregational church, and he mentioned attending meetings there as a boy. But the family's allegiance to Congregationalism was never as total and seamless as biographers have supposed. The Manns remained divided on matters of religion throughout Horace's childhood. His father held rights to pews in both the Baptist and the Congregational churches until the day he died.[41] Having absorbed this ambivalence, Horace was always slightly unsettled towards institutional religion, unsure of its hold over his life. His own family's religious history fractured through and through, he could never fathom how a state could favor one church over another.

Still, in some ways the Baptist movement does seem to have given Horace Mann's life coherence. The Baptists saw themselves as poor and lowly outsiders working against the oppressive influence of the state-sponsored Congregationalism. All his life Horace saw himself as an outsider working against the large, oppressive forces of tradition, an advocate of the poor and the outcast. Although he knew he was part of the establishment, he also saw himself as a gadfly to it. He may have felt more emotional connection to the Baptists than to any other institution he encountered in his youth. When it came time to decide on a college, Horace shunned the Congregationalist-owned Harvard and Yale and selected the more upstart Brown, an institution founded and controlled by Baptists. He later married the daughter of a Baptist minister.

Surely much of Mann's resistance to the institutional church came from his negative experience with the pastor of the Congregational Church in Franklin, a celebrated divine by the name of Nathanael Emmons. Emmons may have influenced Mann's early life as much as any single person. In his history, Mann devoted just a few

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[41] The privileges are mentioned in Thomas Mann, Will, June 9, 1809, in Probate Court Docket, Norfolk County Probate Court and Family Court, Canton, Massachusetts. A copy of the will is also found in Horace Mann's papers in the Massachusetts Historical Society.

lines to each parent. He allocated two full pages to Emmons and his doctrines.

Born in East Haddam, Connecticut, in 1745, Emmons graduated from Yale and at the age of twenty-eight accepted a position as minister of the Second Church in Wrentham (later Franklin Church). And there he remained, unmoved, for the next fifty-four years, preaching in buckled shoes, powdered wigs, and a three-pointed hat long after they went out of style.[42] He was small in stature, had a feeble voice, and is said to have lacked grace as an elocutionist, but he made up for it through forceful writing that methodically cut down all theological objections while following an idea to a single, irrefutable conclusion. He mixed in a thorny wit that could seem supercilious and overbearing. Friends found him full of humor, none of which came out in public. Emmons called himself a "bear," and even admirers admitted that he was a "stern, ascetic soul."[43] Mann recalled little fondness for Emmons whatsoever. He was "a man of pure intellect, whose logic was never softened in its severity by the infusion of any kindliness of sentiment."[44]

Scholars situate Emmons among an influential group of theologians who led the New Divinity movement, the first phase of the powerful New England Theology that saw itself as the direct theological descendents of Jonathan Edwards.[45] These thinkers shared

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[42] Dahlquist, "Nathanael Emmons," 130-31, 150; Nathaniel Hawthorne, *American Notebooks,* ed. Claude M. Simpson (Columbus: Ohio State University Press, 1972), 314.

[43] David Sherman, *Sketches of New England Divines* (New York: Carlton & Porter, 1860), 364, 367-68, 370-77, 381-85; Dahlquist, "Nathanael Emmons," 148, 153-54. Emmons' reputation for sternness was so widespread that some sketches of him intentionally tried to counterbalance the image by showing a lighter side. Blake, *History of Franklin,* 84-85.

[44] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182.

[45] Thus concludes Sydney Ahlstrom, *A Religious History of the American People* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1972), 410, following George N. Boardman, *A History of the New England Theology* (Chicago, 1899). Joseph A. Conforti argues that Emmons' most lasting contributions actually borrowed heavily from Jonathan Edwards and Samuel Hopkins. See his *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1995), 127-28. Period assessments of Emmons's theology include "Nathanael

with Edwards a love of system and expended great mental energy trying to weave Christian doctrines into one grand whole. Their main concern was to get their hearers to repent now, stopping at nothing to achieve that goal. They saw no contradiction between rational presentation, on the one hand, and emotional revivalism, on the other.[46]

Out of the religious awakenings of the 1740s, New Divinity emerged as the hard-line or hyper-Calvinist wing, unflinching in its commitment to doctrinal purity. Its chief rivals were the more latitudinarian, congregational-oriented Old Calvinists, in the center, and the more liberal Arminians, who exalted human self-determination, on the left.[47] Emmons proudly called himself a "genuine Calvinist," implying a set of inferior, and perhaps apostate, rivals.[48]

Emmons, D.D.," *New Englander* 1, no. 1 (1843): 110-21, and William B. Sprague, *Annals of the American Pulpit* (New York: Robert Carter, 1857), 693-706. A recently assessment is John T. Shawcross, "Nathaniel Emmons (1745-1840)," in *American Writers before 1800: A Biographial and Critical Dictionary,* ed. James A. Levernier and Douglas R. Wilmes (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood, 1983), 533-36.

[46] New Divinity men tended not to write out their sermons in full and relied more on extemporary exegesis than the more strictly rationalist Old Light Calvinists. Emmons, who wrote out his sermons, seems to have been the exception. Harry S. Stout, *The New England Soul: Preaching and Religious Culture in Colonial New England* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986), 219.

[47] On New Divinity, see Joseph A. Conforti, *Samuel Hopkins and the New Divinity Movement: Calvinism, the Congregational Ministry, and Reform in New England between the Great Awakenings* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Christian University Press, 1981); Conforti, *Jonathan Edwards, Religious Tradition, & American Culture*, 11-35; E. Brooks Holifield, *Theology in America: Christian Thought from the Age of the Puritans to the Civil War* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2003), 127-56; Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "All Things Were New and Astonishing: Edwardsian Piety, the New Divinity, and Race," in *Jonathan Edwards at Home and Abroad: Historical Memories, Cultural Movements, Global Horizons,* ed. David W. Kling and Douglas A. Sweeney (Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2003), 121-36; Bruce Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers: From Jonathan Edwards to John Dewey* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985), 43-65; Mark A. Noll, *America's God: From Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002), 130-37; Allen C. Guelzo, *Edwards on the Will: A Century of American Theological Debate* (Middletown, Conn.: Wesleyan University Press, 1989), 112-39.

[48] Dahlquist, "Nathanael Emmons," 255. Emmons' insistence on the total corruption of the sinner's heart went even further than the traditional Calvinist rhetoric as found in the Westminster confession, which recognized that sinners, as people who still performed some good acts, were never as perverted as they might be. Guelzo, *Edwards and the Will,* 114.

Unfortunately for young Horace Mann, he was caught in the crosshairs of this adult debate. The New Divinity sought to preserve the sovereignty of God against those who would soften His character along more human, affectionate lines. For this reason, New Divinity theologians preached a God who, to many hearers, seemed inaccessible and remote. Emmons often spoke of God as though He were a distant judge, impervious to human emotions, countering the all-too-heretical language of God as a loving parent put forward by the Arminians. Emmons imagined God looking on impassively, day after day, during the Great Flood, while the wicked cried and pled for mercy, "rending the heavens with their last, expiring groans!" Sympathy was foreign to this god, who, Emmons said, like Caesar's Brutus, wore "stern justice on his countenance."[49]

To harrow up hearers to a conviction of their sins, New Divinity theologians often painted the suffering of the damned in vivid, somewhat exaggerated detail.[50] Even unconverted children "are young vipers, and are infinitely more hateful than papers," Edwards had taught.[51] Mann remembered Emmons expounding "not only the eternity but the extremity of hell torments." Only rarely did he mention the joys of heaven or the "genial, encouraging, ennobling spirit" of divinity.[52]

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[49] Nathanael Emmons, *A Discourse Concerning the Process of the General Judgment, in which the Modern Notions of Universal Salvation are Particularly Considered* (Philadelphia: 1791), 59.

[50] New Divinity theologians may have intentionally exaggerated the pains of hell. Harry Stout argues that Jonathan Edwards' terrifying imagery of hell as found in sermons like *Sinners in the Hands of an Angry God* (1741) is artful, performance conscious, and even somewhat "contrived." Stout, *New England Soul,* 229.

[51] Catherine A. Brekus, "Children of Wrath, Children of Grace: Jonathan Edwards and the Puritan Culture of Child Rearing," in *The Child in Christian Thought,* ed. Marcia J. Bunge (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2001), 300-28, esp. 303.

[52] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182; HM, Journal, July 2, 1837, HMC. The severity of Emmons' depictions of hell is difficult to recreate, since few of his sermons survive in manuscript. His collected works, published posthumously by a son-in-law, show evidence of having been edited to fit the kindler, gentler Calvinism that had taken hold among the orthodox by the 1830s. Louise Hall Tharp, *Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody* (Boston: Little,

Looking back, Mann saw an insidious socialization at work with Emmons. His family attended Emmons' sermons faithfully, and, as easily happened with children, Mann sought to please the powerful authority figure.[53] He mastered the Westminster Assembly's catechism while attending the district school in Franklin and must have taken pleasure in answering correctly when Emmons came around every spring to examine the young scholars one by one. Mann even manifested his loyalty by learning how to refute the objections offered by liberal critics.[54] But, at some point, the weight of the teaching became too much to bear. Mann remembered the "inward joy" of his childhood being crushed by the threat of falling short in God's eyes.[55]

Mann's dim reaction to Calvinism, even as a child, reflected how contested the idea of hell had become over the course of the eighteenth century. The chief contest in all parts was between reason and revelation. Human reason suggested an end to punishment, or God's eventual forgiveness.[56] On both sides of the Atlantic, proponents of universal

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Brown, 1953), 323 n 2. Mann's own descriptions of hell, used as rhetorical foil, look like something out of Dante. In arguing for rejecting the idea of hell as a place, for example, he spoke of "vultures tearing your heart with bloody talon and beak"; wolves "hounding your panting steps, across lonely wastes, in midnight darkness"; serpents coiling themselves around "bosom and throat, and strangling out your life"; and torturers "stretching you upon the limb-disjointing rack, or binding you upon the fire-engirdled stake." HM, "Sin—The Transgression of the Law" (1854), in *Twelve Sermons: Delivered at Antioch College* (Boston: Ticknor and Fields, 1861), 92. Nothing like this imagery appears in Emmons' published writings, where his depictions of hell do not depart much from scripture. See, for example, Emmons, *A Discourse Concerning the Process of the General Judgment,* 13-28; and Nathanael Emmons, *A Collection of Sermons, Which Have Been Preached on Various Subjects* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1813), 478, 481-82, 485-86.

[53] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182.

[54] Dahlquist, "Nathanael Emmons," 119, 192-94; *Our Retrospect: A Memorial Volume, Containing the Historical Discourse, Addresses, Reminiscences, Letters, etc., Given at the Sesqui-centennial Celebration of the First Congregational Church, Franklin, Mass., Wednesday and Thursday, June 13, 14, 1888* (Walpole: Allen, 1888), 58-59; [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182.

[55] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182.

[56] In 1784 the liberal Boston minister Charles Chauncy caused a theological sensation when he argued that it was beneath the dignity of God not to save all of his creatures. Chauncy thought sinners would suffer for a time before eventually joining the blessed in heaven. Charles H. Lippy, *Seasonable Revolutionary: The Mind of Charles Chauncy* (Chicago: Nelson-Hall,

salvation were gaining a following, soon to coalesce into a full-blown Unitarianism. Everywhere God was being configured less as a stern tyrant and more as a kind and benevolent parent who wanted only happiness for His children.[57] Emmons rejected the most radical implications of this rationalizing tendency. He clung to the stern view of God long after it went out of style just as he held on to in his powdered wig and three-pointed hat.[58]

Horace couldn't feel God's love anywhere in Emmons' depiction. There was no Sunday School in Franklin, no place for children to develop a love and admiration for God before they learned to fear him. And Mann's own emotional constitution only heightened his sorrows. He was, by his own account, a "spontaneous combustion" of feeling, an easily excitable boy who experienced the world intensely.[59] Hell fire wasn't in some vague, faraway future for Mann as it might be for other children. The torments "began immediately," he recalled, "and each moment became a burning focus" on "the agonies of the coming eternity."[60]

1981), 113-22; Edward M. Griffin, *Old Brick: Charles Chauncy of Boston, 1705-1787* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1980), 112-13, 174-75; Holifield, *Theology in America,* 134.

[57] Stephen A. Marini, *Radical Sects of Revolutionary New England* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1982), 68-75, 83-86; Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers,* 80-93.

[58] Nevertheless, Emmons felt the need to justify punishment on affectionate grounds. "It is God's love to himself, to his Son, to his law, and to the general good of the universe that induces him to punish the wicked after death." Emmons, *A Discourse Concerning the Process of the General Judgment*, 59. In this sermon, Emmons quotes and argues against universalist arguments found in Chevalier Ramsay, *Philosophical Principles of Natural and Revealed Religion,* 2 vols. (Glasgow, 1748-49), 1:491, and James Relly, *Union; or, a Treatise of the Consanguinity and Affinity between Christ and His Church* [London, 1759]), 65-66. For instances where Emmons argues that God's "goodness" and "love" is responsible for everlasting torment, see Nathanael Emmons, *Sermons on Some of the First Principles and Doctrines of True Religion* (Boston: Samuel T. Armstrong, 1815), 95, 102, 116; Emmons, *A Collection of Sermons,* 511.

[59] HM, "On School Punishments" (1839), in *Lectures on Education* (1845; Boston: Ide & Dutton, 1855), 336.

[60] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182. Mann described himself as being of "high nervous temperament," which was phrenological language indicating a person with an active, easily

Rousseau once famously said that a child loves his sibling as he does his watch.[61] The primary attachment is to self, not to other. For Mann it was the opposite. The thought of one of his family members suffering in hell was about the worst thing he could imagine. "I might not be one of the lost! But my little sister might be," Mann recounted years later. "My mother might be; or others whom I loved; and I felt that if they were in hell, it would make a hell of whatever other part of the universe I might inhabit."[62] Emmons had taught that the righteous rejoice in the eternal punishment of the wicked.[63] For children like Mann, familial bonds came first. He derived no consolation from the notion of rejoicing in the miseries of those he loved most.[64]

The young boy's anxieties were far from hypothetical. Six weeks after Horace Mann's thirteenth birthday, his father died. Was Thomas Mann saved? Because his father had not qualified for communion, young Horace had his doubts about the safety of his father's soul in the eternities. One sees in Mann's history a boy pained with the belief that

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excitable imagination who was highly susceptible to external impressions. [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:179; George Combe, *A System of Phrenology,* 4th ed, rev. and enl. (Boston: Marsh, Capon, and Lyon 1837), 29-30, 434, 470; Andrew Combe, *The Physiology of Digestion, Considered with Relation to the Principles of Dietetics,* 9th ed. (Edinburgh: Maclachlan and Stewart, 1849), 120.

[61] Jean-Jacques Rousseau, *Emile; or On Education,* ed. and trans. Allan Bloom (New York: BasicBooks, 1979), book IV, 219.

[62] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182. Mann later told a friend that as a child he had a strange fascination with one of Isaac Watt's hymns depicting "the desolation of a solitary soul in eternity, rudderless and homeless." Mary Peabody Mann, *Life of Horace Mann,* 2nd ed. (Boston: Walker, Fuller, 1865), 16. According to Andrew Delbanco, abandonment is one of the key leitmotifs in American literature and the "basis of American horror." Delbanco describes the horror not in terms of family separation, as Mann does, but as an "anxiety that the voice of God may be nothing more than a trick of the wind, that the peopled landscape may be suddenly swept clean." Andrew Delbanco, *The Puritan Ordeal* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989), 238.

[63] Emmons, *A Discourse Concerning the Process of the General Judgment*, 63; Kuklick, *Churchmen and Philosophers,* 54.

[64] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182. As Mann later explained, "minds with any sensibility were distressed, detoned and destroyed by the suffering they experienced for themselves & others." Elizabeth Peabody to Mary Peabody, March 22-24, 1834, Berg Collection of American Literature, New York Public Library.

his father was in constant torment: "To my vivid imagination," Mann wrote, "a physical hell was a living reality, as much so as though I could have heard the shrieks of the tormented, or stretched out my hand to grasp their burning souls, in a vain endeavor for their rescue."[65]

Mann was one of a host of intellectuals in the early republic who broke with the Calvinism of their childhood. Mann's break seems to have been more emotional than most. He dropped Emmons for good the year after Thomas Mann died, when Horace's closest brother in age, seventeen-year-old Stephen, drowned while swimming in a pond a mile from the family homestead. Emmons had once warned that "every youth who profanes the Sabbath" was in danger of "enduring such bitter reflections to all eternity."[66] It was Stephen's misfortunate to have drowned on a Sunday. Emmons's funeral sermon does not survive, but the tradition passed down through the Mann family held that Emmons condemned Stephen to eternal doom from the pulpit.[67] Mann never mentioned Stephen Mann by name in his history, so painful was the episode. He did say he often "wept and sobbed" himself to sleep at night at the thought of "the awful throne, the inexorable Judge, and the hapless myriads, among whom I often seemed to see those whom I loved best."[68]

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[65] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:182. Mann later noted that the church of his youth "cast out from fellowship in this life" even believers, alluding to the privileges accorded the fully converted that were denied people like his parents. HM, Journal, July 2, 1837.

[66] Messerli, *Horace Mann,* 22.

[67] Mann, *Life of Horace Mann,* 16-17; Tharp, *Until Victory,* 26, 323 n 4. Tharp's recreation of the funeral sermon appears to be a work of imagination based on decades-old tradition. Straker, "A Glass Upon Glosses," 54. Franklin town death records note that Stephen "drowned at Uncas pond." Orestes T. Doe, ed. *The Record of Births, Marriages and Deaths in the Town of Franklin, from 1778 to 1872* (Franklin, Mass.: Printed at the Office of the Franklin Sentinel, 1898), 148.

[68] [HM], "Horace Mann," 4:183.

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Mann replied quickly to Frederick Packard's letter asking for an opinion on John Abbott's *The Child at Home*. During the spring and summer of 1838, Mann and Packard exchanged a remarkable series of letters in which they sparred back and forth on the question of schoolbooks, with Mann taking the side that books like *The Child at Home* would find objectors among ideologically liberal Christians and were therefore unfit for use in the Massachusetts common schools, and Packard taking the view that books of this kind did not contain "sectarian" views and that in this way they fell within the Massachusetts statutes allowing for the teaching of Christian piety.

Historians have traditionally viewed the Mann-Packard correspondence as a battle between the forces of religion and secularism, as a church-state debate.[69] It is true that each correspondent made arguments that would later be used by each side of the church-state debate. Mann argued, for example, that the state should not favor the beliefs of one religious denomination over another, while Packard argued that local Christian majorities should have the right to decide for themselves if they wanted religious instruction in their common schools.

The trouble with the church-state view is that modern categories do not fit comfortably onto this exchange. Mann was not a secularist. Both Mann and Packard agreed that teachers could talk of Jesus and his teachings in the schools. Mann did not object to Bible-reading in the classroom as long as the teachings dwelt on a Christian

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[69] Susan Jacoby, *The Age of American Unreason,* rev. and updated ed. (New York: Vintage, 2009), 51; Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy,* 48; Raymond B. Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929).

ethics common to all. Mann and Packard differed on the nature of Christianity to be taught, not on whether it should be taught.

Moreover, viewing the debate through the lens of church and state occludes other concerns within the letters. As will become clear, Mann set his arguments within a child-centered psychology that privileged the needs and concerns of children. He objected to books like *The Child at Home* not only on the technical grounds that they favored a "particular religious sect or tenant [sic]" in violation of the Massachusetts statute. The larger issue, however, was that Mann believed such books gave children false notions and views. They could damage children in the same way that Nathanael Emmons' teachings about damnation damaged Mann.

For all the emphasis on the natural affection of children found in John Abbott's *The Child at Home*, Mann thought the book really didn't understand children very well. As he explained to Packard, Abbott "dwells far more on future, & perhaps remote, retribution, & less on the immediate, & instantaneous effects of bad conduct, upon a child's mind, than is right."[70] Mann's must have been reminded of his own fear of eternal damnation while listening to sermons preached in the Congregational church in Franklin as he reflected on John Abbott's preoccupation with "remote" punishment as an incentive for spurring children to right behavior. Abbott thought a vivid depiction of the punishment that a just God was sure to inflict upon the sinner in the afterlife would motivate a child to make better choices. In one passage, he painted the future judgment bar in all its harrowing detail:

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[70] HM to Frederick Packard, March 18, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 242.

> How must the child then feel who has been guilty of falsehood and deception, and has it then all brought to light! No liar can enter the kingdom of heaven. Oh, how dreadful must be the confusion and shame with which the deceitful child will then be overwhelmed! The angels will all see your sin and your disgrace. And do you think they will wish to have a liar enter heaven, to be associated with them? No! They must turn from you with disgust. The Savior will look upon you in his displeasure. Conscience will rend your soul. And you must hear the awful sentence, 'Depart from me into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels.'

Mann was sure that Unitarians and Universalists would bristle at passages like this and told Packard so. Their objections alone had to discount the book from being used in the common schools. But Mann did not stop with a merely legal or clinical explanation. He knew from his own experience with Nathanael Emmons's sermons that a lively description of hell could at best frighten children and at worst scar them. A far superior tactic, as he told Packard, would be to leave theology out of it and instead point out to children the "immediate" effects of bad choices.[71]

Mann contended, further, that Abbott had not sufficiently imagined the inner lives of children. Abbott seemed to think that any offense, no matter how small, was unapproved in the heavens and thus deserved the harshest condemnation. In Mann's words, Abbott threatened "eternal perdition for the most trivial neglects or acts of disobedience, committed in the thoughtlessness of childhood." Mann thought this position a category mistake: it failed to distinguish between the "trivial neglects" that children often committed and "a whole life of heaven-contemning wickedness" found in adults.[72]

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[71] HM to Frederick Packard, March 18, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 242. Mann thought children should learn a kindlier, gentler view of God. He wanted an "amiable," or "lovely" view of God.

[72] HM to Frederick Packard, March 18, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 242.

Children, Mann argued, should be treated as children and not as adults-in-waiting. Children were still developing their ideas of right and wrong, and sometimes they chose wrong innocently, or least not with the design to hurt or maim another. They should not be lumped with adults who chose maliciously. "When a child does any thing, without knowing it to be wrong," Mann argued, "then the act is not wrong, & he ought not to be threatened with punishment for it." Mann thought children were naturally inclined to feel a pang of conscience in cases where they willfully rebelled. "If the child knows the act to be wrong, then remorse is inevitable."[73]

Packard granted Mann's point that children are morally constituted to feel bad when they did the wrong thing. But he doubted whether the pang of conscience was enough to keep them from choosing evil over good. "Is it not, nevertheless, true," Packard asked, "that the present pain or exposure to pain, is willingly suffered for the sake of the forbidden pleasure?"[74] If remorse was enough to persuade a child not to choose evil, then why do children keep choosing evil?

Mann and Packard often spoke past one another, seemingly oblivious to the fact that they spoke different languages. Packard, a Congregationalist with Presbyterian leanings, spoke the language of evangelical Christianity. He followed the traditional reform Protestant conclusion that children did wrong because their natures were fallen: "the native depravity and corruption of the human heart," he said, inevitably dragged

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[73] HM to Frederick Packard, March 18, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 242.

[74] Frederick Packard to HM, March 28, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 244. Packard thought some groups of children were more susceptible than others in violating conscience. "So far as my knowledge of children & youth in the lower classes of society enables me to judge, the shame and suffering attendant on a course of sin, is not sufficient *generally* to deter them from committing it." Frederick Packard to HM, March 28, 1838.

them down.[75] The only antidote for the naturally sinful was to be reborn in Christ, who alone could lift and redeem them out their native "animality."[76]

Mann, meanwhile, spoke the language of Enlightenment faculty psychology: children, naturally good, had minds composed of different parts, more or less developed by habit and training. Children did wrong not because their hearts were depraved, but because "the earthly portion of their natures is highly cultivated, while their moral and religious sentiments are mainly neglected."[77] Children had it in them, though, to have their better natures overcome "the more earthly portion." Train the child in the higher faculties—in "the pleasures of a moral sentiment, of contemplating goodness, of doing good"—and the earthly portion loosens its grip.[78] Packard saw personal salvation in Protestant terms: the individual had to be rescued from the outside, by God reaching down and lifting the helpless sinner up. Mann saw personal salvation in more humanistic terms: individuals had the power within them to move beyond their "earthly portion."

Given this ultimately unbridgeable divide, the two men quite naturally differed on what the common school should be. For Packard, the common school should be a virtual extension of the church, the learning of the one complementing the message of salvation delivered by the other. Packard's view hearkened to an earlier time when religious majorities were permitted to teach their own religious creed in the town schools, the kind Horace Mann learned in school as a boy growing up in Franklin. Packard thought that majority law should prevail in matters of schoolbooks:

Each district, is so far, an independent government. If I am a Universalist or a

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[75] Frederick A. Packard, "Sabbath Schools," *Boston Recorder* 23 (March 23, 1838): 45.

[76] For Packard's views on depravity, see [Frederick A. Packard], *Thoughts on Popular Education in the United States* (Philadelphia: A. Waldie, 1836), 1, 8.

[77] HM to Frederick Packard, June 23, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 248.

[78] HM to Frederick Packard, June 23, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 248.

> Freethinker, resident in the district, I may vote, and speak and protest against the introduction of the books, and may remove my children from the school, rather than have them instructed in such sentiments; or I may prohibit them to attend or bring them home; but so long as the majority of the voters in the district see fit to keep the books there, so long I must submit.

Packard believed that the only way objectionable schoolbooks could be changed was for the Universalist or the Freethinker to "bring a majority of the district to think with me."[79] Religious minorities, in other words, had no protection. To find satisfaction, the weak and the vulnerable had to become mighty themselves.

Thinking in this way, Packard assumed the publications of the American Sunday School Union represented the majority of Christians and could therefore be adopted in any school district in Massachusetts that cared to purchase them. Ten different denominations, after all, were represented on board of directors, and nothing was published by the Union unless every board member first approved it.

But for Mann, the American Sunday School Union did not define Christianity. "You are engaged for a society which consists of a part only of the Christian Community," Mann explained. "I am engaged for a Body which represents every Religious denomination in the State. Yours is founded upon a plan of promulgating your peculiar views, ours upon the plan of non-interference with peculiar views."[80] Packard's Sunday School Union might represent the views of many parents and children in Massachusetts. Mann, as a representative of the state, felt that he had to represent "every Religious denomination" through the moral truths they all shared. Mann's advocacy of Christian ethics has often been viewed as an advocacy of sectarian Protestant ethics, as

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[79] Frederick A. Packard, "Letter II," *Boston Recorder* 23 (March 16, 1838): 41.

[80] HM to Frederick A. Packard, July 22, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 260.

though he somewhat blindly marginalized Catholics and non-Christians from representation in his conception of the common school. That view seems to miss the point. For Mann, liberal Christian ethics, especially the inculcation of right behavior, transcended Protestant ethics. Mann seems to have imagined that permitting Christian ethics to be taught in the classroom did not constitute an offense against non-Christians on grounds that the ethics taught moral behavior upon which all people could agree. The "moral," by definition, was a universal category of mind that transcended any particular religious or theological belief.

Mann conceived of the state as a purveyor and promoter of the moral. For Mann, the common school should be an extension of the state, which in theory represented all people, and not an extension of the church, which represented a faction. Like Pestalozzi's classroom, the common school had to be made a place where every child felt safe to learn. Children who were asked to learn a majoritarian definition of Christianity, or who felt their own minority definition threatened, could find their own views comprised. The "peculiar views" of religious minorities had to be protected.[81]

Mann and Packard both sensed that the end of established religion in America called forth something new for children. For Packard, the end of state-sponsored churches meant that a consensus or "union" Christianity that required no public concessions on the part of the majority denominations should be taught in the schools. For Mann, the end of religious establishment meant an extension of protection to minority Christians and quite possibly even to non-Christians. Concessions were required of all, at least in the public,

[81] Mann thought Abbott placed too much emphasis on obedience to God as the motive for doing right. "Many of our people," Mann argued, speaking of Unitarians, "believe that affection and love to God, is a far higher and more desirable feeling to inspire, than blind obedience." HM to Frederick A. Packard, March 18, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 242.

or state-sponsored, sphere. The common school could not provide all theological instruction some families might want, Mann admitted, but many families got more than they would have received otherwise, and everyone got something valuable. As Mann said to Packard: "Though each one cannot have his children taught all he could wish, yet they may be taught many invaluable things,--the Rudiments of Knowledge, propriety of manners, social duty, practical Morality."[82] In schools sponsored by the tax dollars of all, public morality—what later generations would call civic religion—mattered much more than theology.

Although often overlooked, Mann's arguments for a child-centered public morality may have been his most enduring reform. Mann's "propriety of manners, social duty, [and] practical Morality" were things that came more easily to children than the theology of eternal damnation taught by the likes of Nathanael Emmons and John Abbott. By the twenty-first century, common schools across America often taught children public virtues like honesty, kindness, generosity, and tolerance. These values, which could more easily travel across class lines, became the lingua franca of middle class peoples. Mann's vision ultimately triumphed not only in Massachusetts, but everywhere.

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Horace Mann's correspondence with Frederick Packard did not end well. Mann tried to remain cordial throughout, but, as Mann held his ground and Packard sensed that he was not getting anywhere in their debate, his tone grew increasingly frustrated. In late

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[82] HM to Frederick A. Packard, July 22, 1838, in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 257.

September 1838, Packard shot off a furious twenty-one-page letter in which he accused Mann of spreading atheism in the schools. Mann's theory of nonsectarian teaching was a system "which I cannot but deem erroneous, unphilosophical, dangerous & corrupt."[83] As far as we know, Mann did not reply. There the exchange ended.

The thought of evangelical Christian teachings being excluded from the public schools was emotionally disturbing for Packard as it was for others at the time. A segment of the public feared that the American republic was unraveling. The United States, he once warned, was heading toward its own French revolution, the masses driven to violence on an unprecedented scale. Like other Nativists and anti-Catholics of his day, Packard worried about the "immense mass of ignorance and vice from abroad" that had planted itself on republican soil.[84] Nativists often highlighted the menace of illiteracy in order to demagogue their points. Packard had come to believe that more than a quarter of all residents of the United States were unable to read. "Shut out from Christian influences," these unhappy souls fell back on "throwing brickbats, demolishing houses, and burning machinery"—a reference to recent Irish Catholic riots.[85]

The only hope for such gloomy thoughts was the Christianity of the Bible. School children, Packard explained, had to be taught "the necessity of repentance and regeneration by the Spirit of God, faith in Christ as the only Saviour of lost men, and

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[83] Frederick A. Packard to HM, Sept. 19, 1838, reel 5, HMC.

[84] [Packard], *Thoughts on Popular Education in the United States*, 3, 30-31.

[85] Carl E. Prince, "The Great 'Riot Year': Jacksonian Democracy and Patterns of Violence in 1834," *Journal of the Early Republic* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1985): 1-19; Jay P. Dolan, *In Search of American Catholicism: A History of Religion and Culture in Tension* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2002); [Packard], *Thoughts on Popular Education in the United States*, 8, 11. On Evangelical Christianity and Nativism, see Charles E. Hambrick-Stowe, "Charles G. Finney and Evangelical Anti-Catholicism," *U.S. Catholic Historian* 14, no. 4 (Fall 1996): 39-52. The classic overstatement is Lyman Beecher, *Plea for the West* (1835; reprint New York: Arno, 1977).

justification through faith in Him as the only ground of acceptance with God."[86] Really what they needed was the Common School Library of the American Sunday School Union. By rejecting that library, Mann invited Packard's righteous indignation. Infidelity had to be stopped.

That fall, Packard began attacking Mann and the Massachusetts Board of Education in the public press. In a series of articles published under the name "Verax" in the *New York Observer,* Packard condemned nonsectarian textbooks in Massachusetts schools as "the artful movement of a few minds hostile to all the great doctrines of the Bible; another of the bold efforts of the day to banish the gospel from the world."[87] Packard gathered his letters into a pamphlet, which he published anonymously, in Boston, calling on "the good people of our country," of all parties and denominations, to rise up and immediately "put down this new-fangled philosophy of education" championed by Horace Mann.[88]

Mann felt the letters had to be answered, but the Board of Education said no, fearing that more publicity was not good publicity.[89] Emerson Davis, a member of the Board of Education and an orthodox Congregational minister, wrote the editor of the *New York Observer* privately, arguing that the letters were filled with baseless criticisms and that the paper should cease publication of the letters at once. For reasons unknown, the paper obliged.[90]

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[86] Frederick A. Packard, "Sabbath Schools," *Boston Recorder* 23 (March 23, 1838): 45.

[87] Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion,* 84; HM, Journal, Oct. 27, 1838, HMC.

[88] *The Question, Will the Christian Religion Be Recognised as the Basis of the System of Public Instruction in Massachusetts?: Discussed in Four Letters to the Rev. Dr. Humphrey, President of Amherst College* (Boston: Whipple and Damrell, 1839).

[89] Massachusetts Board of Education, Minutes, August 31, 1838; *Twelfth Annual Report,* 114-15.

[90] Emerson Davis to HM, Oct. 24, 1838, reel 5, HMC; Culver, *Horace Mann and*

The publication of Packard's letters coincided with rumors that the Board of Education was planning to publish its own series of schoolbooks. Packard didn't know the exact plan, but he invoked a specter when he suggested a large outlay of tax dollars sure to be devoted on "a series of elementary books, prepared on the new principle," published by the Board of Education and certain to be forcibly adopted in all the Massachusetts schools.[91] At that point, the Board of Education knew the publicity surrounding the school library could get out of hand. The plans for a common school library had to be unveiled to the public at once.

The Board of Education quickly issued a circular explaining the school library plan, which Mann reproduced in the pages of the *Common School Journal* in January 1839 soon after reporting to the legislature that most school committees favored receiving schoolbook recommendations. The circular does not sound like it had any forcible intent, as Packard argued. "The Board of Education, of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, has decided to cause to be prepared two series of volumes, particularly adapted to the capacities of the young," Mann explained rather plaintively. Mann reported that two series, fifty volumes each, were already in process of publication.[92]

Without mentioning Packard by name, the circular subtly sought to regain control of the narrative. The Board of Education had no plan to prepare regular classroom texts, as Packard could have been read to suppose in using the term "elementary books." It was preparing a school library. Countering Packard's charge of a new tax burden, the circular reminded the public of a new Massachusetts law authorizing school districts to tax

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Religion, 86-87.

[91] *Will the Christian Religion Be Recognised*, 4-5, 24.

[92] "Common School Library," *Common School Journal* 1, no. 2 (Jan. 15, 1839): 29-30, esp. 29.

themselves for school libraries. The districts would be responsible for taxing themselves to get the books: there would be, in other words, no state-wide funding for school libraries as there was in New York. To Packard's charge that the books would be filled with "new-fangled philosophy," the circular described the authors (who were not mentioned by name) in words a state proud of its leading position in intellectual matters might be prepared to endorse: "Individuals, distinguished for their learning, superior judgment and moral excellence, of different political parties and religious denominations, have been engaged to prepare and superintend these works."[93]

Packard had implied that all the schools in Massachusetts would be obliged to use books recommended by the Board of Education. The Board, however, didn't even recommend its own books in its circular. It let someone else do that. Mann quoted a short statement provided by the peerless *North American Review,* which said that "it is highly desirable that every School District should avail itself of the law" and purchase the new libraries when they become available. This was reassuring news. The longstanding New England tradition of local control over schoolbooks, the statement seemed to be saying, was not being threatened.[94]

From the perch of history, it is hard not to see the Board of Education's new library as an attempt to muscle out the American Sunday School Union from placing its books in common schools—not just in Massachusetts, but in states like New York, where the books had been recommended. The Board of Education called its library "The Common School Library." That was the same name the Sunday School Union gave to its library. Packard boasted that every volume of the Sunday School Union library was read

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[93] "Common School Library," 29.
[94] "Common School Library," 30.

and approved by a committee composed of two Methodists, two Baptists, two Episcopalians, and two Presbyterians.[95] The Massachusetts Board of Education boasted that every volume of its library would be approved by every member of its board, which was composed of various "parties and denominations."[96]

Still, the differences between the two libraries remained indelible, reflecting the concerns of their principle architects. Packard thought the Sunday School Union's library was primarily about the Christian religion. It was, he said, *"pervaded by the Spirit of Christianity."* Mann thought that the Board of Education's library was primarily about children and their behavior. The library was, he said, about "training up the young in the way they should go."[97]

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Mann's announcement that the Board of Education planned to issue a school library brought out a range of reaction in the public press. Educators seemed pleased. Soon after the announcement, Mann traveled to Albany for an educational convention, where he mentioned the Board of Education's library. The New York papers praised the Massachusetts plan as an alternative to the deficiencies found in Harper's. Others believed the board's plan answered a real and pressing need for moral instruction in the schools.

Others projected standard democratic fears onto the project, worrying that the

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[95] Packard, "Sabbath Schools," 45.

[96] "Common School Library," 29.

[97] Frederick A. Packard, "Sabbath Schools," *Boston Recorder* 23 (April 13, 1838): 57; "Common School Library," 30. Mann is paraphrasing Proverbs 22:6.

books would create a monopoly resulting in a rise in prices. They fretted about the libraries stifling creativity and ingenuity. Would anyone have the motivation to write new works? Critics argued that authors whose books were adopted by the Massachusetts Board of Education would have little incentive to update the books over time and that potential rival authors would be discouraged from attempting an alternative. Democratic-oriented critiques worried that books would cast children "in one and the same mould." The same fear or monopoly found in the arguments against state-sponsored normal schools were manifest in the criticism against state-sponsored school libraries. Wasn't it superior to have a variety of schoolbooks in a land "so indefinitely diversified in its structure, tastes and destined employments of life"?[98]

Having lived in the thick of Boston politics for many years, Mann had observed the newspaper wars up close and knew he could come through them. He realized that he had defenders who could counter-ballast the critics. But there was one critic who concerned him more than any. "That one man has declared war & levied troops against the Board & myself," Mann told a friend.[99]

Orestes A. Brownson was a worry because he possessed brilliance, unpredictability, and an acid pen—a combustible combination. Born in Vermont seven years after Mann, Brownson was adopted out as a child and proved later to have a peripatetic temperament. He wandered in and out of churches looking for satisfaction he could not find. At one time or another he claimed membership as a Congregationalist, a Presbyterian, a Universalist, a Unitarian, and a "Humanitarian"— all before the age of

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[98] Clericus Hampdensis, "Letter I," *Boston Recorder* 24 (Jan. 11, 1839): 5.
[99] HM to Samuel G. Howe, July 21, 1839, reel 5, HMC.

forty."[100] He helped found Transcendentalism, only to drop the movement when he perceived that Emerson cared more for solitude than social reform. In 1844 Brownson converted to Roman Catholicism, where he remained till the end of his life, having finally found the church that met his spiritual longings.[101]

At the time of the school library controversy, Brownson was editor of the leading Democratic magazine in Boston, the *Boston Quarterly Review*, which published long, passionate essays on literature, religion, and politics. The magazine, as one of Brownson's biographers put it, does leave the distinct impression that Brownson was a "highly charged bear of a man, talking endlessly and often banging on the table, seizing in a rush of language upon any new idea or program which happened to arise, shifting his attention without pause to the subject arising next."[102]

Brownson shifted his attention to Mann and the Board of Education in a long review of Mann's first two reports published in the *Quarterly* in October 1839.[103] At that time, Democrats often trumpeted the natural rights of all people living in a republican polity. Brownson extended those rights to children, believing that the community—not merely the family—had a duty to help educate the child. Every child, Brownson argued,

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[100] On Brownson, see Patrick W. Cary, *Orestes A. Brownson: American Religious Weathervane* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: William B. Eerdmans, 2004); William Joseph Atto, "Visions of Order: Orestes Brownson and American Society" (Ph.D. diss., University of Arkansas, 2000); Gregory S. Butler, *In Search of the American Spirit: The Political Thought of Orestes Brownson* (Southern Illinois University Press, 1992); William James Gilmore, "Orestes Brownson and New England Religious Culture" (Ph.D. diss., University of Virginia, 1971); Hugh Marshall, *Orestes Brownson and the American Republic: Historical Perspectives* (Washington D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1971); Arthur M. Schlesinger Jr., *Orestes A. Brownson: A Pilgrim's Progress* (New York: Octagon Books, 1963).

[101] Leonard Gilhooley, *Contradiction and Dilemma: Orestes Brownson and the American Idea* (New York: Fordham University Press, 1972); Theodore Manard, *Orestes Brownson: Yankee, Radical, Catholic* (New York: Macmillan, 1943).

[102] R. W. B. Lewis, *The American Adam: Innocence, Tragedy and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century* (University of Chicago Press, 1955), 185.

[103] [Orestes Brownson,] "Art. I.," *Boston Quarterly Review* 2 (Oct. 1839): 393-434.

is born with "as good a natural right to the best education that community can furnish, as he is to a share of the common air of heaven, or the common light of the sun." He made no distinction between race or gender, asking for the community to provide "the best education it can for all its children, whether male or female, black or white, rich or poor, bond or free." A popular government without popular education, he said, was a "baseless fabric."[104]

Brownson's emphasis on the responsibility of the community to provide education for all children seemed compatible with the views of Mann and the Board of Education. But Brownson wanted something more radical for the common schools. Education, he argued, "must be religious and social, or political. Neither religion nor politics can be excluded. Indeed, all education that is worth anything is either religious or political, and fits us for discharging our duties, either as simple human beings, or as members of society."[105] Like Packard, Brownson did not distinguish between education conducted in churches and families, and education conducted in common schools. Orestes Brownson thought that common schools must teach a total philosophy of life.

Given this philosophy of life, it comes as no surprise that Brownson might express disappointment in Mann's reports. To be sure, they were "learned and eloquent," but "we find no leading idea, no enlarged views, no comprehensive measures; nothing, in fact, to inspire us with the least confidence in the Board, or its labors, as a means of aiding us to an education worthy of a free and Christian Commonwealth."[106]

Like Packard, Brownson expressed skepticism in the Board's plan to promote religion or morality acceptable to all denominations, including Christian minorities.

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[104] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 393.
[105] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 402.
[106] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 403.

Packard would have agreed with Brownson's assessment that "a faith, which embraces generalities only, is little better than no faith at all." But then Brownson took the idea to an extreme. "There is, in fact, no common ground between all the various religious denominations in this country, on which an educator may plant himself."[107] Not even the common Christianity taught by the American Sunday School Union was fit for the schools. Each teacher ought to instruct in his own religious and political truth.

Orestes Brownson's assessment marked the beginning of a new, more overtly political critique of Mann's activities with the Board of Education. During the first year of the Board's existence, few people in the public press charged the Board with trying to further its own Whig agenda. The county conventions were largely harmonious and involved people of all political persuasions; political parties scarcely, if ever, figured into the reporting. For all his fulminating, not even Frederick Packard declared the Board of Education to be a tool of one political party.

But for a man of Brownson's temperament, for whom everything was political, the Board of Education had to be a "Whig measure" and a "Whig philosophy." The normal schools hired only Whigs and intentionally shut out Democrats, he said. (At the time, the normal schools had but two instructors.) Brownson found nothing at all redeeming in Whig educational ideas. They got all their ideas from Europe, and nothing from within their own souls, he said. They were materialists who denied "the inner light." They were "virtually Atheists," and he would never trust his children with them.[108]

Brownson quite reasonably construed Mann's project with the Board of Education as a search for social consensus and conformity among the disparate peoples of

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[107] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 404-5.
[108] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 405-6.

Massachusetts.[109] But many of Brownson's generalizations were baseless and unfair. By associating Whiggery with Europe, he implied that the normal school idea was a Whig proposition, masking the fact that the matching appropriation for normal schools passed through the state legislature overwhelmingly with bipartisan support. Brownson did have one piece of firm evidence on which to build his case against the board. There was now but one Democrat on the Board of Education, he pointed out. All the other members were Whigs. Brownson could use that imbalance to suggest that some larger scheme was in the works to take away the liberty of people who were not Whigs:

> Establish, then, your whig [sic] Board of Education; place on it a single Democrat, to save appearances; enable this Board to establish Normal Schools, and through them to educate all the children of the Commonwealth; authorize them to publish common school libraries, to select all the books used in school, and thus to determine all the doctrines which our children shall imbibe, and what will be the result? We have then given to some half a dozen whigs[?], the responsible office of forming the political faith and conscience of the whole community. We have done all that can be done to give Whiggism a self-perpetuating power; all that we can do to make a community of practical infidels. Are we prepared for this result?

At the birth of the two-party system, Democrats frequently accused Whigs of consolidating power unto themselves like Old-World monarchists.[110] Brownson leveled the same charge against the Board of Education. The truth, he argued, was that the Board of Education has sought to "imitate despotic Prussia," where the autocrat craved control. "Who sees not that education in Prussia is supported merely as the most efficient arm of the police, and fostered merely for the purpose of keeping out revolutionary, or what is the same thing, liberal ideas?"[111] The Board of Education amounted to a police force, its

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[109] Taylor, *Horace Mann's Troubling Legacy,* 71-72.

[110] Michael F. Holt, *The Rise and Fall of the American Whig Party: Jacksonian Politics and the Onset of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1999).

[111] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 406-7.

schoolbooks a form of propaganda, designed to enshrine centralized power.

Other than a return to the status quo, Brownson offered no practical solutions to the problems the Board of Education was started to help solve. He was at his best when throwing bombs. In some places he seemed to deny that problems existed: the deficiency of good teachers in Massachusetts was merely "alleged," he said, and may not be the case. Without evidence, he carried ideas through to their worst conclusion. He was positive that the Board of Education would start out recommending their books and, later on, "ask of the legislature authority to enjoin." Give the Board of Education the authority to offer an opinion "and soon they will try for authority to dictate."[112]

Brownson's critique was not unlike the concerns of unbridled power echoed by many of the founding generation in the early decades of the American nation. And the critique would become the aboriginal anti-government critique of public schooling that, in later generations, migrated from state to federal government. In the context of antebellum America, however, rhetoric as strident Brownson's underscored a larger messaging problem for state-sponsored reform. From a certain political viewpoint, any measure conceived to bring liberty and happiness to "the people" could be framed as narrowly interested and destructively partisan. Any recommendation made by a government entity, paid or lay, could be imagined as sliding uncontrollably into an edict, a voluntary committee turning into a police force. It is true that in some ways, Brownson's critique proved wonderfully prophetic, as recommendations made by state boards of education in one generation would, in another, turn into edicts. But this move was in the distant future, and in 1839 the Massachusetts Board of Education could never adequately satisfy every fear that might be imagined, however grossly distorted. All

[112] [Brownson,] "Art. I.," 408.

Mann and the board members could do was to show by their actions that they sought moderate, temperate solutions to very real problems. Even then, as events were soon to prove, the force of the argument against centralization could prove costly.

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The reading public had to wait a long time for the Common School Library to appear. When Mann first announced the library in January of 1839, he said the first volumes would be published "in several weeks." Instead it took ten months. To mute public criticism of the selections, every member of the board was asked to read and approve every word, a process that took longer than anyone imagined. Meanwhile, the Board of Education had to feed a population eager for more information. In August, even before the blast from Brownson, Mann issued an expanded prospectus explaining the compass of the two series of books. One series was intended for readers under ten or twelve years of age. The other was for older students and their parents.[113]

The children's series was positioned as something that was age-appropriate for younger readers. The books aimed to stimulate further intellectual and moral development, to "lure the child onwards, fix his attention, and induce him, subsequently, to seek information from other and more recondite works," which may have otherwise appeared "dry and unintelligible." Mann thought the series would do much good. He spoke in the optimistic language of republicanism, not the brooding spirit of Packard's nativism. He expected all classes, children of farmers, merchants, and laborers, to "profit by the lights of science and literature, that they may be rendered the more virtuous and

[113] "The School Library," *School Advertiser* 2 (August 1839): 1-2, esp. 1.

happy, and become useful to themselves, to one another, to the community, and mankind at large."[114] These were the sorts of books he would have liked to have read as a youth had he not had the good fortune of benefitting from Benjamin Franklin's largesse.

Mann's initial announcement mentioned no authors by name. The enlarged prospectus listed several dozen people who had agreed to take part in the series. It was an illustrious list that had the effect of giving the series heft and gravitas, underscoring the idea that the public school libraries should have the public's best thinkers, contain writing that would elevate and uplift children, drawing out their latent abilities. U.S. Supreme Court justice Joseph Story would be contributing a treatise on the federal Constitution. Francis Wayland, president of Brown University, would write on "The Pursuit of Knowledge under Difficulties." Proving that the Board of Education had not become infidels, Royal Robbins, an orthodox Congregational minister, would show "what Christianity has done for the human intellect, and what that has done for Christianity," in a work to be entitled "Christianity and Knowledge."[115] Caroline Sedgwick, one of Mann's favorite writers, agreed to contribute "Means and Ends, or Self Training." And a young Nathaniel Hawthorne would prepare a book of "New-England Historical Sketches."[116]

The first four titles came off the press in the middle of November 1839 to largely glowing reviews. The Board of Education clearly chose works to launch the series that they believed offered the least chance of criticism. Washington Irving's *Life of Columbus* was already a beloved book by a much beloved author, written a dozen years before while Irving was serving as U.S. ambassador to Spain. *Lives of Eminent Individuals,*

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[114] "The School Library," 2.
[115] "The School Library," 8, 12.
[116] "The School Library," 15.

Celebrated in American History, edited by Governor Everett, contained inspiring biographies of inventors, explorers, and military heroes. Henry Duncan's *The Sacred Philosophy of the Seasons,* was a work of natural theology that offered "proofs of divine benevolence in the works of creation." In the same spirit as Duncan, William Paley's *Natural Theology,* had already taken on a kind of classic quality as the Bible of natural theology. It was a text that Mann and every other college student in early Republic was asked to read, and was republished here in a special abridged edition for younger readers to discover.[117]

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The publication of the initial volumes in the School Library was a great moment of triumph for Mann. Every sheet that rolled off the press seemed to put more distance between him and vocal critics like Orestus Brownson. But deep down, Mann knew his successes rested on tenuous foundation. He was well aware that the Board of Education, and its Secretary with them, served at the pleasure of the Massachusetts legislature and, through them, the people who elected them. That circumstance meant that the Board, no matter what its successes, did not control its own existence: perception, public opinion, and party politics could conspire to end the great experiment at any time. The people and its representatives, not the Board itself, held the future of school reform in its hands.

So long as Governor Edward Everett led the Board of Education, the pathway seemed secure. Everett was one of the great individual success stories in Massachusetts

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[117] The republication of Paley's *Natural Theology* in the Massachusetts common school library thrilled some Christian readers. "We never open it but with a wish to keep it open. Well do we remember the glow and passion with which we first read it, and the hearty outbreak of youthful enthusiasm, which we could not and would not suppress." "Art VI.—The School Library," *Christian Examiner and General Review* 27 (Jan. 1840): 386-96, esp. 390.

history, and, for a time, he seemed incapable of failure. He was the first American to earn a Ph.D. (in Germany) and the first professor of Greek literature and language on American soil (at Harvard).[118] His contemporaries considered him one of the greatest orators of the era. Future generations would remember Everett for being the man who gave the long speech at Gettysburg that no one remembers. He afterwards had enough good sense to admit that Lincoln had said more in two minutes than he himself had said in two hours.

A man of such rare accomplishment was more admired than beloved, more envied than approached. He was nonetheless proud to call himself a party man, a Whig who was the de facto leader of the vast majority of voters in Massachusetts. Through an odd provision in Massachusetts law, Massachusetts voters went to the ballot box every year to vote for a governor. Since 1835, Everett had been comfortably elected governor. And every year, the Democrats nominated the same man to run against him, Marcus Morton of Taunton. In the fall of 1839, Everett was up for election a fifth time. Morton was sent out a fifth time to oppose him. Orestes Brownson was the man who introduced Morton to thunderous applause at the state Democratic convention.

With bulldogs like Brownson in their camp, the Democrats ran an enthusiastic campaign, painting Everett as an extravagant and profligate spender, an appealing message in these recession years. Confident that they would again prevail, the Whigs did almost nothing to fight back. Many did not turn out to vote, sure that Everett would win as he had always done.[119] People came to the polls on November 11, and, as the votes

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[118] Alan Seaburg, "Everett, Edward (1794-1865)," in *The Bloomsbury Encyclopedia of the American Enlightenment,* ed. Mark G. Spencer (New York: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 402-4.

[119] Edward Everett, Journal, Nov. 11, 14, 1839, Everettt Papers, MHS; Paul Revere

trickled in over the next few weeks, it became clear that Everett was in trouble. Several irregularities surfaced, and a victor could not be determined until the start of the new year, when the counts could be reviewed by the Massachusetts legislature. On January 9, a legislative committee declared Morton the winner. Everett lost by one vote. It later came out that Everett's own brother had voted against him.[120]

Marcus Morton's victory emboldened critics who said the Board of Education and its secretary's salary was another unnecessary expense. Morton's inaugural speech to the legislature never mentioned the Board of Education, signaling to some that he disapproved of their activities.[121] Democrats took control of the committee on education in the Massachusetts House and began working on a plan to take down Mann and the Board of Education. On March 3, they submitted a resolution on the floor of the House calling for the Massachusetts Board of Education to be abolished. The Massachusetts House of Representatives now held Mann's future in its hands. Secretary Horace Mann would be brought to a vote.

Frothingham, *Edward Everett: Orator and Statesman* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1925), 149-50.

[120] Frothingham, *Edward Everett: Orator and Statesman*, 152-53.

[121] "Probably he did not know of its [the Board of Education's] existence," Mann deadpanned, referring to Morton's speech. HM, Journal, Jan. 26, 1840.

Chapter 4

Schoolhouses for the Towns

The legislative assault on the Board of Education left Horace Mann in a vulnerable position. Still less than three years removed from the creation of his office as secretary, he knew his experiments in reform could not be justified on results. Two normal schools had been in operation only a few months, and a third school had not yet opened. No graduates had come from these schools. Only a handful of volumes from the School Library had come off the press, too early to tell whether they met the intended need. Mann had held county-wide school conventions every fall for the last three years, but they were filled with much talk, and improvement was difficult to measure. This thin record of achievement could, in the hands of aggressive opponents like Orestus Brownson, make it appear as though the Board of Education had not amounted to much and thus was, at heart, wasteful.

The absence of a long and established track record provided the perfect opening for opponents of the Board of Education to stoke fears and concerns. What the Board *might do* was far more terrifying than what it had actually done. Three of the five members of the Committee on Education in the Massachusetts House of Representatives favored abolishing the Board of Education and wrote up their reasoning in a majority report submitted to the House on March 7, 1840.[1]

The report, which relied heavily on Orestes Brownson's arguments, allocated much space to hypotheticals. The Board's recommendations, the majority report

[1] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, in Act to Abolish the Board of Education, Docket 817, Massachusetts Legislative Dockets, MA.

cautioned, were sure to become regulations in the end: "The Legislature will naturally lend a ready ear to the suggestions of the Board, and will be apt, without much examination, to clothe with a legal sanction such rules and regulations, as the Board may recommend."[2]

The majority took exception to the Board's recommendation of nonsectarian schoolbooks in the school library as though the school law prohibiting the use of books favoring "any particular religious sect or tenet" was not on the statute books. "A book, upon politics, morals, or religion, containing no party or sectarian views," the report explained, "will be apt to contain no distinct views of any kind, and will be likely to leave the mind in a state of doubt and skepticism much more to be deplored than any party or sectarian bias."[3] The majority cited no evidence that the books left children in "state of doubt and skepticism," but asserted that undoubtedly it must be the case.

The larger framework within which the report operated was the xenophobia found in Orestes Brownson's lengthy essay. The true aim of the Board of Education, the majority affirmed, was to remodel Massachusetts schools "altogether after the example of the French and Prussian systems." The Board wanted to centralize, to take power away from the local school committees, and to bring all schools under "one plan, as uniform and exact as the discipline of an army."[4] The report preyed on old republican fears: the establishment of the Board of Education commenced "a system of Centralization and of monopoly of power in a few hands, contrary in every respect to the true spirit of our

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[2] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 4.

[3] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 15. The chief author of the report, Allen Dodge, was an orthodox Congregational minister, and the reference to "no distinct views of any kind" probably represents a veiled shot at Unitarianism.

[4] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 8-9.

Democratical institutions, and which unless speedily checked, may lead to unlooked for and dangerous results."[5]

The committee majority observed nothing good or decorous in the Board of Education.[6] Nor did the report acknowledge any problems with the common schools as they then existed. It quite simply advocated a return to the old way of doing things, to the system of governance that "has been so long and so successfully carried on."[7] The committee proposed no new legislation; its recommendations, in fact, were entirely privative: an immediate repeal of the legislative acts that created the Board of Education, the office of secretary, and the normal schools, along with a return of the normal school funds to Edmund Dwight.[8] Once these measures were taken, the committee said, the common schools would rest on a "safer and more solid foundation."[9]

Horace Mann could find no legitimacy in the legislative proceedings against the Board of Education. He thought the majority report was characterized, in every way, "by the most dishonorable & unchristian proceedings."[10] Mann believed that Frederick Emerson, a member of the majority committee and a Boston schoolmaster, had acted out

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[5] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 10.

[6] A line at the beginning of the report said that Mann's reports suggested the "beneficial influence" of the Board of Education, but that insight was never followed up with any concrete examples. Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 2.

[7] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 8. The academies and high schools, the committee said, are "fully adequate" in furnishing Massachusetts schools with "competent teachers." Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 17.

[8] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 23-25. The original act proposed that Edmund Dwight be reimbursed by the State Treasury for funds he had already expended on the normal schools. The amendment to the act cut that provision.

[9] Committee on Education, Majority Report, March 7, 1840, 22.

[10] HM to Samuel F. Lyman, May 11, 1840, Horace Mann Papers, William L. Clements Library, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor.

of personal animosity.[11] Allen W. Dodge, the primary author of the majority report, was an orthodox Congregational minister who, like Frederick Packard, was in a panicky state over sectarian Christianity disappearing from the public schools. It was obvious to Mann that Dodge's concern with library books that contained "no distinct views of any kind" was a veiled shot against Unitarianism. In light of these personal circumstances, Mann thought the arguments in the majority report lacked credibility. Mann said nothing in the public press, but privately he spared no criticism, denouncing the "bigotry, fanaticism, & all the prejudices of ignorance & radicalism" combined in the majority committee.[12]

Not all members of the Committee on Education agreed with Emerson and Dodge. Once he had a chance to look at the majority report, James A. Shaw, one of the two members of the Committee on Education who supported the Board of Education, began preparing a minority report as a public rebuttal. Shaw asked Mann to provide him with raw material by writing down arguments in the Board's favor.[13]

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[11] Mann later explained in a private letter that Emerson had had his sights set on becoming a member of the Massachusetts Board of Education, and when he was not selected, he became bitter towards the board. Moreover, according to Mann, Emerson had authored an arithmetic textbook, which he submitted to Mann, hoping to have it selected for use in the public schools. Mann refused the work, further angering Emerson. Emerson calls the story of Mann refusing the textbook a "fabrication." According to Emerson, he sent a courtesy copy to Mann, as he did to more than fifty others. "I received no answer from Mr. Mann, nor did I expect any, for the occasion did not call for any." Raymond B. Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), 145-46; "Board of Education," *Columbian Centinel,* April 25, 1840, 4.

[12] HM, Boston, to Samuel F. Lyman, May 11, 1840. Mann was not the only one who suspected personal jealousies in the majority report. The *Christian Examiner* thought "the true causes of opposition" in the report lay in "groundless sectarian prejudices," "authors' jealousies," and "instructors' piques." "Critical Notices," *Christian Examiner* (Boston) 28 (May 1840): 255. Others in the public press mentioned the rejection of Emerson's schoolbook as an explanation for his hostility. "The Public Schools," *Trumpet and Universalist Magazine* 12 (March 28, 1840): 158.

[13] HM to J. A. Shaw, March 7, 1840, reel 5, HMC.

Mann's letter to Shaw made all the usual arguments one might expect Mann to make. He countered the charge that the Board wanted to usurp local power by presenting evidence that the county associations welcomed and favored the Board of Education. If the normal schools were an imposition on local authority, why did so many towns court them? Why did the citizens of Lexington and Barre make a tremendous push and voluntarily tax themselves to support their normal schools? Recognizing that the jury was still out on the Board of Education, Mann also asked for more time. "The experiment cannot be said to have failed," he told Shaw. "If it has a fair trial & fails, then the matter will be set at rest."[14]

Most of Mann's arguments contested matters of fact. But an argument on behalf of the reform of schoolhouses also appealed to the sympathy Shaw and other legislators might have towards children. "In many instances," Mann told Shaw, schoolhouses "have been cold, cheerless, repulsive, badly located, injurious to health & an impediment to study." Children suffer in these schoolhouses, and many parents kept their children home as consequence, Mann claimed.

The majority report said nothing about schoolhouse reform; Mann, however, thought it was one of the great arguments in favor of the Board of Education. He reminded Shaw that, during his first year as secretary, Mann had, at the Board's encouragement, prepared a long report on the subject of schoolhouses. The Legislature published the report, and a copy was sent to every school committee in the state.[15] Mann believed that "the facts & arguments contained in that Report, have already caused the

[14] HM to J. A. Shaw, March 7, 1840.
[15] HM to John R. Bigelow, April 16, 1838, Houghton.

rebuilding or remodeling of hundreds of schoolhouses in the State."[16] That number must have been an exaggeration, but even if half the number were true, it spoke highly of the board's mission to diffuse information widely and let the people govern themselves.

Mann's mention of the remodeling of schoolhouses was important, for it suggested a critique of the majority's conception of power. Dodge had argued that, if the Board of Education had power, it was a threat that ought to be quashed, but, if it had no power at all, it was an unnecessary expense that could be cut off. Mann argued that autocracy and irrelevance were not the only two choices. "Cannot the Board advise, counsel, enlighten, submit their views," as they had done on schoolhouses, "without any usurpation [or] aggression, & still with great advantage?"[17] Power was not just a threat to be quashed like a foreign aggressor. Power could also be used benevolently, to "advise, counsel, enlighten."

In Mann's eyes, the recent improvements in Massachusetts schoolhouses in light of his report created a rationale for the existence of the Board of Education. Improvement came at the initiation and expense of the people, preserving the local autonomy that people like Allen Dodge cherished. But improvement relied on information supplied by the state through the office of the Secretary of the Board of Education. At the intersection of the people and the state stood children. The plight of suffering children, and the responsibility of the state to ameliorate that suffering, would drive the debate about whether the Board should continue to exist.

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[16] HM, Reply to Majority Report of the Massachusetts House Committee on Education, undated [March 1840], reel 5, HMC.

[17] HM, Reply to Majority Report of the Massachusetts House Committee on Education, undated [March 1840].

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Children may have been the last population in America to enjoy comfortable habitations. By the beginning of the nineteenth century, the middling and working classes had begun to improve their homes, replacing logs with frames and putting carpets on their floors as the gentry had long done. This newfound concern with refinement spread outward to other places adults inhabited. Church parishioners insisted on brick or stone, and clergyman put comfortable cushions on the benches and adornment on their walls.[18] Even prisons and asylums saw improvement before schoolhouses did. Children had little ability to improve their habitations, as adults did. Their comfort was easily assumed, forgotten, or ignored.

Much of what we know of schoolhouses in early national America comes from reformers who were critical of them. These reformers argued that the "typical" New England schoolhouse, as late as the late 1830s, was a single room with a chimney on one end and a single door at the other. The furniture was spare and rough, most often consisting of long slabs of wood (with no backs) on which children packed close together for hours at a time, the slabs so high that the feet of the younger children did not touch the floor. Most schools had no outhouses, no blinds on the windows, and no playgrounds.

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[18] Richard L. Bushman, *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1992); Carl Lounsbury, "God Is in the Details: The Transformation of Ecclesiastical Architecture in Early Nineteenth-Century America," *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture* 13, no. 1 (2006): 1-12; Gretchen Buggeln, *Temples of Grace: The Material Transformation of Connecticut's Churches, 1790-1840* (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 2003). In 1839, Mann noted the great improvement that had taken place in the design and upkeep of churches since the late 1820s. Schools, however, remained pitifully underkept: "The wood-colored clapboards dangle by a nail; the moss-covered shingles flutter in the wind; the chimney bends with the infirmities of age; a rail, borrowed from a neighboring fence, props a hingeless window-blind." "Public Worship," *Common School Journal* 1 (Jan. 15 1839): 26.

The schools were often located on main roads, exposing children to dust in the summer time and distractions at every time of year. Nothing about the arrangement of these buildings showed any concern for children or their senses.[19]

A few writers brought attention to these poor conditions as early as the 1820s, but the beginning of reform is usually dated to William Alcott's *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses,* published in Boston in 1832.[20] Alcott, a schoolteacher from Hartford and second cousin of the Alcotts from Concord, answered a call from the American Institute of Instruction for the best essay on schoolhouse design. His essay won the cash prize and quickly became a reference point for reformers interested in more child-centered design.

Alcott argued for many things that New Englanders had not seen in their schools, most of which could be found in the more progressive, child-centered schools of Europe operated by Pestalozzi, Philipp Emanuel von Fellenberg and others.[21] Alcott's basic idea was that the health of children should be a priority before all else. Not even learning to read was worth sacrificing health. To that end, Alcott thought that smoky fireplaces had to go. Schoolrooms should be heated with a clean-burning stove that was placed in an adjacent room, the heat pumped in through pipes. He thought benches a terrible idea.

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[19] "New England Schoolhouses," *American Annals of Education and Instruction* 7 (June 1837): 241-46; "Furniture of Schoolrooms," *American Annals of Education and Instruction* 7 (June 1837): 246-49.

[20] William W. Cutler III, "Cathedral of Culture: The Schoolhouse in American Educational Thought and Practice since 1820," *History of Education Quarterly* 29, no. 1 (Spring 1989): 1-40, esp. 4; William J. Adams, "On the Construction and Furnishing of School Rooms: and on School Apparatus," in *The Introductory Discourse and Lectures Delivered in Boston, Before the Convention of Teachers, and Other Friends of Education, Assembled to Form the American Institute of Instruction, August 1830* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1831), 335-46; William A. Alcott, *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses, to Which Was Awarded the Prize Offered by the American Institute of Instruction, August 1831* (Boston: Hilliard, Gray, Little and Wilkins, 1832).

[21] Alcott had access to European schoolhouse innovation through the pages of the *Annals* of the American Institute of Instruction. See, for example, "Sketches of Hofwyl," *American Journal, and Annals of American Education and Instruction* 1, part II, no. 3 (March 1831): 89-91.

Every child deserved to have his own desk with a back to lean on. Schools should be in secluded, rural settings, located far away from the hazards of main roads. They should have playgrounds, fruit trees, and flowers. Alcott thought that children learned better when they were happy and comfortable. "Are not children better pleased with handsome houses, fences, walls, &c," he asked, "than with those of a contrary description?"[22]

Alcott's essay circulated among a small group of educators, but there is little evidence that it reached school committees on a wide scale. There is much evidence to suggest that many schoolhouses continued to be "filthy huts," as Alcott called them, into the late 1830s, structures far beneath the dignity that most families were willing to endure.[23] The same year Alcott's essay was published, Horace Mann was working on another kind of reform as a member of the Massachusetts House of Representatives. Mann was interested in improving the environmental conditions of a different marginalized population than the one that concerned William Alcott. Mann was making the same kinds of arguments on behalf of the insane that Alcott was making on behalf of children.

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The asylum of the eighteenth century is often portrayed as a dark and dreary place, in Michel Foucault's memorable description, more a "centre of death *(foyer de*

[22] Alcott, *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses*, 8, 10, 15-19.
[23] Alcott, *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses*, 6; "Public Worship," 22-26.

mort)" than a therapeutic agent.[24] The very unnaturalness of the asylum with its large and rigid enclosures came to be seen as part of the problem. Cure rates were low and death rates high. It made more sense, enlightened architects and medical doctors agreed, to bring patients out of the dark into the light, out of the city and into the country, to places where the mentally maimed could breathe fresh air and feel God's pleasure. If man was a *tabula rasa,* as Locke argued, might new sensations imprint a new soul onto one that was fractured and broken?[25]

Historians sometimes take a dim view of institutionalization, but for people living in the early nineteenth century, it appeared far more enlightened than the alternatives.[26] In Massachusetts, concrete interest in caring for the mentally ill emerged out of other reform activities of the 1820s. The Prison Discipline Society, a volunteer society organized in Boston in 1825, sought to alert the public to the appalling living conditions in town jails. The society condemned the dark, dank, filthy conditions of many prisons as inhumane and unbecoming of a civilized society.[27] Horace Mann was a member of the Prison

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[24] Foucault was referring specifically to the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris, an asylum recognized for its unusually high death rate. Michel Foucault, "The Politics of Health in the Nineteenth Century," in *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977* (Brighton, UK: Harvester, 1980), 166-82.

[25] Christine Stevenson, *Medicine and Magnificence: British Hospital and Asylum Architecture, 1660-1815* (New Haven: Yale University Press for the Paul Mellon Centre for Studies in British Art, 2000), 188, 222-23, 234; Andrew Scull, *Madness in Civilization: A Cultural History of Insanity, from the Bible to Freud, from Madhouse to Modern Medicine* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2015), 159-61.

[26] The dim view is reflected in the historiography of the 1970s, when institutionalization was thought to have failed. See, for example, David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum: Social Order and Disorder in the New Republic* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1971).

[27] *First Annual Report of the Board of Managers of the Prison Discipline Society, Boston, June 2, 1826,* 6th ed. (Boston: Perkins and Marvin, 1830), 7-9.

Discipline Society and probably came to take interest in the mentally ill through his work with this society.[28]

The Society's careful examination of these town jails brought out the righteous indignation of reformers. The report found many who had been confined to jail for years—in some case decades—for reasons having nothing to do with dangerous criminal actions. They may have been chronically poor or mentally ill ("furiously mad" in the language of the statute), but they did not seem to present a grave threat to society.[29] Their living conditions appalled nineteenth-century sensibilities. One man had been confined to a room for 30 years without fire. Others lived in shackles, their cells dark or poorly lit.[30] If their living conditions were improved, might they be reformed? Mann thought many of them might be and took up the cause of founding an asylum for their care. Would his fellow legislators not join him, he asked, in becoming "protectors of the wretched, and benefactors of the miserable"?[31]

In the winter of 1829, Horace Mann was appointed chair of a Massachusetts House committee assembled to consider erecting "an asylum for the safe keeping of lunatics, and persons furiously mad."[32] Mann did a survey of the needs of the various towns of the Commonwealth, and found upwards of 300 people presently in jail who

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[28] "Prison Discipline Society," *Missionary Herald* 30 (July 1834): 265.

[29] A 1796 Massachusetts law permitted local authorities to place those deemed to be "furiously mad" in jails and houses of correction. Mary Ann Jimenez, "Madness in Early American History: Insanity in Massachusetts from 1700 to 1830," *Journal of Social History* 20, no. 1 (Autumn 1986): 25-44, esp. 35.

[30] For a description of the poor conditions, see *Report of Commissioners Appointed Under a Resolve of the Legislature of Massachusetts to Superintend the Erection of a Lunatic Hospital at Worcester* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1832), 16-19.

[31] George Allen Hubbell, *Horace Mann: Educator, Patriot and Reformer* (Philadelphia: William F. Fell, 1910), 70.

[32] *Reports and Other Documents Relating to the State Lunatic Hospital at Worcester, Mass.* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1837), 3.

might qualify.[33] The legislature eventually gave $30,000 towards a building in Worcester, thus creating the first fully state-supported asylum for the mentally ill in America.[34]

A highly idealized view of humankind largely governed the view of treatment that Mann and others recommended. Most medical American professionals before about 1850 started with Lockean assumptions about mental illness. If the senses or the brain somehow became impaired, then faulty impressions resulted, resulting in abnormal behavior.[35] The road to recovery began with improving the living environment and thus changing the possibility that new sense impressions could be formed.

Mann described the injurious living environments of jails in terms similar to the way William Alcott spoke of bad schoolhouses. Alcott condemned schoolhouses for being poorly lit and ventilated. He warned of the "atmospheric impurity" that rendered a child "unfit for vigorous effort, and thus slowly, though surely, impair his constitution."[36] Mann thought the bad air of dark jails made sanity impossible. "If there be any recuperative energies of mind, suffering suspends or destroys them," he said, "and recovery is placed almost beyond the reach of hope."[37]

Mann imagined a new place where all the old impediments to obtaining proper sense impressions would be removed. In his speeches to the Massachusetts legislature, Mann spoke of returning the mentally ill to the "cheering and healing influences of the

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[33] Only 114 towns answered the survey, less than half of all the towns in Massachusetts.

[34] Gerald N. Grob, *The State and the Mentally Ill: A History of Worcester State Hospital in Massachusetts, 1830-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1966). Other asylums founded prior to this time—most prominently McLean Asylum, Friends' Asylum, and the Hartford Retreat—relied largely on privately philanthropy. Emerson Davis, *The Half Century; or, A History of Changes that Have Taken Place, and Events that Have Transpired, Chiefly in the United States, Between 1800 and 1850* (Boston: Tappan and Whittmore, 1851), 114-18.

[35] Gerald N. Grob, *Mental Institutions in America: Social Policy to 1875* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 2009), 152.

[36] Alcott, *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses*, 7.

[37] "Hospital for Lunatics," *Boston Daily Courier,* Feb 15, 1830, [1].

external world," to the restorative powers of "light and air."[38] If the environment were only improved, healing could begin. "Let us restore them to the enjoyment of the exalted capacities of intellect and of virtue," Mann pleaded. "Let us draw aside the dark curtain which hides from their eyes and the wisdom and beauty of the Universe."[39] Like other antebellum reformers, Mann rhapsodized over the powers of the external world—and particularly the country—to perfect even the most broken of human creation.

Mann was involved in every aspect of the planning of the Lunatic Hospital at Worcester. He helped select the location, the building materials, and the contractors. He researched European asylums and studied the most approved methods in design. The best success, he learned, came when the insane were placed in comforting, light-filled settings and be allowed to go "into the open air, the fields and the woods, that the restorative influences of nature may strike some chord in the heart."[40] The same year Mann wrote these words, William Alcott recommended that children be permitted to leave the schoolroom and walk out into the open air at least once an hour, thus promoting conditions "favorable to health."[41]

For all his interest creating optimal physical environments, Mann's concern in the early 1830s was mainly with the exception to the norm, the mentally ill. He was working to help people who had been injured and required rehabilitation. Could the same principles be extended to people who were already whole? Could they be extended as a

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[38] "Hospital for Lunatics," *Boston Daily Courier,* Feb 15, 1830, [1].

[39] "Hospital for Lunatics," *Boston Daily Courier,* Feb 15, 1830, [1].

[40] *Report of Commissioners Appointed Under a Resolve of the Legislature of Massachusetts,* 21.

[41] Alcott, *Essay on the Construction of School-Houses,* 15, 21.

preventative to the young, keeping them mentally and physically fit? For answers to those questions, Mann turned to phrenology.

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Historians have often viewed phrenology as a kind of embarrassment to clear-thinking people, a pseudo-science that embraced a crude and now discredited biologism.[42] After all, no one today thinks that bumps on the head correlate to personality traits, as phrenologists once did. But that gloss does little to account for the great appeal of phrenology during its heyday in the first half of the nineteenth century or for its influence on the development of fields as diverse as anthropology, criminology, psychometrics, and the fine arts.[43] By 1832 phrenology had become accepted as a legitimate science by the Boston Medical Society and had entered the curriculum of Harvard Medical School.[44] It attracted some of the brightest minds of the day: Clara Barton, Walt Whitman, and Henry Ward Beecher, among many others. Horace Mann was among the devotees.[45]

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[42] Martin Gardner groups phrenology with palmistry and graphology in *Fads and Fallacies in the Name of Science* (New York: Dover, 1957). For other dismissive treatments, see John D. Davies, *Phrenology, Fad and Science: A 19th-Century American Crusade* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1955), and Arthur Wrobel, "Phrenology as Political Science," in *Pseudo-Science and Society in 19th-Century America,* ed. Arthur Wrobel (Lexington: University Press of Kentucky, 1987), 122-43.

[43] Charles Colbert, *A Measure of Perfection: Phrenology and the Fine Arts in America* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); Van Whye, *Phrenology and the Origins of Scientific Naturalism* (Aldershot, UK: Ashgate, 2004).

[44] Megan Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 241.

[45] "George Combe," in *Nineteenth-Century Science: A Selection of Original Texts,* ed. A. S. Weber (Peterborough, Ont.: Broadview Press, 2000), 161-71, esp. 162.

Part of the appeal of phrenology was that it provided an answer to a timeless problem, one that had vexed philosophers from the pre-Socratics forward, even down to the present day: the relationship between mind and matter. Franz Joseph Gall, the Viennese anatomist who is often credited with founding the phrenological movement, extended a line of thought found in eighteenth-century faculty psychology, which had wide influence everywhere, including America, had became enshrined in the founding documents of the American republic.[46] According to faculty psychologists, the mind consists of a series of faculties, or mental and moral traits, that could be developed through mental exercise much as exercise of the body develops muscles. Gall added the brain to this configuration. If the brain was the organ of the mind, as Gall hypothesized, might the various faculties be found in the brain? Gall located the faculties in different areas of the brain and went on to argue that the size of these areas of the brain (as manifest through the shape of the skull) manifested the relative power of the faculties.[47]

Gall's theories soon made their way to Scotland, and it was there that George Combe became a great evangelizer, founding the Edinburgh Phrenological Society in 1820. Trained in philosophy at the University of Edinburgh, Combe began lecturing on

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[46] Daniel Walker Howe, *Making of the American Self: Jonathan Edwards to Abraham Lincoln* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 78-103.

[47] Robert M. Young, *Mind, Brain and Adaptation in the Nineteenth Century: Cerebral Localization and Its Biological Context from Gall to Ferrier* (Oxford, UK: Clarendon Press, 1970), 9-53. Gall thought mental traits could be associated with cranial topography only in a small number of individuals. One of his associates and chief interpreters, Johan G. Spurzheim, generalized to the entire human population. Edwin Clarke and L. S. Jacyna, *Nineteenth-Century Origins of Neuroscientific Concepts* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 223-24.

phrenology across Europe and eventually made his way to the United States, where he became the movement's chief popularizer.[48]

Combe was typical of many reformers in the early nineteenth century in that his philosophy began by rejecting Calvinism's emphasis on the innate depravity of man.[49] His chief work, *The Constitution of Man,* published in 1828, started by affirming that God created all things good—a sentiment reminiscent of Rousseau's opening line of *Emile.* Combe frequently compared the human being to an acorn that was destined to grow into a full measure of its creation—a towering oak—if only the external conditions were right. In like manner, the "germ" from which human beings spring, Combe said, is "complete in all its parts, and sound in its whole constitution."[50] The end toward which this constitution tended was "moral and intellectual happiness."[51]

Rousseau famously argued that human institutions corrupted human beings as they came from God. For Combe, the main source of corruption was ignorance, not institutions. Human beings, as part of the natural order of creation, were governed by natural law just as the universe was governed by natural law. They were organisms constituted to breathe and to eat for their well-being. Their survival required light. Their bodies craved warmth. It was an "organic law," Combe said, that, from the moment human beings took their first breath, they "must be supplied with food, light, air, and

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[48] David Stack, *Queen Victoria's Skull: George Combe and the Mid-Victorian Mind* (London: Hambleton Continuum, 2008); Charles Gibbon, *The Life of George Combe,* 2 vols. (London: Macmillan, 1878).

[49] Stephen Tomlinson, *Head Masters: Phrenology, Secular Education, and Nineteenth-Century Social Thought* (Tuscaloosa, Ala.: University of Alabama Press, 2005), 166-67.

[50] George Combe, *The Constitution of Man, Considered in Relation to External Objects,* 11th American ed., rev. and enl. (Boston: Marsh, Capen, Lyon and Webb, 1841), 121-22.

[51] Combe, *The Constitution of Man*, 23.

every other physical element for [their] support."[52] But few observers seemed to realize, as Combe forcefully did, that obedience to organic law was "rewarded with a vigorous and healthy development," and that disobedience to that law, either from ignorance or neglect, brought only pain and disappointment—not as a punishment from God, but as a natural consequence of violating the law that governed the human constitution.

Combe's great contribution to phrenology was to suggest a program of action for Gall's theory of faculties.[53] Combe's system put a high premium on creating an optimum physical environment for the human constitution. He insisted that things like breathing bad air or not getting enough sunlight resulted in "feebleness, stinted growth, general imperfection, or early death."[54] Not physical feebleness only, but moral and intellectual feebleness as well. He thought the violation of natural law spared no one. Even the hardiest individuals, if persistently in violation of the natural law that governed the human organism, would find the "vigor of the moral and intellectual organs" impaired: irritation, memory lapse, and lost patience all resulted.[55] To avoid such treacherous costs, the only sound program was to become educated in the laws that governed human happiness and place oneself in harmony with these laws.[56]

Combe's sweeping conception of the power of the physical environment to invigorate and preserve explains why reformers of all kinds, on both sides of the Atlantic,

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[52] Combe, *The Constitution of Man*, 46.

[53] Combe was not the first to suggest an educational plan. Gall's chief early interpreter, Johan G. Spurzheim, had earlier spoken about the possibility of "human nature [being] perfected" through education of the faculties. Tomlinson, *Head Masters,* 89-96.

[54] Combe, *The Constitution of Man*, 46-47.

[55] Combe, *The Constitution of Man*, 313.

[56] In this, Combe's theory anticipated the rise natural or holistic medicine.

embraced phrenology with unbounded enthusiasm.[57] Could phrenological principles be applied not just to prevent the body's decline but to cure it from degeneration? If you removed a person from a dark jail and gave him sunlight, good food, and human society, the very things required of all thriving human beings, might his body and his mind become reconstituted? Stooped or broken bodies might become straight and vibrant again. Shriveled minds might flower and bloom. If the right conditions were in place, the oak tree that nature intended might develop.

The implications of Combes' theories seemed thrilling to educational reformers like Mann. At some point in the 1830s, Mann discovered Combe, and after 1838 the two reformers became friends and regular correspondents through the end of Mann's life. Mann occasionally quoted Combe in his reports but did not openly endorse or push phrenology during his years as Board of Education secretary. Even at the height of its popularity, the phrenological movement was controversial, drawing severe criticism, especially in Scotland.[58] Mann freely admitted the contested elements and may have entertained some reservations himself.[59] He seems to have believed that the most important insights in Combe's *The Constitution of Man* had little to do with bumps on the head. He recommended the book his sister, he told her, "not that you may become a believer in that part of it, which treats of the correspondence, between the powers of the

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[57] Roger Cooter, *The Cultural Meaning of Popular Science: Phrenology and the Organization of Consent in Nineteenth-Century Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1984).

[58] Nicholas J. Wade, "Scotland," in *The Oxford Handbook of the History of Psychology: Global Perspectives,* ed. David B. Baker (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012), 462-495, esp. 485.

[59] During his 1838 tour of the United States, Combe spoke in Boston, and local luminaries threw him a party. Mann was present. Tributes were given, but Mann requested that his own tribute to Combe not be published so as to avoid controversy. HM to Samuel G. Howe, Nov 20, [1838], reel 5, HMC.

mind & the external developments of the head," but that she might master the phrenologists' "mental philosophy."[60]

Like other reformers, Mann was most impressed with Combe's theories as a way of perfecting the human species. "I know of no book," Mann explained, that "does so much to 'vindicate the ways of God to man' as *The Constitution of Man."* Combe had shown "what various & different endowments, heaven has blended." Humans had been "fitted for the world" in such an "exquisite manner."[61] "Our misfortune is not the possession of any faculty or power which in itself is an evil, but the abuse or misuse of these, which were given for beneficent purposes."[62] In effect, Combe had put Rousseau within a natural scientific setting: children came into the world good; they fell from grace not so much because of the corruptions of society as their own ignorance of the natural laws that governed their constitution. Combe's phrenology was thus fundamentally an educational program in the ways people could avoid the "the abuse or misuse" of their own mental, moral, and physical faculties.

Mann thought of Combe as an axial figure, a genius who was destined to do for the moral and intellectual science what Francis Bacon once did for experimental science.[63] It became obvious to Mann what he must do with this encounter with genius. He must put his knowledge of the laws of health into service. He must bring light and air and comfort to the constitutions of children. That meant he must reform schoolhouses.

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[60] HM to Lydia B. Mann, Nov. 9, 1838, reel 5, HMC.
[61] HM to Lydia B. Mann, Nov. 9, 1838.
[62] HM to Lydia B. Mann, Nov. 9, 1838.
[63] Combe spoke with "the voice of God, revealing eternal truths to men," Mann said. HM to Mrs. Mills, Nov 1, 1838, reel 5, HMC.

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Mann's report on schoolhouses, written in the spring of 1838 and published at the end of his first report to the Massachusetts Legislature, shows no evidence of familiarity with home architectural books then in popular circulation in early America. Professional architects, moreover, had not yet taken up schools as a subject of interest to this point in American history, and, as a consequence, with the exception of William Alcott's essay, which Mann quoted in his report, he seems to have been very much on his own in crafting guidelines on schoolhouse design.[64]

Mann wrote not as an expert on building but as a close observer of what he called "the laws of health and life" that made learning environments optimal.[65] The success of the Lunatic Asylum at Worcester, now five years in operation, helped establish Mann's credibility as a reformer of lived environments. But the report establishes its own credibility at the outset by conveying the impression of a deeply ambitious study—as later observers pointed out, the most ambitious on the subject to this point in American history.[66] Mann had accumulated loads of information about what was working in Massachusetts schoolhouses and what was not. He began the report by noting that, during his tour of the counties in the fall of 1837, he personally examined or obtained "exact and specific information" on the size, construction, and condition of about 800 schoolhouses.

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[64] Neville Thompson, "Tools of Persuasion: The American Architectural Book of the Nineteenth Century," in *The American Illustrated Book in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Gerald W. R. Ward (Winterthur, Del.: Henry Francis du Pont Winterthur Museum, 1987), 137-69; Harold N. Cooledge, "Samuel Sloan and the 'Philadelphia Plan,'" *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 23 (Oct. 1964): 151-54.

[65] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education, on the Subject of School Houses, Supplementary to His First Annual Report* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1838), 14.

[66] Joseph Henry, "Report Read Before the Convention," in *Proceedings of the National Convention of the Friends of Public Education* (Philadelphia: n.p., 1849), 55-58.

Through personal correspondence, he received more general information on at least 1000 more.[67] For the first time in American history, someone was attending to children's physical learning environment on a large scale.

Mann is sometimes viewed as the first of a long line of bureaucrats who sought to impose uniformity on American public schools.[68] But Mann denied a one-size-fits-all approach to schoolhouses. He was sure there was not a "perfect model," which meant that he could not "urge a universal conformity" to any one plan.[69] It mattered, he said, whether the school was a high school or an infant school, whether it was in the city or the country, whether it taught few studies or many, whether it enrolled a lot of students or just a few, and whether it was for males or females or both. He thought school committees should decide the plan that is best for the needs of their own community.[70] His report contained several plans for consideration, but Mann did not put them forward as the ultimate solution, and he expressed delight when his plans were adapted by local school committees. His main purpose in writing, he said, was to put the "essentials" of good schoolhouse design into the hands of the committees, who would then be better

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[67] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education*, 5.

[68] Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1972); Michael Katz, *Class, Bureaucracy, and Schools: The Illusion of Educational Change in America* (New York: Praeger, 1975).

[69] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 6.

[70] Mann said he could not recommend the proper temperature for schoolrooms (though he said physicians suggested 65-70 degrees Fahrenheit), because the habits of children differed. "In cities, there is generally less exposure to cold, than in the country; and factory children would suffer from cold, when those employed in the out-door occupations of agriculture would be comfortably warm." HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 18.

empowered to make decisions. Once those essentials were understood, the schoolhouse could be adapted to particular needs of the local community.[71]

These essentials, as the report explains, involved the laws of health that governed the natural constitution of children. George Combe, of course, had put great priority on clean air in allowing human beings to develop in the way God intended. Mann spoke about the need for good ventilation in schoolhouses in similar terms, noting that the proportion of elements in clean air had been "adapted, by omniscient wisdom, with perfect exactness" for "human utility and enjoyment." Drawing on the language of natural theology, Mann pointed out that clean air was abundant, rushing to fill every nook and cranny on the earth's surface. God had poured out clean air "forty and fifty miles deep all around the globe." Why? "It was to prevent the necessity of our using it, *second-hand,* that it was given to us by skyfulls."[72] Nature's ways were best. Our duty, he told the school committees, was not to disturb the elemental proportions that humans were best suited to breath. Foul or stale air had to be avoided at all costs.[73]

Mann's solution for stale air in schoolhouses was much the same as William Alcott's. The size of schoolrooms should be expanded, so that sufficient air could circulate, and apertures should be made in the ceiling to allow foul air to escape. But the best way of expelling bad air, Mann argued, was to introduce an abundant supply of "fresh warm air" into the room. He did not object to stoves placed in schoolrooms, but thought they were far from ideal, as they overheated students who sat near them and underheated those who sat far away. Far better, Mann argued, to put a furnace in the

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[71] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 6.
[72] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 11.
[73] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 8-9.

cellar of the schoolroom, where the warm air came up through cracks and crevices, and heated all space uniformly, thus providing warmth to all children regardless of the seat they happened to occupy.[74]

The natural constitution craved sunlight as well as warmth. Mann recommended an abundance of natural light in the schoolroom, just as William Alcott did, though on different grounds. Mann thought that the human eye was used much more frequently in modern times than it had been in former centuries and was under greater strain than in the past. Children were using their eyes constantly in the classroom. Mann fretted over young eyes being overworked and then failing to recover. To offset this concern, he urged that schoolrooms be supplied with "a good deal more light than is ordinarily wanted." Windows should supply light at all times, helping to ease the strain placed on the child's eyes.[75]

Alcott had recommended that windows be placed high on the walls, so that children could not be distracted by passers-by. But Mann, drawing on his experience in planning the asylum, thought high windows gave the schoolroom "a prison or cellar-like appearance." Children should be able to see out the windows any time they liked to so as to enjoy the pleasure and health of more direct light. If the school was built in a secluded place away from the road, there would be little need for high windows.[76]

The subtext of Mann's report was that children's learning and their physical comfort were closely intertwined. "Children will sit more easily and more upright, if the back of the seats slope a little from them, at the shoulder blades"—the implication being

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[74] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 15.
[75] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 33.
[76] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 34.

that children who "sit more easily" will be happier, more contented learners.[77] In all things, school committees should take their cues from the natural bodily constitution of children, an axiom Mann learned from George Combe. "A child cannot be expected to sit still," Mann argued, unless he has a firm resting place for his back and his feet. The desks, therefore, should be constructed with the physiognomy of children in mind. Mann thought every child should be able to sit with his feet on the floor, his knee joint forming a right angle, in this way putting no pressure on the thigh bone.[78]

Overall, Mann's schoolhouse report can be placed within the larger genre of antebellum reform texts that concerned themselves with the improvement of physical space. Mann's report exposed the defects in Massachusetts schoolhouses just as the Prison Discipline Society had exposed defects in its jails. Schoolhouses revised and improved were like the Worcester asylum that brought forgotten people out of darkness into light. But the report also extended a view of the innocent child found in George Combe as it had been found in Rousseau and others. In this, Mann's report drew on the sympathy of its hearers: children, innocent and pure, should not have to inhabit miserable conditions. With children in mind, schoolhouses "injudiciously located, unsightly without, and uncomfortable within" could be avoided.

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Mann's report on schoolhouses enjoyed widespread influence. The Massachusetts legislature printed 6,000 copies, and reprints soon appeared in several other states.

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[77] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 20.
[78] HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 22.

Reformers seemed to sense that children were not being well served and that the public ought to do better. In 1839, a copy of Mann's report was published in London and greeted with enthusiastic reviews.[79]

Once the report was in the public domain, it was up to school committees to decide what to do with it. No law asked the committees to build new, more hospitable schoolhouses. But the school laws passed in the years immediately after the creation of the Massachusetts the Board of Education had made the local committees more accountable to the public than ever before. One law asked every town school committee to prepare a detailed yearly report on how the schools under their jurisdiction were doing and especially "designating particular improvements and defects in the methods or means of education."[80] The report was to be read in an open town meeting every year and printed and distributed to town residents. A copy then had to be sent to the Secretary of the Commonwealth.

These town committee reports were turned over to Mann, as Secretary of the Board of Education, and he was tasked with preparing an abstract of the reports of the local school committees and laying it before the Legislature every year. This *Abstract of School Returns* was a bear of an assignment, requiring Mann to copy literally hundreds of pages by hand. He sometimes groused privately over the labor. But he also recognized the great value in having "a minute and authentic statement of the actual condition of the

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[79] HM, *School Houses* (London: Hodson, 1839); "Art. XXVI.—School Houses," *Monthly Review* (London) 3 (Dec. 1839): 613-14. Some reviews were more tepid. See, for example, "On School-Houses," *Educational Magazine* (London), New Series, 1 (Feb. 1840): 107-11.

[80] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1839), iii.

schools in many of the most important points."[81] In fact, these local reports, which have been entirely overlooked by Mann biographers, probably represented the best way of measuring overall progress in the common schools of Massachusetts.

Mann submitted his second abstract to the Massachusetts House about the same time the abolition of the Board of Education came under debate. Many of the town reports provided only raw statistical data, in satisfaction of the law, but other school committees wrote long, revealing descriptions on the state of the common schools under their watch. Could their "authentic statement" of actual conditions on the ground provide evidence for or against the Board of Education?

It is hard to know exactly what to make of these reports. They are "abstracts," not complete reports from the committees.[82] Did Mann prune the most objectionable content out? Because Mann was the one who edited the reports for publication, he was in a position to omit material unfavorable to him and the Board of Education. That said, there is nothing in the reports to suggest that Mann pruned the reports to present the prettiest possible picture of Massachusetts schools in print. The committees were often critical of their own schools and townspeople, and that material remains in the published documents. Nor is there any evidence in the public press that the committees were unhappy with the way Mann edited their reports. Yet, outside of the occasional complaint of being overworked, it is a fact that criticism of legislative decisions is largely absent. Nevertheless, the *Abstract of School Returns* offers unparalleled source material on the

[81] HM to Henry Barnard, March 2, 1840, Barnard Papers, New York University.

[82] I have searched in vain in the Massachusetts State House for the original town reports from this period.

way local townspeople viewed the Board of Education during this period of political turmoil.

On the whole, the abstract for 1838-39 seems to vindicate the controversial decisions made by the Board of Education, the very decisions criticized by people like Orestes Brownson and the writers of the majority report of the House Committee of Education. Several committees decried the great defect of unqualified teachers and praised the decision to start normal schools.[83] No committee referred to the normal schools as an imposition from Prussia. Some committees seemed to understand that the origin of the idea had little bearing on solving the problem at hand. Teacher training could be likened to an apprenticeship, the committee at Westport wrote. "If experience, skill and judgment are required in the ordinary mechanical, agricultural, or mercantile pursuits of life," they said, "we believe it most certainly required of those who are to lay the foundation of the future usefulness in society."[84]

Many school committees said they felt the want of books in their schools and towns, and lauded the Board's decision to publish a library of schoolbooks to help remedy the problem.[85] The school committee in Framingham referred to the "judicious arrangements" made by the Board of Education to "obtain original works from writers of the greatest ability in the country, which are to be furnished at a very reduced price."[86] The committee did not seem to feel that the Board of Education was trying force their

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[83] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 5-6, 55.
[84] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 284.
[85] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 3, 36, 56, 76, 80, 87, 198, 246, 275.
[86] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 56.

books on the towns. It was instead putting out a strong and affordable product that towns might not have otherwise enjoyed.

The Board of Education comes off as more of an ally than an adversary in the reports. There is no animosity to speak of. The committees probably sensed that the Board of Education was trying to make the role of the local committees more important, not less. They knew that Mann was in their camp. He spent a large portion of his first report to the legislature praising the thankless and tireless work of school committees and condemning the apathy of parents who refused to assist them. Mann thought school committees should be paid for their labor and told the legislature so, asking for a portion of the school fund to be given to towns for the purpose. Mann was a friend, not an enemy, to the school committees.

Mann's advocacy probably helped generate good will in the school committee reports. The great deficiency mentioned in the reports was not the Board of Education but the apathy on the part of parents—the same concern Mann raised.[87] The committees said they looked for guidance from the Board of Education, and reflecting this good will, some school committee men defended the Board of Education, praising the Board as "excellent" and their motives as originating "in feelings of patriotism and philanthropy."[88] The reports referred repeatedly to Mann's actions as useful and helpful.[89]

There is abundant evidence in the committee reports that Mann's report on schoolhouses had registered with public consciousness. There was much complaint about

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[87] The complaint is ubiquitous. See, for example, *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 26-27, 102, 192, 212, 219, 226, 236, 252, 271, 322.

[88] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 207, 262, 295, 320.

[89] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 20, 64, 254, 287.

schoolhouses being cold, dark, stuffy, or poorly situated. Some school committees had done something about the problems by remodeling rooms, installing new furnaces, rebuilding schools, or, in one case, moving the school back from a busy road.[90]

Many of the reports saw their town's schoolhouses as impairing the health of children, repeating arguments Mann had made.[91] They lamented benches without backs that were too high for children to touch the floor.[92] The reports highlighted, just as Mann had, the painful conditions under which some children were asked to learn. The descriptions can be read as attempts to draw on the sympathy of townspeople in order to persuade the citizens to tax themselves for improvements. "Children are compelled to sit hour after hour on a narrow plank," the Fitchburg school committee wrote, "with nothing to support their bodies, unless they lean one upon another, which is too often done for the good order and quiet of the school." The bad effects of backless benches were now plain for all to see. "All must see that such a position for children is any thing but beneficial to health or mental improvement."[93]

The school committees seemed especially appalled by poorly ventilated schools that created air, in the words of one school committee, "unfit for any human being to breathe."[94] Once again, Mann's arguments were repeated. "There is no such indispensible necessary to life as fresh air," said the school committee in Roxbury, quoting Mann's

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[90] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 66, 282.
[91] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 14, 203.
[92] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 200, 212.
[93] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 102.
[94] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 314.

report on schoolhouses: "A child may live for days without food, drink, or sleep; but deprive him of air for only one minute, and all power of thought is extinct."[95]

As evidence from the court of public opinion supporting the utility of the Board of Education, these reports were hard to assail. They seemed to suggest that common schools were improving, not regressing, under the guidance of the Board. Even towns that had not yet made changes in their schoolhouses were now aware of the problems and intended to take steps to remedy them. Taken as a whole, the reports from the school committees suggested that the Board of Education was making a positive contribution to the education of Massachusetts' children. Mann's duty to diffuse information as widely as possible seems to have been working.

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The town committee reports in the *Abstract of School Reports* formed part of the large background of debate about whether the Board of Education should be abolished. The minority report of the House Committee on Education, written primarily by John Shaw with information supplied by Mann, was submitted on March 11. Debate began a week later.

Rather than dwell on hypotheticals, as the majority report had done, the minority report spent much time on what the Board had actually done. Shaw thought the majority

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[95] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 250; HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 7-8. The school committee in Fall River quoted Mann's schoolhouse report (without attribution) when they wrote that "closely connected with the *love of study*—with proficiency in study—with *health*, with *anatomical formation*—and with *length of life,"* said the school committee in Fall River. *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1838-9,* 270; HM, *Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education,* 7.

"seem to be in great fear of imaginary evils," for they had not cited a single instance where the Board of Education had interfered with the rights of towns or school districts.[96]

Like Mann, Shaw tried to show that power could be used in moderate, benevolent ways. If an idea had to be discounted because it originated in Europe, lots of humanitarian institutions that Americans liked would have to be shut down. "Central" institutions were not evil based on their centrality; their potential to harm depended on how they used their power. Shaw asked: "If every institution is to be abolished, that it is possible to pervert to some evil purpose, we beg leave to ask what one would be left?" In all human affairs, "the possibility to do wrong goes with the power to do right. Take away the power of doing wrong, & the power of doing right will be destroyed at the same time."[97] Shaw thought the Board of Education should be able to recommend textbooks without those recommendations being viewed as an "aggression" on the rights of citizens. People could take them or leave them.

The dissemination of information had positive value, Shaw pointed out, a few pages into his report. Take schoolhouses as a case in point. "It is well known to every one who ever went to a common public school, that a very large proportion of the school houses had not been in times past, what they ought to be." Shaw repeated language Mann had supplied him in a private letter: "In very many instances they have been cold,

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[96] John Shaw and Thomas A. Greene, Minority Report of the Committee of Education, March 11, 1840, in Act to Abolish the Board of Education, Docket, 817, Massachusetts Legislative Dockets, MA.

[97] John Shaw and Thomas A. Greene, Minority Report of the Committee of Education, March 11, 1840.

cheerless, badly constructed & situated, & much in need of repair, unfit either for study or health."[98]

Shaw reminded the Legislature that Mann had prepared a report on schoolhouses that had "probably caused the rebuilding or remodeling of hundreds of school-houses in the state." The report circulated widely in this country, Shaw said, and was republished in England and commended in the English journals. But none of this success had imposed on the towns of Massachusetts. The Board had exercised no control over whether towns should rebuild their schools or how exactly they would go about doing it. "Every district has followed its own inclination in building its new house, or repairing its old one," Shaw explained. There was clearly a place for the benevolent exercise of power. "This is one instance of their effecting much good, without exerting any control, or attempting any interference."[99]

Whigs responded more readily to such arguments than did Democrats, but the vote did not go straight down party lines. On March 18, the bill to abolish the Board of Education failed 182 to 245.[100] Although Whigs formed a majority in the House, the failure of the bill was not a foregone conclusion, as some Whigs did favor shutting down the Board of Education. Two-thirds of all Democrats voted to abolish the Board of Education while four of every five Whigs supported the Board. Had the bill made it

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[98] John Shaw and Thomas A. Greene, Minority Report of the Committee of Education, March 11, 1840.

[99] John Shaw and Thomas A. Greene, Minority Report of the Committee of Education, March 11, 1840.

[100] "Massachusetts Legislature," *Columbian Centinel,* March 21, 1840, 4.

through the House to the Senate, where Whigs predominated, it almost surely would have been defeated there as well.[101]

The year 1840 may have been the most difficult of Mann's secretaryship. The movement to abolish his office caused him great pain and many hours of untold worry. "I strained my head & heart, for three months," he told Elizabeth Peabody.[102] Mann didn't know it at the time, but the Board would never be attacked in such a way again. Its place in the state apparatus was now secure. The next time the opposition attacked, it would be far more personal.

[101] Carl F. Kaestle and Maris A. Vinovskis, *Education and Social Change in Nineteenth-Century Massachusetts* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1980), 219, 229. Josiah Quincy Jr., Mann's successor as president of the Massachusetts Senate, told Mann that the act to abolish the Board of Education would never have passed a vote in the Senate.

[102] HM to Elizabeth Peabody, June 11, 1840, Rhode Island College.

Chapter 5

Discipline and Punish

Three years passed, and three more annual reports. The Massachusetts legislature's vote to retain the Board of Education pumped fresh air into the reform movement, and, from that time on, momentum seemed to gain. All three normal schools were now in operation, and, cheeringly for Mann, the legislature had extended their funding. Further, the legislature had allocated a small appropriation for each school in the state to purchase a library, providing schools with the resources to purchase the dozens of new volumes of the Massachusetts School Library that rolled off the press.[1] As 1843 began, Mann looked back on 1842 as "a most auspicious year" that augured well for the future. Reform was moving "more rapidly than it has ever moved." Mann saw only good things on the horizon.[2]

Common school reform did indeed seem to have more friends than ever before. For years Mann had felt himself on an island with the Board of Education. Aside from an occasional supportive newspaper article, the board were largely alone in making the public case for the positive effects of reform. By 1843, however, statistical and anecdotal evidence had begun to accumulate, bringing out an enlarged circle of vocal defenders. That winter, Whigs in the Massachusetts House and Senate placed before the public a paper that drew attention to the most recent school returns.[3] The reports from local school committees were filled with "eulogiums of the advance and increasing utility of these

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[1] *Acts and Resolves Passed by the Legislature of Massachusetts, in the Years 1839, 1840, 1841, 1842* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth), ch. 74, 565-66.

[2] HM, Journal, Feb. 20, March 3, 1842; Jan. 1, 1843, HMC.

[3] *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns for 1841-42* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1842).

schools," these Whigs noted. In the five years since the creation of the Board of Education, they observed, local taxes for public schools were up 33% while the amount of tuition paid to private schools had declined. During the same time, local citizens had built 405 new schoolhouses and had made substantial repairs on another 429 more.[4] The cumulative weight of the report suggested to readers that common school reform in Massachusetts was not a Whig-driven scheme designed to centralize power. School reform enjoyed widespread support, and the public schools were "rising in importance with all classes of men."[5] Mann felt that "the cause has now taken such deep hold of the public mind, that the politicians do not think it safe to attack it."[6]

But underneath the shine of legislative approval lay another group that had long seethed over Mann's movements. From the beginning of his tenure as secretary, Mann had used language in his reports and his speeches calculated to extract legislative approval for his plans. His words sometimes exaggerated the problems and under-stated successes. The rhetoric surrounding the need for teacher training was particularly hard-hitting. Mann's reports had used phrases like "incompetent teachers," "ignorance of the teachers," and "sleepy supervision." He spoke of the "unsoundness and debility" within the common schools.[7] Many teachers found these remarks insulting, for such phrases

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[4] Henry Barnard, *School Architecture; or, Contributions to the Improvement of School-Houses in the United States* (New York: A. S. Barnes, 1848), 64.

[5] *Address of the Whig Members of the Senate and House of Representatives of Massachusetts, to Their Constituents, Occasioned by the Inaugural Address of His Excellency Marcus Morton* (Boston: T. R. Martin, 1843), 15-16.

[6] HM to Lydia Mann, March 15, 1843, as quoted in Raymond B. Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1929), 179.

[7] B. A. Hinsdale, *Horace Mann and the Common School Revival in the United States* (New York: Charles Scribner's, 1898), 182; Barnum Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of the Hon. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board* of Education (Boston: Charles C. Little and James Brown, 1844), 10.

took no cognizance of the earnestness with which many teachers went about their labors. An outside observer might have been led to conclude that no teacher in Massachusetts was an effective teacher. In one particularly memorable remark, Mann had asserted that Massachusetts teachers were "deeply and widely deficient in the two indispensable prerequisites for their office, viz., a knowledge of the human mind, as the subject of improvement; and a knowledge of the means best adapted wisely to unfold and direct its growing faculties."[8] By calling teachers "widely deficient," Mann seemed to be putting down most of the teachers in the state. Teachers who believed they possessed the knowledge that Mann said most did not have could have easily felt disheartened and undervalued.

Mann was not, of course, the only vocal critic of the public school teachers of Massachusetts. As will be recalled, the American Institute of Instruction had roundly bemoaned the state of teaching in its 1837 memorial to the Massachusetts legislature, and others in the public press had found much to dislike. But Mann's high office gave his comments much more heft and visibility, far beyond Massachusetts, as other states looked to Massachusetts for their lead in common school reform. Mann's reports went out across the country by the thousands, leaving some Massachusetts teachers feeling vulnerable and exposed. Was Mann turning them into a foil? How could he know what went on inside their classrooms? How could he be certain that any one teacher lacked "indispensible" qualifications? Some teachers believed that Mann's comments made their work harder by generating "fulminations of sarcasm and ridicule" against their profession

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[8] *Second Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the Second Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1839), 28.

in the public press.[9]

Many of Boston's grammar school teachers found Mann's comments particularly galling. Bostonians had long cherished the thought that its public schools, located as they were in the "Athens of America," must be second-to-none. The grammar schools, which contained the oldest students below high school, were assumed to be at the top of the pecking order; for some, the schools were beyond criticism. Many of Boston's grammar school teachers were older, college-educated men with many years of teaching experience, and with many connections socially and culturally to the Boston community. Collectively the group went by the term "masters," a word that distinguished them from other public teachers and denoted both their cultural power and a measure of their own self-appraisal. These grammar school masters considered Horace Mann's comments inflammatory and insulting to their years of teaching experience.

Mann's *Seventh Annual Report* to the legislature, released in early 1844, was the last straw for many of them. The report challenged several widespread assumptions concerning school discipline and, in so doing, indirectly indicted the methods of the Boston masters. To keep their students in line, the masters often offered rewards or public recognition as motivation for good behavior or good performance. Mann's report denounced this so-called "emulation" method as encouraging selfishness and class division.[10] The report came down even harder on corporal punishment, which the Boston masters were known to have deployed in order to keep students in line. Mann stopped short of calling for an end to all corporal punishment in the Massachusetts schools, but he

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[9] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report*, 7.

[10] On emulation in Massachusetts schools, see William J. Reese, *Testing Wars in the Public Schools: A Forgotten History* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2013), 26-30; David J. Hogan, "Modes of Discipline: Affective Individualism and Pedagogical Reform in New England, 1820-1850," *American Journal of Education* 99 (Nov. 1990): 1-56.

did say that most uses of the rod were entirely unnecessary, and that hitting students generally spoke poorly of teachers. Fear of punishment, he said, should be eliminated as a motive for good behavior in the schools.[11]

Mann's report began a very public and at times acrimonious debate with the Boston schoolmasters about the merits of corporal punishment in the Massachusetts schools. The debate is often framed as a battle between two powerful authorities, with Horace Mann on the one side and the Boston grammar schoolmasters on the other. But this showdown was less about the popularity of public figures than it was about the popularity of the beliefs these figures held about children. Ultimately, the debate was about what children were fundamentally and what conditions in the classroom best fostered learning within the child so conceived. The nature of children, not Horace Mann or the Boston schoolmasters, were being tried in the court of public opinion.

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The tinder for Mann's public conflict with the Boston schoolmasters was a trip to Europe. In the spring of 1843, Mann's bosom friend Samuel Gridley Howe was engaged to be married. Howe proposed to spend six months in Europe on a honeymoon trip with his new bride, Julia Ward. Howe was an adventurous soul, having once fought in the Greek war for independence. He also shared Mann's passion for reform, having founded the New England Asylum for the Blind, where Mann had served as a trustee. Howe

[11] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," *Common School Journal* 6 (April 1, 1844): 105-20, esp. 116; (May 1, 1844): 137-52, esp. 151.

proposed spending part his honeymoon touring European schools and asylums.[12] He invited Mann to come along. Mann had never seen Europe, and, with the political situation calm in the state legislature, he accepted the invitation to join the newlyweds.

The European trip represented an important transition in Mann's life. A decade had passed since he had lived in the Boston boarding house with Mary and Elizabeth Peabody. During that interim, he kept in touch with the sisters, and, in the early 1840,s his contacts with Mary grew more frequent. She translated German educational articles for publication in the *Common School Journal,* and she and Mann wrote each other increasingly affectionate letters.[13] After he bought his steamship ticket to Europe, Mann noticed a change in his feelings. He realized that "it would be too painful to go and leave so lovely a being [as Mary] and one in whom I had such an interest."[14] Mann was now forty-six, Mary a decade younger. He proposed marriage. When Mary said yes, Mann purchased a second ticket.[15]

The ceremony was performed on a rainy morning, the first day of May, 1843, in the parlor of Mary's house at 13 West Street in Boston.[16] Later that afternoon, after the skies had cleared, the Howes and the Manns boarded a steamer in Boston harbor and set off for Liverpool, their friends and family cheering from the wharf.[17]

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[12] Howe founded the New England Asylum for the Blind in 1829. By 1843 the name had been changed to Perkins School for the Blind.

[13] For a readable, though highly romanticized view of this courtship, see Louise Hall Tharp, *Until Victory: Horace Mann and Mary Peabody* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1953).

[14] HM, Journal, March 26, 1843, HMC.

[15] Megan Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters: Three Women Who Ignited American Romanticism* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2005), 441.

[16] Marshall, *The Peabody Sisters*, 441-42; Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 383-84; George Combe, writing a congratulatory letter from Scotland, told Mann: "Your nature was framed for affection." George Allen Hubbell, *Horace Mann: Educator, Patriot and Reformer: A Study in Leadership* (Philadelphia: Wm. F. Fell, 1910), 103.

[17] Julia Ward Howe, *Reminiscences, 1819-1899* (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin, 1900), 88-

Horace and Mary Mann visited schools in England, Ireland, and Scotland. They ventured into schoolrooms in Saxony as well as Prussia, and in larger German cities like Hamburg and Frankfurt, where Mary did the translating. They observed schools in Holland and France. They went to primary and secondary schools, and entered into dark asylums and prisons. Horace Mann kept careful notes of his observations, and, upon returning to Boston, expanded them into his *Seventh Annual Report* to the Massachusetts legislature.

The *Seventh Annual Report* can be seen as an extended meditation on what Mann had learned during his tour of European schools. He had heard and read much about them, but, not until he saw with his own eyes did he realize fully what the schools and their teaching methods had to offer the schools of Massachusetts. Knowing that people like Orestes Brownson would be eager to frame an expedition to Prussia in politically damaging terms, Mann took special care to explain the trip in the most reasonable light. This meant separating schooling from politics. "If the Prussian schoolmaster has better methods of teaching reading, writing, grammar, geography, arithmetic," Mann reasoned, "so that, in half the time, he produces greater and better results, surely we may copy his modes of teaching these elements, without adopting his notions of passive obedience to government, or of blind adherence to the articles of a church."[18] Mann made it clear that he was not endorsing Prussian politics or the entirety of the Prussian educational system

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89; Hubbell, *Horace Mann,* 238.

[18] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," *Common School Journal* 6 (March 1, 1844): 65-88, esp. 73. Mann's report did not name Brownson but did take on arguments made by him rather directly. Generous minds do not judge a thing based on where it came from it, Mann argued, but judge it based on what it is. "Those who, at the present day, would reject an improvement because the place of its origin, belong to the same school of bigotry with those who inquired if any good could come out of Nazareth." "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 73.

(citing, for example, the recitation of catechisms in the schools). Yet, he asserted, "I do not hesitate to say, that there are many things abroad which we, at home, should do well to imitate." Massachusetts would do well not to take the educational systems of "the most highly civilized and conspicuous nations of Europe" lightly.[19] Prussia and Saxony, in particular, had been running an efficient and much-lauded educational system for many years. Those positive results could not be dismissed as mere "speculation and theory." [20]

Mann does not come off as a wide-eyed traveler in the report, lauding all he sees. He did not hesitate to say that the European prisons he observed were far less advanced than those in the United States, or that conditions in European jails were often worse than those in Massachusetts had been twenty-five years earlier.[21] He was not impressed with the British schools and said so. He spent most of the report on his observations of the schools in Prussia and Saxony, probably because of their much-vaunted reputation for excellence.

Mann's observations of German schools worked within a well-trodden genre of educational travel reports.[22] He resisted merely confirming the observations already made by others, and explicitly framed his own report as an attempt to cover ground that other travelers had not tread.[23] Victor Cousin's report said very little about corporal punishment in the Prussian schools other than to quote the law that said they should be

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[19] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 84.

[20] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 72.

[21] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 74.

[22] Karl-Ernst Jeismann, "American Observations Concerning the Prussian Educational System in the Nineteenth Century," in *German Influences on Education in the United States to 1917,* ed. Henry Geitz, Jürgen Heideking, and Jurgen Herbst (Washington D.C. and Cambridge, UK: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 1995), 21-41.

[23] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 105.

free of "cruelty."[24] Mann seems to have set out to Europe with the intention of covering this oversight by paying close attention to the way teachers kept order in their classrooms.[25] Mann's *Seventh Annual Report* addressed the question of discipline in the schools more than any other single issue.

Mann frankly reported observing beatings and other harsh forms of discipline in the British schools. These harsh methods contrasted with the milder methods he observed elsewhere. In Prussia, where he spent several months, he never saw a single child punished for misconduct. "I never saw a blow struck, I never heard a sharp rebuke given, I never saw a child in tears, nor arraigned at the teacher's bar for any alleged misconduct."[26] He heard no child ridiculed, sneered at, or scolded for making a mistake. "No child was disconcerted, disabled, or bereft of his senses, through fear." When he answered correctly, the child was told "good," or "right"; when he was slow, he was told "no."[27]

Mann seems not to have imagined that his own status as an observer may have inclined Prussian teachers to milder forms of discipline while in his presence. He tested his observations by closely questioning German school officials, who confirmed that corporal punishment was indeed quite rare in their schools. Mann wished that he could say the same of the Massachusetts public schools. Mann's *Seventh Annual Report* never mentioned the Boston schoolmasters by name and singled out no particular group of

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[24] Victor Cousin, *Report on the State of Public Instruction in Prussia,* trans. Sarah Austin, 2d ed. (London: Effingham Wilson, 1836), 54, 220. Prussian schoolmasters were to discipline "by a sentiment of tenderness and love, which chastises only to improve," Cousin reported. Cousin, *Report on the State of Public Instruction,* 299.

[25] Several Mann's earliest journal entries from the trip make observations about corporal punishment. See HM, Journal, May 17, June 3, 1843.

[26] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 152.

[27] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 152.

teachers for rebuke. He seemed reluctant to directly attack anyone. The report backed its way into criticism: "I mean no disparagement of our own teachers by the remark I am about to make," he said. "But it was impossible to put down the questionings of my own mind,--whether a visitor could spend six weeks in our own schools without ever hearing an angry word spoken, or seeing a blow struck, or witnessing the flow of tears."[28]

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At least since the early eighteenth century, when the *New-England Primer* asked children to memorize that "The idle Fool,/ Is whipt at School," corporal punishment was a fixture in American schooling as it was in schools across Europe. Children were routinely flogged or paddled for the most trivial offenses as teachers modeled themselves after either imperial or divine rulers who sought to establish their own authority by invoking fear of punishment as a primary motive for obedience among their subjects.[29] Under the influence of more affectionate modes of parenting and egalitarian forms of household governance, the harshest discipline moderated somewhat in the eighteenth century, especially among the genteel, but in the culture at large, striking and beating remained acceptable ways of insuring discipline and thus continued in schools,

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[28] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," *Common School Journal* 6 (May 15, 1844): 153-68, esp. 153.

[29] On school punishment in colonial New England, see Herbert Arnold Falk, *Corporal Punishment: A Social Interpretation of Its Theory and Practice in the Schools of the United States* (New York: Bureau of Publications, Teachers College, Columbia University, 1941), 11-48. On punishment elsewhere, see William M. Cooper, *Flagellation & the Flagellants: A History of the Rod in All Countries from the Earliest Period to the Present Time* (London: William Reeves, 1910).

supplemented by lesser forms of torture and humiliation.[30] The dominant image of the schoolmaster in nineteenth-century America—the tyrannical despot who lords over his terrified subjects with a hickory or birch scepter—suggests both the ubiquity of physical punishment in the classroom and a simmering outrage against comportment that seemed at odds with American political principles.[31]

As with the reform of schoolhouses, the mitigation of corporal punishment within schools arrived somewhat late in the West, long after the rise of a general, diffuse humanitarianism made harsher forms of punishment seem grotesque and unnecessary as public spectacle.[32] John Locke's comment that corporal punishment debased character, making the child either spiteful or slavish, never "wise, good and ingenuous," did little to effect reform within English schools in the eighteenth century.[33] Vocal, persistent criticism of corporal punishment in American schools did not began until the 1830s and 1840s after reformers on both sides of the Atlantic had already begun campaigns against the corporal punishment of many types of people--prisoners, the sick, the insane, women,

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[30] The severity of punishment in schools probably mirrored the severity of punishment in families. Holly Brewer, *By Birth or Consent: Children, Law, & the Anglo-American Revolution in Authority* (Chapel Hill: Published for the Omohundro Institute of Early American History and Culture by University of North Carolina Press, 2005), 259; Linda A. Pollock, *Forgotten Children: Parent-Child Relations from 1500 to 1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 269; Philip J. Greven, *The Protestant Temperament: Patterns of Child-Rearing, Religious Experience, and the Self in Early America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 39. For examples of school punishment in the early 1800s, see John Manning, "Discipline in the Good Old Days," in *Corporal Punishment in American Education: Readings in History, Practice, and Alternatives,* ed. Irwin A. Hyman and James H. Wise (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1979), 50-61; and Barbara Finkelstein, *Governing the Young: Teacher Behavior in Popular Primary Schools in Nineteenth-Century United States* (New York: Falmer Press, 1989), 155-57.

[31] George W. Crandall, "Emperors and Little Empires: The Schoolmaster in Nineteenth-Century American Literature," *Studies in American Humor* 5, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 51-61.

[32] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison,* trans. Alan Sheridan (New York: Pantheon Books, 1977).

[33] Nevertheless, Locke thought corporal punishment was acceptable with very young or obstinate children. Anja Müller, "Children and Physical Cruelty: The Lockean and Rousseauvian Revolution," in *Childhood and Violence in the Western Tradition,* ed. Laurence Brockliss and Heather Montgomery (Oxford, UK: Oxbow Books, 2010), 129-35.

and, most vociferously, slaves.[34] This change in attitude towards corporal punishment is thus not unique to views about children or schools. Whatever was going on in school reform tapped into a larger change in sensibility that cut across American culture and across American bodies. Views of the body and the place of physical and emotional suffering were being radically revised.

This revision of the body had roots in the European humanitarian movements of the eighteenth century and even earlier, but in the United States its greatest impetus came from the erosion of Calvinist orthodoxy and the ascent of a liberal Protestantism that rejected the salutary effect of human suffering and the notion that humans were naturally depraved. Out of this debate emerged a God who valued, above all else, the happiness and pleasure of his children rather than their pain and misery.[35]

The bleeding body had long been a centerpiece of Christianity, both a confirmation of and a link to the divine order. Medieval Christians, especially ascetics, viewed bodily suffering as closely akin to godliness, the bleeding body of Christ upon the cross. By rejecting the suffering divine and replacing it with the historical Jesus, lover of humanity, liberal Protestants had to revise the order of the cosmos. "They shifted their

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[34] Myra C. Glenn, *Campaigns against Corporal Punishment: Prisoners, Sailors, Women, and Children in Antebellum America* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1984); Martin S. Pernick, *A Calculus of Suffering: Pain, Professionalism, and Anesthesia in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1985); Michael Meranze, *Laboratories of Virtue: Punishment, Revolution, and Authority in Philadelphia, 1760-1835* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Harold D. Langley, *Social Reform in the United States Navy, 1798-1862* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1967).

[35] Elizabeth B. Clark, "'The Sacred Rights of the Weak': Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights in Antebellum America," *Journal of American History* 82 (Sept. 1995): 463-93; Margaret Abruzzo, *Polemical Pain: Slavery, Cruelty, and the Rise of Humanitarianism* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011), 50-84; Glenn, *Campaigns against Corporal Punishment*, 50; Daniel Walker Howe, *Unitarian Conscience: Harvard Moral Philosophy, 1805-1861* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1970); and Donald Yacovone, *Samuel Joseph May and the Dilemmas of the Liberal Persuasion, 1797-1871* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1991).

focus from the drama of God, the sovereign judge, sentencing the inherently depraved human to an afterlife of unremitting suffering," Elizabeth B. Clark observes, "to that of God, the benevolent father, working for his children's physical and spiritual well-being. The purpose of worship shifted from the glorification of God to the salvation and celebration of man."[36]

This revised natural order did not require human suffering. Men and women naturally avoided pain and, according to advocates of innate human goodness, naturally sympathized with those who had to endure it. Liberal Protestants granted that some forms of pain and deprivation could be personally instructive, but they joined a large chorus of enlightened thinkers in concluding that punitive or deliberately inflicted pain was not conducive to moral growth and ought to be mitigated, if not eliminated.[37]

Under the liberal Christian framework, corporal punishment in the schools appeared as needless suffering, more a result of the teacher's capriciousness than the satisfaction of any divine or earthly necessity. Reformers found it easy to impugn the motives of corporal punishers, portraying them as arbitrary and harsh, in the image of the Calvinist God they had rejected. In Boston in 1837, for example, the American Institute of Instruction argued that corporal punishment of students failed to do any good in ninety-nine out of every one hundred cases. The only positive case the Institute could imagine was one where the punishment reflected great patience and premeditation on the part of the teacher—punishment not been "inflicted in haste" and "with a wrong temper," like the time when Jesus cleansed the temple of moneychangers after first stopping to

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[36] Clark, "Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights," 471; Rosalind Rey, *The History of Pain,* trans. by Louise Elliott Wallace, J. J. Cadden, and S. W. Cadden (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1995).

[37] Clark, "Pain, Sympathy, and the Culture of Individual Rights," 472-73.

braid a whip,[38] Young children might benefit from corporal punishment on occasion, if it could keep them from larger wrongs or evils, but liberals generally agreed that punishment for older children was inappropriate and potentially damaging.[39]

The condemnation of suffering merged with the image of the innocent child that many liberals had accepted in place of the traditional Calvinist narrative of the depraved birth. Reformers became more likely to speak of disobedient children as lacking in understanding than as intentionally doing wrong. "Very few children do wrong *for the sake of doing wrong* as such," one reformer explained. Most children misbehaved out of "mere thoughtlessness."[40] Others argued that children required special protection because they were so easily damaged by hitting and striking.[41] It became harder to justify striking a child on such terms. Bronson Alcott, the progressive Boston pedagogue, had children who misbehaved whip *him* as penance under the assumption, at least in part, that children were weak and fragile and naturally sympathetic to the sight of seeing another in pain.[42] Children whose bodies were still developing and who acted out of thoughtlessness did not seem to warrant the most severe forms of corporal punishment. Alcott's adult body was fully-formed and thus better able to hold up under the strain.

Liberal Protestantism's revision of the problem of human suffering helps explain

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[38] "Corporal Punishment," *American Annals of Education and Instruction* 7 (July 1837): 321.

[39] Alonzo Potter and George B. Emerson, *The School and the Schoolmaster* (Boston: William B. Fowle and N. Capen, 1843), 205; HM, *Lectures on Education* (Boston: Ide & Dutton, 1855), 304.

[40] Lyman Cobb, *The Evil Tendencies of Corporal Punishment as a Means of Moral Discipline in Families and Schools, Examined and Discussed* (New York: Mark H. Newman, 1847), 188-89.

[41] This line of reasoning drew on medical science to argue that corporal punishment did damage to children's body parts, which were tender and still in the process of developing. "The Schoolmaster—No. III," *American Annals of Education and Instruction* 7 (Aug. 1837): 361-63.

[42] Elizabeth Palmer Peabody, *Record of a School,* 2nd ed. (Boston: Russell, Shattuck, and Co., 1836), 23-25.

the preoccupations in Mann's *Seventh Annual Report.* The elimination of suffering of all kinds, not the harshest punishments only, had long been an occupation for him. As early as 1837, he condemned an array of painful classroom punishments: putting "timid children in a dark and solitary place"; bracing open a child's jaws with pieces of wood; and straining muscles and bones by forcing children to hold stacks of books.[43] Mann's interest in improving the lighting, heating, and ventilation of schoolhouses can be seen as an early effort to remove needless suffering from the experience of children. On his European tour, he extended the campaign against the suffering of children by asking in every school he entered if corporal punishment was permitted. He was universally answered yes. In Prussia and Saxony, however, he was told that, "though all teachers had liberty to use it, yet cases of its occurrence were very rare, and these cases were confined almost wholly to young scholars."[44] In his report, Mann praised the alternatives he observed during his travels, especially in Prussia, where expulsion constituted the preferred method of harsh discipline.[45]

The diminishment of suffering in the Massachusetts public schools was an important priority for Mann, but ultimately he felt that the issue had implications far beyond his own stewardship. Mann believed that corporal punishment practices and national character were closely linked. The expulsion of refractory students in the Prussian schools spoke as highly for the progress of that school's nation as it did for an isolated teacher or school. Early nineteenth-century liberal Protestants like Mann often spoke in the language of progress: civilization was moving ahead, becoming more

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[43] HM, *Lectures on Education*, 45-46.

[44] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 155.

[45] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," *Common School Journal* 6 (June 1, 1844): 169-84, esp. 170.

enlightened, more rational. Mann found confirmation of this view by observing the doings of the societies he encountered in Europe. The most technologically advanced civilizations, he argued, also tended to become more humane over time. "As civilization has advanced," he wrote, "the wheel of torture has been arrested, and the instruments of terror and affright have ceased to be used, as stimulants to duty or motives to obedience."[46] The most enlightened civilizations could be identified by the degree to which they avoided the tool of the "brute"—force or violence. "Any person," he argued, who "begins back where the brute begins, and where the savage begins, can have no approvable capacity for the government of a school."[47]

This way of putting it seemed to suggest that anyone who struck a student was no better than an animal, and that Prussia, where corporal punishment in schools was rare, was more enlightened than America, where corporal punishment was frequently practiced. That message was sure to find opponents.

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The reconfiguration of the meaning of human suffering prompted change up and down American society and culture. In addition to the criticism over corporal punishment in the schools, the boundary between parental and teacher authority had to be reassessed. Traditionally, parents had ceded their right to discipline their children to the teachers of those children, giving teachers virtually unquestioned authority. But the image of the innocent child, when coupled with the egalitarian political revolutions across the Western

[46] *Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education, Together with the Fifth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1842), 57.

[47] *Fifth Annual Report of the Board of Education,* 57.

world, threw the relationship between teacher and child into question. Children had risen in power, having become the repositories of goodness and (for some) wisdom, and now the subjects of poets and writers; autocracy, by contrast, had diminished in scope and reach, discredited by the people's revolutions. By the 1830s, many American reformers believed the sovereignty of the teacher ought to be scaled back, counterbalanced against emerging talk about the rights of children.

Traditionally, common law had granted teachers the same rights as parents in governing children, *in loco parentis.* Parents who disciplined harshly willingly ceded the same privilege to teachers. Mann understood the teacher's right to exercise discipline *in loco parentis* from his own experience and never questioned its basic soundness in principle. When Mann was in grade school, his father had a custom of inviting the local schoolmaster in Franklin to dine at the Mann home at the beginning of every school year. With the entire family gathered around the table, Thomas Mann emphasized the necessity of good order in the school, telling his children, in the schoolmaster's hearing, that he expected them to be obedient to the master just as they were obedient to him. "If they justly incurred any punishment at school," Thomas Mann explained, "he should repeat it at home, because he should consider an offence committed in school as an offence against himself, as well as against the teacher."[48] Horace Mann recounted the episode to suggest that schoolmasters should think twice before meting out their punishment, never knowing whether punishment made in haste will be repeated at home. But the larger message, unstated by Mann, was that his father had willingly ceded his authority to discipline to the Franklin schoolmaster. Teachers stood *in loco parentis* and parents like Thomas Mann gave them his unquestioned loyalty.

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[48] HM, *Lectures on Education*, 336.

Horace Mann did not question the right of the teacher to discipline by force just as a parent might. As illustration, Mann told the story of how, as a boy, he once played a practical joke in class, designed as a test of his father's warning about punishment at school being repeated at home. The schoolmaster flogged Horace multiple times on the back for it. Mann said the punishment was "well merited," which tells us something about how common flogging was in the early nineteenth century and how difficult it was even for reformers to imagine a world where physical punishment disappeared entirely from the classroom. That night, Thomas Mann flogged Horace's back the same number of stripes, as he had promised he would do. "And there ended the chapter of school punishments, in that family, forever," Horace recalled years later.[49] Thomas Mann's tactic had worked. Horace was a model student ever after.

Mann told this story not as a cautionary tale but as an example of "reasonable" punishment. The idea of reasonable punishment *in loco parentis* entered into American common law through British common law, primarily via the eighteenth-century British legal scholar William Blackstone, whose legal commentaries were practically memorized by every law student in early America. Mann's notes from his legal training at Litchfield Law School, which survive in four thick leatherbound volumes, are filled with references to Blackstone.

The middle of the first volume of Mann's legal notes contains a section he entitled "Parent and Child," which is the key section pertaining to corporal punishment. Blackstone said that parents are lawfully permitted to "correct" children, but only "in a reasonable manner."[50] He does not define "reasonable" correction in this passage, but,

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[49] HM, *Lectures on Education*, 336-37.

[50] William Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* 4 vols. (Oxford, UK:

elsewhere, he implies that the punishment should not run to extremes: "the same moderation" the father uses to correct his wife should be used with his servants or children.[51] As Mann wrote in his law notes: "As to the Rights & Powers of parents over their children, they are in the first place empowered to correct the children reasonably." But children were not without their rights. Correction can be excessive, and in such cases, the child could take action. When parents "exceed the bounds of moderation & are influenced by malice" in their punishment, Mann wrote, "the child may have an action of battery."[52]

Elsewhere Blackstone suggests that schoolmasters have the right to correct children just as the fathers of these children do. Fathers, he says, "may also delegate part of his parental authority, during his life, to the tutor or schoolmaster of his child; who is then in loco parentis, and has such portion of the power of the parent committed to his charge, viz. that of restraint and correction, as may be necessary to answer the purposes for which he is employed."[53] The schoolmaster's rights do not extend beyond the parent's; he may correct children who are not his own, but only in a reasonable manner.

Most antebellum Americans probably accepted Blackstone's qualification of "reasonable" punishment or correction. But people of divergent beliefs and temperaments disagreed on what "reasonable" punishment meant. By delegitimizing physical suffering, liberal Protestantism constricted what constituted "reasonable" correction on the part of the teacher. By the 1830s, reformers had begun to insist that the teacher must have the proper motives when disciplining students. Punishment should never be inflicted "with

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Clarendon Press, 1765-69), 1:440.

[51] Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* 1:432.

[52] HM, Notes on Lectures at Litchfield Law School, Vol. 1, Sec. "Parent and Child," 59, Dedham Historical Society, Dedham, Mass.

[53] Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* 1:441.

the wrong temper," just as the American Institution of Instruction said. Angry motives on the part of teachers were beneath the dignity of rational creations and were therefor considered illegitimate.[54] Mann himself constricted reasonability by arguing that the teacher always had to take account of the effect the punishment would have on the child. Punishment should always be with a rod, he said, never with a large, heavy ferule; and always on the legs, never on the chest, head, or hand. Mann thought that the more humane punishment came after the teacher had had a chance to cool off, before or after school, not in the heat of the moment. Only then could the teacher be sure that his punishment was appropriately measured.[55]

The revision of reasonability also required reformers of corporal punishment to redefine the relationship between the parties—teachers and students— for whom reasonability mattered. In pre-Revolutionary times, the teacher and student related to each other in hierarchal terms, as master and subject. The teacher was like the distant lawgiver God of Calvinism, whose inscrutability was supreme. The student was to show deference to the teacher as he would his father or master. Thomas Mann was operating under this constellation of beliefs when he explained his expectations to his children at the dinner table. The Franklin schoolmaster was not to be questioned. The children were to obey the sovereign no matter what.

Reformers of corporal punishment did not question the removal of hierarchy in the classroom as much as they provided softer, more personable terms for it, putting forward what Richard Brodhead has called a new kind of "disciplinary intimacy."[56] To

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[54] "Corporal Punishment," 321.

[55] HM, *Lectures on Education*, 324, 337.

[56] Richard H. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters: Scenes of Reading and Writing in Nineteenth-Century America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1993), 18-47.

make this move, reformers turned from reason to the sentimental language of affection.[57] As early as the 1760s, Blackstone had argued that parents have a natural desire for the maintenance of their children. Providence, he said, has implanted "in the breast of every parent" an "insuperable degree of affection" that "not even the wickedness, ingratitude, and rebellion of children, can totally suppress or extinguish."[58] Mann's notes on this passage said that "the natural affections of the parents [were given] to protect & provide for their children."[59]

Reformers of corporal punishment in the schools extended the logic of Blackstone's argument. If parents had a natural affection for their children, and teachers operated *in loco parentis*, might teachers also have natural affection for the children under their charge, even if the children were not their biological offspring? Mann said yes. In his *Seventh Annual Report,* he argued for the ideal relationship between teacher and student on affectionate grounds. In Prussia, he observed a child who had trouble coming up with the right answer to a question posed to him during a classroom exercise. The anxiousness on the face of the student drew out the sympathy of the teacher, who walked toward his charge with a "mingled look of concern and encouragement." As the child stammered, uncertainly, the teacher lifted his arms and turned his body "as a bowler who has given a wrong direction to his bowl." When finally the child answered correctly, "the teacher felicitates him upon his success, perhaps seizes and shakes him by the hand,

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[57] On this sentimental turn more generally, see Jay Fliegelman, *Prodigals and Pilgrims: The American Revolution Against Patriarchal Authority, 1750-1800* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982). The turn relied heavily on the Scottish moral philosophy of Anthony Ashley-Cooper, the 3rd Earl of Shaftesbury, and later interpreters like Francis Hutcheson and Adam Smith. See Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of the Modern Identity* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1989).

[58] Blackstone, *Commentaries on the Laws of England,* 1:435.

[59] HM, Notes on Lectures at Litchfield Law School, Vol. 1, Sec. "Parent and Child."

in token of congratulation."[60]

Mann believed that these unconscious gesticulations were evidence of the teacher's irrepressible affection for the student. In another instance, he observed a teacher "not able to contain his joy" who embraced a student who produced the right answer. Mann looked on in wonder as teachers clapped their hands with delight at correct answers. Was there a connection between the transparent delight teachers took in their students and the lack of corporal punishment Mann observed in the Prussian schools? He suspected so. He came to believe that students who sensed affection from their teachers would be reluctant to cross them. Affection begat affection, love begat love. "All this has been done so naturally and so unaffectedly," Mann said, "as to excite no other feeling in the residue of the children than a desire, by the same means, to win the same caresses."[61]

What was the origin of this natural affection between teacher and student? Children were naturally affectionate, Mann observed, inclined to readily form a "bond of attachment" with adult caregivers, whether parent or teacher.[62] The main responsibility for forming the bond thus lay with the teacher. Teachers who took intense pleasure in the successes of their students, Mann believed, were people of high moral character. Still, time together in the classroom was also required to create the bonds of affection, just as time in the home strengthened the natural affection of parents and children. Once the teacher "had time to establish the relation of affection" with his student, Mann argued, he "had time to create that attachment which children always feel towards any one who, day after day, supplies them with novel and pleasing ideas," it was no longer necessary to "restrain and punish them." This bond of mutual affection made corporal punishment

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[60] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 153.
[61] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 153.
[62] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education" 171.

unnecessary except in the most extreme circumstances. "A love of the teacher and a love of knowledge become a substitute," Mann said, "for punishment."[63]

Mann's report stopped short of saying that children had a right to the natural affection of teachers as they did the affection of their parents. But by putting forward an affectionate model, he could be read as suggesting that teachers who were not affectionate with their students were deficient in their classroom discipline. In this way, his *Seventh Annual Report* challenged older, more traditional models of the relationship between teachers and students.

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Mann's talk of the "relation of affection" between teacher and student must have sounded like a foreign language to many of Boston's schoolmasters. In August 1844, they published a long reply to the *Seventh Annual Report.* To say that these schoolmasters were angered would be an understatement. Thirty-one of them—all the grammar school teachers in Boston save four—signed their name to the document, fully satisfied that Mann had done them wrong and that a public hearing would vindicate their own views.[64]

Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report quoted all of Mann's statements critical of teachers going back to his earliest reports. It accused him of creating "a spirit of distrust" among parents and students, who were now more inclined to follow his lead in being more critical of teachers and their classroom practices. It ridiculed Mann's theories as

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[63] "Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Board of Education," 155.

[64] Some reviewers thought the Boston masters were bitter not because Mann had criticized them, but because he had ignored them in his *Seventh Annual Report*. Luther, "The Schoolmaster's Review of Mr. Mann's Report," *Boston Daily Courier,* Sept. 24, 1844, 2.

"untried," "impracticable," and "vain and worthless." The normal schools were portrayed as merely a propaganda tool to advance Mann's pet theories. The masters referred again and again to their own teaching experience and pointed out that Mann had none.[65]

One might think that the best way to have swayed public opinion might have been for the masters to confine their criticisms to the affectionate model of school discipline and then show how a more authoritarian model was superior. But the masters didn't do that. Instead, they reopened the old question of the legitimacy of the Board of Education and the need for reform in the public schools of Massachusetts. From their perch in Boston, the masters felt that the Massachusetts common schools were "never more prosperous than at the time the Board of Education was formed."[66] Like Orestes Brownson, the masters seemed to reject the idea that the common schools had serious problems that needed fixing. They began the report with an encomium to "those Puritan fathers" who founded a system of schools that "has ever been the pride and glory" of Massachusetts.[67]

The reference to the Puritans was telling. There is abundant evidence to suggest that the masters who signed their names to the *Reply* had rejected the liberal Protestantism that undergirded Mann's reforms. The portion of the *Reply* most critical of Mann was written by an orthodox Protestant, and the masters' staunchest defenders in the

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[65] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report*, 6-7, 11-13, 20. The hardest comments against Mann came in the first 38 pages, which were said to have been written by Barnum Field, a master known for his harsh disciplinary measures.

[66] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual*, 6.

[67] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report*, 5. There may have been a political component to the Boston masters' objection to Mann's report as well. At the time many Massachusetts Whigs were downplaying Puritan or New England triumphalism, George Bancroft, a prominent Democratic historian, gave the Puritans adulatory treatment in his writings. John McWilliams, *New England's Crises and Cultural Memory: Literature, Politics, History, Religion, 1620-1860* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2004), 193-226.

press were orthodox clergymen.[68] Mann himself interpreted the masters' *Remarks* in religious terms: "The orthodox have hunted me this winter as though they were bloodhounds, and I a poor rabbit."[69] He thought the masters objected to education that "opens the mind, develops the conscience, and cultivates reverence for whatever is good without the infusion of Calvinistic influence."[70] He suspected that attacks like those found in *Remarks* were designed to break down the Massachusetts Board of Education and reintroduce sectarian teaching into the schools.[71]

The more likely purpose of the Boston schoolmasters' *Remarks* was to defend themselves against an increasingly hostile public that found the masters' frequent use of corporal punishment out of step with the times. By 1843, some educators had begun to argue that teachers had "no right" to hit students at any time, in effect challenging the doctrine of *in loco parentis*.[72] The press began to cover stories of excessive or unreasonable corporal punishment in the schools that a generation earlier would have been ignored.[73] *Remarks* made no reference to these stories and spent dozens of pages

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[68] Glenn, *Campaigns against Corporal Punishment*, 106-7. Barnum Field, the author of the first 38 pages of the *Reply,* belonged to the Orthodox Congregational Society of South Boston until 1830, before joining St. Matthew's Episcopal Church in Boston. He was remembered for his "severe, exacting, violent" management of the classroom. *The Hawes School Memorial, Containing an Account of Five Re-Unions of the Old Hawes School Boys' Association, One Re-Union of the Hawes School Girls' Association, and a Series of Biographical Sketches of the Old Masters* (Boston: David Clapp & Son, 1889), 128-29.

[69] HM to George Combe, Dec. 1, 1844, George Combe Papers, National Library of Scotland.

[70] HM to George Combe, Dec. 1, 1844.

[71] Mary Peabody Mann, *Life of Horace Mann* (Boston: Walker, Fuller, 1865), 225-26.

[72] "American Institute of Instruction," *Common School Journal* 5 (Sept 15, 1843): 278; Michael Grossberg, "Teaching the Republican Child: Three Antebellum Stories about Law, Schooling, and the Construction of American Families," *Utah Law Review* (1996): 429-60.

[73] "School Tyranny," *Boston Morning Post,* April 30, 1841, 1; "Charges against a Schoolmaster," *Boston Morning Post,* May 15 1844, 2; "Case of Mr. Forbes, Instructor," *Boston Morning Post,* May 16, 1844, 2; "The Course of Mr. Forbes, as Master of the Colored School," *Boston Morning Post,* May 21, 1844, 1. On the growing public concern with harsh disciplinary methods of the Boston masters, see Reese, *Testing Wars in the Public Schools*, 79-83.

defending the use of corporal punishment in the schools as though shifts in opinion about bodily suffering required no account. "We have no alternative," they said, "but to present to their [i.e. the students'] senses, in tangible shape, the actual rod."[74] The masters rejected natural affection as a starting point for school discipline. Instead*, Remarks* hearkened back to the older, more hierarchical conception of the relationship between teachers and students. The document stressed obedience in the classroom. The teacher's authority had to be "automatic, and total, and categorical." It required "unconditional submission" on the part of the student. Some of the language in the report sounded as if it had come out of another era: "The will of the subject is merged completely in the will of the ruler."[75]

This was indeed a conservative position. For orthodox believers, the reason that "unconditional submission" was required was because the student was naturally inclined to disobey. The child's unruly will had to be broken. One of the Boston schoolmasters, justifying the use of corporal punishment in the public press, thought that "the innate element of evil" in students prompted them to rebel.[76] Students were not inclined to obey out of natural affection, as for Mann. They had to be humbled into submission, by reason if possible, by force if necessary.

The implication of the masters' position in the *Reply* was that, at its root, their battle with Mann was less about his capacity to speak intelligently on matters within the classroom and more about a deep-seated philosophical difference on the essence of human nature. A defender of the masters' viewpoint suggested that Mann's *Seventh*

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[74] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report,* 16.

[75] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual*, 128-29.

[76] *Rejoinder to the "Reply" of Hon. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education* (Boston: Little and Brown, 1845), 57.

Annual Report had erred in positing "the innocence of human nature."[77] Mann, another defender wrote, had proceeded "upon the false philosophy or theology which assumes inherent goodness in children, to be educed—and not inborn refractoriness, to be restrained and quelled."[78] Mutual affection between teacher and student failed as a disciplinary model, in other words, because teacher and student were not by nature affectionate.

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The *Reply* of the Boston schoolmasters left Mann to search for the proper response. During the difficulty with Frederick Packard and Orestes Brownson, Mann had remained silent in the face of these public attacks, heeding the recommendation of the Board of Education that more attention only brought unwanted publicity. At that time, Edward Everett had given Mann his private opinion that newspaper wars were more easily lost than won. Mann should not engage his critics through public essays, Everett reasoned, "unless they are diligently, vigorously, & resolutely kept up, by some person able & willing to make a business of it."[79] Everett did not suggest that Mann be that person.

The *Remarks* from the Boston masters represented a new and potentially damaging kind of criticism. The other critics each had some sort of partisan interest that blunted the force of the criticism. Packard's writings could be dismissed as the

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[77] [Leonard Withington,] *Penitential Tears; or, A Cry from the Dust by 'The Thirty-One"* (Boston: C. Stimpson, 1845), 7.

[78] Justice, "The Hon. Horace Mann and the Schoolmasters," *Boston Daily Atlas,* Dec. 5, 1844, 2.

[79] Edward Everett to HM, Feb 5, 1840, S-M, 1070-A.

fulminations of a spurned sectarianism unwilling to grant the revision of Massachusetts law. Brownson's criticisms came from a Democratic political operative who had a reputation as a bomb thrower. The Boston masters, by contrast, were school teachers—insiders—who delivered a hefty salvo of almost 150 pages directly at their file leader. Rather than attacking the theory of central governance, as Brownson had, the *Remarks* attacked Mann's competence to judge matters inside the schoolroom. This tactic was akin to challenging Mann's fitness to serve as secretary of the Board of Education. The signatures of thirty-one august authorities added further legitimacy to their harsh judgments against Mann. The collective weight of the testimony was hard to ignore.

After the *Remarks* came out, Mann hesitated to act unilaterally, knowing that the Boston masters vastly outnumbered him. He knew that he could not win a newspaper war alone, just as Edward Everett had predicted. Mann called his friends together to discuss strategy, and the group decided that the charges of the Boston masters had to be met in the public press. Samuel Howe began writing articles for the *North American Review* and the *Christian Witness.* Theodore Parker, a brilliant young polemicist, Transcendentalist, and Unitarian clergyman, delivered a lyceum lecture repeatedly during the coming year praising the policies of Mann and the Board of Education. And George B. Emerson, founder of the American Institute of Instruction, wrote a scathing review of the *Remarks* and a reasoned, moderate-toned review of Mann's *Seventh Annual Report.*[80]

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[80] Harold Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe: Social Reformer, 1801-1876* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 124; Theodore Parker to HM, Sept. 17, 1844, reel 7, HMC; Dean Grodzins, *American Heretic: Theodore Parker and Transcendentalism* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 470; G[eorge] B. E[merson], *Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled "Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of the Hon. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education"* ([Boston: Little, Brown], 1844); G[eorge] B. E[merson], "Art X.—Common Schools," *Christian Examiner and Religious Miscellany* 36 (May 1844): 411-20. In addition, Mann's friend and former housemate at 3 Somerset Court, George S.

Some of Mann's supporters thought that he should remain above the fray and let others do the dirty work of public refutation. Francis Bowen, editor of the *North American Review,* thought it would be foolish for Mann to insist on "stooping his head, shutting his eyes, and running a tilt like a mad bull against the Boston schools and prejudices of two thirds of the population of the city."[81] But the litigator in Mann could not resist a chance to return to the exhilarating back-and-forth debate he had known for so many years on the political stage. A clear awareness that he had friends to back him up provided him with the confidence to publish his own refutation, which appeared in Boston in November 1844.[82]

Mann's *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters* can easily strike modern readers as an overwrought production. One wonders why Mann felt he needed 171 pages to answer the masters' 144. One of his biographers calls the work "caustic, scornful, and severe."[83] There are indeed intemperate parts of the production. He says he writes in "sorrow," in the spirit of "an accused man who knows his innocence and knows he can prove it."[84] But his actual tone is in many instances petty and juvenile, frequently referring, for example, to the inartful way in which the masters phrase their criticism rather than dwelling wholly on substance. In reality Mann frequently fails to rise

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Hilliard, defended him in the public press. G[eorge] S. H[illiard], "Mr. Mann and the Boston Teachers," *Boston Daily Atlas,* Dec. 7, 1844, 2. Howe's biographer says that an article Howe submitted to the *North American Review* was rejected on grounds of its "extremism," but an anonymous review of the controversy between Mann and the Boston masters appeared in the January 1845, favoring Mann's position, and it may be that Howe toned down his original submission for publication. Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 127; "Art. IX.," *North American Review* 60 (Jan. 1845): 224-46.

[81] Francis Bowen to Charles Sumner, Dec. 19, 1844, as quoted in Jonathan Messerli, *Horace Mann: A Biography* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1972), 416.

[82] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters on the Seventh Annual Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education* (Boston: William B. Fowle and Nahum Capen, 1844).

[83] Messerli, *Horace Mann,* 417.

[84] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters,* 7.

above the schoolmasters he criticizes. He speaks of the masters' "buffoonery" as though he has forgotten that he is a standing high state official with some responsibility for the morale of the buffoons.[85] The writing sometimes exaggerates to make the point. Mann claimed that the cornerstones of the masters' disciplinary regime was "Power, Violence, Terror, and Suffering!"[86] Children who are flogged in school, Mann said, are sure to end up as thieves, burglars, or arsonists.[87]

Mann once described his youthful personality as a "spontaneous combustion" of feeling.[88] He seemed constituted to feel more strongly, more vividly, more emotionally than most other people. He never did deal with criticism very well. He rarely acknowledged the validity of two answers to the same question, and found it nearly impossible to see that his opponents could disagree with him with the best of intentions. Once crossed, Mann imagined his interlocutor a personal enemy. He observed ad hominem everywhere, which in Mann's mind, required him to attack the messenger in turn. His contemporaries were able to see that Mann took things too personally and lashed out when it seemed entirely unnecessary. Mann, meanwhile, seems to have been tone-deaf to the severity of his own words.

Yet it seems equally clear that much of the verbal dueling in Mann's *Reply* seem inaccessible to us today precisely because we no longer see debates in the public press as a kind of public performance that are to be consumed with great relish. Severity was to be expected, not shunned. A few years before Mann's debate with the masters, Andrews Norton, a Harvard theology professor, engaged in an extended, highly acerbic pamphlet

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[85] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters,* 153.
[86] HM *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters,* 133.
[87] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters,* 152.
[88] HM, *Lectures on Education*, 336.

debate with George Ripley and Ralph Waldo Emerson over the nature of biblical miracles.[89] Mann and the Boston schoolmasters followed in the same tradition, exchanging public volleys back and forth for the next two years. Critics thought Mann's *Reply* was "supercilious," full of "squibs and quips, and witty turns."[90] But that was exactly what the reading public craved. Samuel Howe thought Mann's *Reply* was a masterful "public flagellation" (said with some irony) and was sure it was being read in large numbers. "It is in fact the town talk," he said.[91]

The town must have talked over high-minded passages too, which historians have largely overlooked in Mann's *Reply*. In one plaintive section, Mann appealed to the noblest sentiments in the masters when he asked why a "lover of God and friend of human kind" would not want to "select his motives from the loftiest of the series." Anyone who "bowed before the Eternal Throne" did not have to resort to the methods of the beasts—brute force—to accomplish his purposes. The teacher could, after all, do as Jesus did. He could, through moral suasion, "inspire his pupils with the spirit of those two great commandments on which hang all the law and the prophets,--first, the love of God, with all the heart and soul and mind; and second, the love of our neighbor, as ourselves." Could not the Boston masters, in short, do unto others as they would have others do unto them? If they did not themselves wish to endure public flogging, could they not avoid doing the same to those under their charge? [92]

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[89] Gary Dorrien, *The Making of American Liberal Theology: Imagining Progressive Religion, 1805-1900* (Louisville, Ky.: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001).

[90] Justice, "The Hon. Horace Mann and the Schoolmasters," 2.

[91] Samuel G. Howe to HM, Nov. 26, 1844, as quoted in Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 126.

[92] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters*, 125.

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Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters proved that Mann, like the masters, was unwilling to budge an inch. His *Reply* quoted long passages from his previous reports condemning corporal punishment. They were the views "by which I am willing to stand or fall," he said.[93] He surely realized that a pamphlet war could go only so far. Public opinion might be swayed to reject corporal punishment, but so long as masters had unfettered control of their classrooms, they might continue their flogging just they had before. As a lawyer and a politician, Mann naturally looked to the power of law for the ultimate solution to the problem of corporal punishment in the grammar schools of Boston.

While Mann and his friends led the charge in the public press, another group of liberal Christians attacked on the legislative flank. The model for this labor was Edward Dwight's donation for normal schools, which used private beneficence to public benefit, much to the agreement of ideological opponents. Now a group of Mann's friends led by Charles Sumner, a young lawyer and anti-slavery advocate, proposed to test the public's opinion of the masters' denunciation of normal schools. In January 1845, Sumner and his friends offered $5,000 for new buildings, libraries, and apparatus for the normal schools of Massachusetts and asked the state legislature to match their donation, even as Dwight had some years before. The legislature complied, and Governor George N. Briggs, a Democrat, signed the measure into law.[94]

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[93] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters*, 124.

[94] *Acts and Resolves Passed by the General Court of Massachusetts,* 623. These memorialists included Charles Brooks, Mann's friend in the normal school fight, and Edward Loring, Mann's friend and former classmate from law school.

The Boston masters had attempted to drag down the credibility of the normal schools by calling them "propaganda" machines for an experimental, unproved method of instruction.[95] By extending the funding of these schools, the state legislature seemed to reject the masters' label and endorse Mann's vision for Massachusetts as a leader in American school reform.

The state legislature's support of the normal schools can only have registered with Mann as one victory in a protracted war. State politics could do only so much in a decentralized governance structure. Mann knew the legislature had no jurisdiction over local school districts and therefore could do little to diminish, let alone end, corporal punishment in Boston or in any other town. The fight would have to be taken take to the halls of local government. In Boston as elsewhere, the teachers served at the pleasure of the school committees. Could the Boston School Committee pressure the masters from above?

At the same time as he was writing his *Reply,* Mann asked several of his friends to seek election to the Boston School Committee in the hopes that the masters' excesses could be exposed and reined in, thus serving as an example for other towns throughout the state. Accepting Mann's challenge, Samuel G. Howe and several other reform-minded individuals threw their hats into the ring and were elected to the twenty-four-member board on the Whig ticket.[96]

Howe was not Mann's lackey, simply doing as he was told. As a longstanding reformer of deep and abiding passion, Howe was completely invested in the cause. "I have made a resolution, as deep as my nature allows," he told Mann, "that I will falter not

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[95] Field et al., *Remarks on the Seventh Annual,* 13.

[96] Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 128-29; Stanley K. Schultz, *The Culture Factory: Boston Public Schools, 1789-1860* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1973), 138.

until I have effected an entire reformation in our system."[97] Mann believed that Howe performed a rare labor during his one year on the Boston School Committee. It was a work, Mann later said, "which only Sam Howe or an angel could have done."[98]

Even so, angels seemed to help Howe along the way. Howe ran for the school committee as an avowed supporter of Mann and his policies. Although the Boston School Committee was overwhelmingly Whig, reform-minded members like Howe represented only a minority.[99] But the stars seem to align perfectly for Mann. In the same election that brought Howe into office, Joseph Quincy, Jr., was elected mayor of Boston. A close friend of Mann's and former ally in the Massachusetts Senate, Quincy was sympathetic to Mann's reforms. He quickly appointed Howe to serve on a visiting committee of three charged with conducting the annual inspection of Boston's grammar schools, the very schools where the thirty-one masters worked. The other two men Quincy appointed to the committee were also favorably disposed to reform.[100] He had stacked the deck against the masters.

The visiting committee began its work the first week of May 1845. For the next three months, Howe and his two mates, dividing up Boston's nineteen grammar schools between them, swooped in without notice, examining students and directing the masters to fill out detailed questionnaires. Their lengthy report, which they read before the full Boston School Committee on August 7, sweepingly indicted the practices of the masters,

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[97] Samuel G. Howe to HM, May 8, 1845, as cited in Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 130.

[98] Howe, *Reminiscences*, 148.

[99] Twenty-one of the twenty-four members were Whigs, but as the vote to abolish the Board of Education in the 1840 Massachusetts Legislature indicated, Whig party affiliation did not automatically mean alignment with Mann's reform. On the composition of this committee, see Reese, *Testing Wars in the Public Schools*, 71-72.

[100] Schultz, *Culture Factory,* 140; Reese, *Testing Wars,* 93-94, 100; Mann, *Horace Mann,* 238.

as many surely expected.[101]

Working closely with Mann, Howe had designed a strategy to impugn the credibility of the masters in their disciplinary practices by showing the deficiency of their teaching. If widespread ignorance among the students signaled teaching deficiency, the report did the intended work. The committee showed that the grammar school students did poorly when tested on the most basic information. In geography, for example, no school tested higher than 46%.[102] The overall impression left by the committee's findings made the masters appear less than masterful; the teaching "experience" they extolled had not translated into learning in their students.

As the visiting committee must have known, the low student performance in the Boston grammar schools tended to undercut the claim of the masters that corporal punishment had a salutary effect on teacher authority. If teacher authority did not result in learning, what good was it? Not surprisingly, coupled with the documented low performances, the visiting committee found "gross abuse of the power of corporal punishment" in the grammar schools.[103] Many of the cases involved trifling offenses like whispering or other conduct resulting from discomfort or other forms of weariness having more to do, the committee argued, with poor teaching than any problem inherent in the student.[104] Framing corporal punishment as an outdated, anti-republican relic "unsuited to our own schools, and to a system for this country," the committee side-stepped the argument with Mann and the masters over the question of affection between teacher and

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[101] Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 130-31.

[102] Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 133. "Linking test scores to job security thus made its first appearance in the modern world." Reese, *Testing Wars,* 96.

[103] "Boston Grammar and Writing Schools," *Common School Journal* 7 (Oct. 15, 1845): 305-20, esp. 318.

[104] "Boston Grammar and Writing Schools," 320.

student. All could agree the image of the teacher-tyrant who ruled by fear clashed with American ideals.[105] Fear "may keep boys still," the committee said, "but it ever makes them esteem order." Fear may make students obedient to authority, but "it never makes them love him who imposes it."[106] The child who never learns to act out of compulsion will not grow up fit for republican citizenship.

The visiting committee's report was greeted to enthusiastic reviews from fellow liberals. Mann was positively ecstatic. He filled four full issues of the *Common School Journal* with large extracts and placed the most condemnatory passages on the masters' use of corporal punishment at the front of the abstract of school returns, thus giving the subject the widest possible hearing.[107]

Howe's visiting committee report resonated with more than like-minded friends. The findings in the report outraged many people. The *Boston Atlas,* no friend to Mann, pronounced the report "masterly."[108] The visiting committee benefitted from its high-minded tone, which rose above the sarcastic debate found in the writings of Mann and the masters. Howe condemned behavior without condemning people. He took a merciful hand with the masters, declaring that, if any among them used the rod but are "good men and good masters in other respects," the school committee would not turn them away, but

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[105] Scholias [Mark Antony De Wolfe Howe], *Review of the Reports of the Annual Visiting Committees of the Public Schools of the City of Boston, for 1845* (Boston: 1846), 54.

[106] "Boston Grammar and Writing Schools," 319.

[107] "Boston Grammar and Writing Schools," *Common School Journal* 7 (Oct. 1, 1845): 289-304; (Oct. 15, 1845): 305-20; (Nov. 1, 1845): 321-36; (Nov. 15, 1845): 337-52; (Dec. 1, 1845): 353-68; *Abstract of the Massachusetts School Returns, for 1845-6* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1846), 2-10. Privately Mann said he was "ashamed" to reproduce the school committee's report because it showed evidence of the "degraded condition" of the Boston schools, which did not reflect well on the state as a whole. HM to G. M. Brewer, Sept. 21, 1845, as cited in Schultz, *Culture Factory*, 347 n. 21.

[108] Schwartz, *Samuel Gridley Howe,* 132.

would give them "the fullest opportunity for reform and improvement."[109]

The visiting committee report left the masters shaken. The emperor's clothes had been removed, and the picture was not pleasant. Further complicating matters, allegations surfaced that some students had cheated on the exams, which for the first time were written and not oral. The masters responded with another pamphlet, this time attacking Howe, but the effort led to nothing. Four masters ultimately lost their jobs, which Mann compared to turning out four peers from the House of Lords.[110] They were removed at least partly for the harsh hand they had taken to students, putting the rest of the masters on notice.[111]

The public feud between Mann and the Boston schoolmasters marked a shift in the rhetoric surrounding corporal punishment in the public schools of Massachusetts. Many citizens came to associate the use of the rod with ill-bred people rather than the emerging middle-class culture to which they inspired. The bourgeoisie could see their own aspirations to gentility in Mann's brilliant reframing of public schools around the disciplinary image of the middle class even as he hinted at problems with the older, more hierarchical notions of authority found in the masters' disciplinary strategy and in the working-class culture of Irish-Catholic immigrants:

> Was it not, and is it not, one of the grand objects in the institution and support of Common Schools, to bring those children who are cursed by vicious parentage, who were not only "conceived and brought forth," but have nurtured in "sin"; who have never known the voice of love and kindness; who have daily fallen beneath the iron blows of those parental hands that should have been outstretched for their protection;--was it not, as is it not, I say, one of the grand objects of our

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[109] "Boston Grammar and Writing Schools," 318.

[110] HM to George Combe, Sept. 25, 1845, Combe Papers, National Library of Scotland.

[111] Two of the four removed masters had been involved in high profile cases of corporal punishment within the past two years. Reese, *Testing Wars,* ch 4.

> schools to bring this class of children under humanizing and redeeming influences; to show them that there is something besides wrath and stripes and suffering, in God's world; to lift these outcasts and forlorn beings from their degradation, by gentle hands, and to fold them to warm and cherishing bosoms?[112]

With corporal punishment set against "humanizing and redeeming influences," the use of the rod came to be seen as no trifling matter. Teachers sensed that they must publicly account for their own use of harsh disciplinary tactics in ways that hadn't been expected of them before. In light of the conflict, the Boston School Committee ruled that Boston teachers would have to record any instance of corporal punishment used in their classrooms.[113] Mann thought that the ruling decreased the cases of corporal punishment in the Boston schools by 25 percent. Agitation to reform corporal punishment in schools quickly spread to other states.[114]

The conflict with the masters changed Mann's practices as well. Using the power granted the board to gather information, Mann began asking local school committees across Massachusetts to start regularly reporting the number of instances of corporal punishment in their schools. Simply asking the question made townspeople more cautious of abuses. The implication of the question, the committees understood, was that it was best not to have too many cases. In 1846, Mann proudly reported that 500 schools across Massachusetts had gone the entire school year without any cases of reported corporal

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[112] HM, *Reply to the "Remarks" of the Thirty-One Boston Schoolmasters,* 136. I am indebted to Richard Brodhead for the interpretation of this passage from Mann. Brodhead, *Cultures of Letters,* 25-26.

[113] Earlier, in December 1844, the Boston School Committee resolved to document every case of corporal punishment but permitted that all records could be destroyed after one quarter, making it possible for teachers to elude responsibility for repeat offenses. Reese, *Testing Wars,* 78.

[114] Glenn, *Campaigns against Corporal Punishment,* 136-37.

punishment.[115]

Corporal punishment would not be outlawed in schools until late in the twentieth century, but Mann's arguments for affection between teacher and student had helped set the country on a new path. In the long run, the affectionate model of teacher and student largely replaced the model of harsh authoritarian relation.[116]

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In the middle of Mann's conflict with the Boston schoolmasters, at a time when his *Seventh Annual Report* was being dissected, at times unfairly, in the public press, his friends decided he needed some cheering up. Without telling him, they got together on several successive winter evenings and composed a group letter. Not a letter to the newspapers or the magazines, supporting Mann's policies or condemning the masters, but a letter to Mann himself, conveying their admiration and love.

The letter praised Mann for his complete and total dedication to the cause of school reform. It complimented him on "those remarkable powers of eloquence and persuasion, with which you have been blessed." It told Mann what they had learned from him: an appreciation for the "genial modes of instruction, by which the pupil is won, and not driven to the paths of knowledge."

Thirty-four of his friends signed the letter, three more than the Boston

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[115] *Tenth Annual Report of the Secretary of the Massachusetts State Board of Education* (Boston: Dutton and Wentworth, 1846), 81-84.

[116] Cynthia A. Kelly, "Spare the Rod and…," *Update on Law-Related Education* 1, no. 2 (Fall 1977): 16-17; James P. Stoneman, "Corporal Punishment in Schools: A Time for Change," *Journal of Juvenile Law* 4 (1980): 155-69. By the 1880s, the use of corporal punishment in the schoolroom was "fully understood," in the words of the Quincy Massachusetts School Report, to be "a sure indication of weakness in a teacher." As quoted in Falk, *Corporal Punishment*, 95.

schoolmasters: "They that be with us are more than they that be with them," wrote Charles Brooks, the crusader for normal schools. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow signed as well. The lead signer was Josiah Quincy Jr., the mayor of Boston.[117]

Mann was overwhelmed by the show of support. His wife said the letter left him in tears. He returned reply a week later, expressing his great joy in the "personal kindness and good will" that drew forth the letter. As he read each of the signatures, Mann said, it seemed as though each friend were standing before him, hailing him, encouraging him. "Let us work on together," Mann urged. "let us encounter toil as a pleasure." If trial comes, let us bear it together, "still struggling onward for the great end of human improvement."[118]

The exchange was reminiscent of the relationship Mann longed to see between teacher and student. The relationship was not imperial, though neither was it strictly egalitarian. In Mann's moment of need, his friends were like the Prussian teacher who stood before the student with his body bending this way and that, agonizing with the child in his uncertainty, urging the pupil on. The teacher, kind, affectionate, and ever hopeful, leads the student to push through any difficulty he might encounter. Together, they come on the other side, happy and whole.

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[117] Josiah Quincy et al. to HM, Jan. 13, 1845, HMC; the letter is reproduced in Culver, *Horace Mann and Religion in the Massachusetts Public Schools,* 287-89. The letter accompanied the offer to donate for $5,000 for normal schools.

[118] HM to Gentlemen, Jan. 20, 1845, S-M.

Epilogue

By 1848 Mann was entering his twelfth year in office as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education. No one, not even he, could have imagined in 1837 that his tenure would be as long as it was. Now, at fifty-one-years old, he was at the peak of his influence and had no plans to resign. And then the world changed unexpectedly. John Quincy Adams, the ex-U.S. president, collapsed with a cerebral hemorrhage and died suddenly, leaving his seat in the U.S. House of Representatives vacant. Desperate for a name to fill the office that would befit the Adams legacy, the Whig machinery huddled in Boston and drafted Mann. He was surprised by the honor and flattered by the attention. He did not, could not refuse, possessed by the idea of bringing more civility to a country increasingly fractured over the issue of slavery and intrigued with the possibility of crafting new and as yet unimagined educational laws for what he called "waste territory"—the vast tracts of interior North America acquired during the recent war with Mexico.[1]

In a run-off election held in April, Mann won the seat in a landslide and set off immediately for the nation's capital. He spent the remainder of the year splitting time between Washington and Boston, producing one more school abstract and a valedictory report to the Massachusetts legislature, after which he retired as secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education and focused solely on his duties as a representative.

The all-absorbing question in Congress at the time, of course, was whether slavery would be extended to the new American territories. The present and the future

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[1] -HM to Thomas French et al., March 21, 1848, in *Horace Mann, Slavery: Letters and Speeches* (Boston: B. B. Mussey, 1851), 9.

seemed far more important than any reflections that might be given to the past. The public press attended more to Mann's speeches against the extension of slavery than it did his legacy as an educational reformer.

No one rose up to condemn Mann's tenure as secretary the way Orestes Brownson once did. Twelve years had produced a salutary track record that was difficult to assault. Those who did pause to assess his legacy believed that he had done something extraordinary during his years in office, but the reforms were so new and still ongoing that even the most astute observers struggled to put exactly what Mann had done into words. The most common assessment put Mann's achievements into numbers. Newspapers reported that, between 1837, when Mann became secretary, and his retirement in 1848, the total local appropriations made in dollars toward Massachusetts public schools more than doubled.[2] During the same period, the ratio of private to public school expenditures decreased from 75% of total expenditures to 36%, reversing a longstanding trend toward private school education. The newspapers seemed impressed with the finding that Massachusetts citizens had expended over $2 million on new schools and school repairs during Mann's tenure as secretary. They thought that the three normal schools started by Mann, all of which were still in operation and yielding graduates, spoke highly of his vision.[3] All of these figures seemed to indicate progress—something bigger and better than what Massachusetts schools had produced before. Criticism of Mann's tenure was hard to find in 1848, though it may have been the case that Mann's critics simply ignored his retirement. For most, Mann's secretaryship had

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[2] This figure includes local appropriations only and does include appropriations from the Common School Fund. "Horace Mann's Twelfth Annual Report," *District School Journal* 10, no. 2 (May 1849): 24-25.

[3] *Boston Transcript,* reproduced in "Horace Mann," *Common School Journal* 11 (Jan. 1, 1849): 3-6.

succeeded because he helped inaugurate a robust era of public spiritedness in Massachusetts.[4]

The suggestion in the public press was that Mann's signal accomplishment had been to kindle interest in the Massachusetts public schools. The implication was that total appropriations would never have doubled had Mann had not been there to stoke interest in the common school cause. Mann, it was said, awoke Massachusetts from its lethargy, helping the public to realize that "hardly half her children were at school at all" and that only a revitalization of the public schools was likely to change that. He showed the citizens that their schoolhouses were hardly more than "barns"; that their teachers were ill-trained and ill-prepared; that the whole system, in short, was "in a slip-shod, unprogressive, unwatched, and inefficient condition."[5] This way of seeing Mann's tenure turned him into a master motivator. Drawing on the pride many Massachusetts citizens felt in their long tradition of town schools, Mann helped align expectation and reality. He raised Massachusetts' schools to the level at which its citizens felt that they should have been functioning all along. How could Massachusetts hope to measure up to its reputation as the center of American learning if its schools lagged behind?

There was, however, something small and somewhat provincial about measuring Mann's contribution through numbers. Did Mann do nothing more than help the citizens of his home state see that they did not in fact enjoy the sorts of schools they thought they had? In reality Mann did not seek a return to the glories of the Puritan past; his reforms proved controversial not because he argued for better versions of the past, but because he

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[4] For a summary of these changes, see George Henry Martin, *The Evolution of the Massachusetts Public School System: A Historical Sketch* (New York: D. Appleton, 1915), 174-75.

[5] "Horace Mann," *Christian Inquirer* 3 (Sept. 22, 1849): 2.

argued for a kind of school that had not yet existed in Massachusetts—or anywhere else on American soil. To measure his contributions through numbers, moreover, seems unnecessarily reductive and delimiting. Was there no ideational component to Mann's reforms? Was there no unifying idea? Did he not persuade anyone outside Massachusetts of the merits of his proposals?

A few observers sensed that Mann's influence was larger and more revolutionary than implied by the reports. As early as 1844, the former president of the American Institute of Instruction observed that Mann's ideas "have already reached far beyond the limits of our narrow State. They are echoing in the woods of Maine, and along the St. Lawrence and the Lakes. They are heard throughout New York, and throughout all the West and the South West."[6] Just what these ideas were the writer did not say. It was not as apparent in the 1840s that Mann's reforms would spread far beyond Massachusetts in succeeding generations.

Mann's influence was hard to gauge in his own time because he stood on edge of two large cultural shifts in Western childhood. The first is the influence of the state on the lives of children. In 1750 the state had little influence over how children were raised. By 1900 the state intervened directly in how children were raised.[7] Reform of the public schools was unsteady and uneven: many school buildings, especially in the rural South, remained poorly equipped, and schools in the urban north were often overcrowded.

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[6] G[eorge] B. E[merson], *Observations on a Pamphlet, Entitled "Remarks on the Seventh Annual Report of the Hon. Horace Mann, Secretary of the Massachusetts Board of Education"* (n.p., 1844), 15.

[7] Hugh Cunningham, *Children and Childhood in Western Society Since 1500,* 2d ed. (Harlow, UK: Pearson Education Limited, 2005), 122-25; Peter N. Stearns, *Childhood in World History,* 2d ed. (London: Routledge, 2006), 72-73; James Schmidt, "Children and the State," in *The Routledge History of Childhood in the Western World,* ed. Paula S. Fass (London: Routledge, 2013), 174-90.

Underfunding was a chronic problem felt everywhere.[8] Even so, by 1900 individual states across America had begun to adopt a model of public schooling that looked very much like the one first advocated by Horace Mann and later implemented in Massachusetts. The children of rich and poor (though not, universally, the children of different races) were educated together in the same classroom; normal schools found in every state in the union taught child-centered methods; school books taught common, non-sectarian values; school buildings were well-ventilated and heated and made comfortable for children; and corporal punishment, although far from non-existent, had become less severe in many places, and arguments either for its diminution or its elimination had gained traction.

Horace Mann cannot be said to have been as solely responsible for initiating these changes, as many who celebrated Mann's life in 1937 supposed. The causal factors resulting in child-centered education methods are overdetermined, and Mann was just one voice among a set of larger, more comprehensive changes. The spread of gentility across all social classes, the diffusion of liberal Protestantism and other forms of secularity with their emphasis on humanitarian ethics, and perhaps most importantly, the widespread expectation of material comfort bred of rising affluence, all worked to move public education in the direction or recognizing the comfort and well-being and personhood of children as an organizing principle within learning environments.[9]

Still, by virtue of a fortunate combination of circumstances—Mann's chronological priority among school reformers, his location in a leading and reform-minded state in Massachusetts, and his articulate and able voice—the reforms he

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[8] James D. Anderson, *The Education of Blacks in the South, 1860-1935* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989); David Tyack, *The One Best System: A History of American Urban Education* (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974).

[9] Charles Taylor, *Sources of the Self: The Making of Modern Identity* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989).

implemented enjoyed unusual heft among school reformers in other states. Mann, more than any other reformer, was cited repeatedly in state superintendent reports as evidence that reforms had worked and were therefore necessary.[10] The example of Massachusetts had proved what could be done elsewhere. In this sense, Mann gave legitimacy and power to the state as an educational entity and gave reform the credibility progressives sought. He spoke for the ability of the state to rigorously educate large numbers of children well, if given the opportunity.[11]

Mann's successes in Massachusetts did not ensure that the state could educate every child well. Nor did they mean that other institutions, such as families or private schools, could not educate children just as well than the state could. Some continued to believe that state involvement weakened the influence of parents and churches as educational agents. But this view formed a small minority, and after Mann, a more child-centered public education gained traction across the United States.[12]

The other large cultural shift that made Mann's influence difficult to gauge in his own time was the diffusion and widespread incorporation of the image of the innocent child into the thinking of a growing middle class. After emerging in the West among elite classes, the image of the innocent child spread in the nineteenth-century into periodicals, advice and parenting guides, and fiction of all kinds aimed at middle-class readership.

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[10] See, for example, *Thirty-Fourth Biennial Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction of the State of Illinois* (Springfield, Ill.: State of Illinois, Office of the Superintendent of Public Instruction, 1920), 103.

[11] By the beginning of the twentieth century, some observers suspected that public schools might be more rigorous than private schools, arguing, for example, that parents who kept their children in private schools did so not out of social prejudice, but because they feared that public school overworked pupils. Thomas Wentworth Higginson, "Women and Men: Private and Public Schools," *Harper's Bazaar* 31 (Feb. 5, 1898): 106.

[12] "First State Convention of the 'People's Free School Party' of Massachusetts," *Massachusetts Spy,* Sept 7, 1859, 1.

Most middle-class parents came to accept childhood and schooling as intimately tied together. Childhood should be a time of relative ease, cordoned off from the trials of adult life. Schooling became a way of preserving the child's native innocence, and this meant that schooling itself should become gentler and kinder, more like the home middle class people idealized for themselves. Just as the image of the depraved child dominated Western thinking in the early modern period, the image of innocent child came to define childhood in modern times.[13]

Mann's primary achievement, which is more apparent now than in his own lifetime, was to bring the image of the innocent child under state sponsorship in the service of educational reform. He made "the most prevailing 'cry for the children' that Massachusetts had ever heard"—and, indeed, that America and quite possibly the Western world had ever heard.[14] Mann's advocacy for children from his perch as a state official meant that the legitimacy of the innocent child became intertwined with the legitimacy of the state as an institution that both supported and created the sort of child whose parents aspired to middle-class respectability. In this way Mann revolutionized the way we think about children. In the eighteenth century, Massachusetts and other states passed laws protective of the orphaned poor. These laws shielded the most vulnerable but did little to promote their social or material betterment. Over time, arguments of the kind made by Mann would be used to promote the state as a great advocate for children everywhere as it sought to protect them from the abuses of corporations and parents, from

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[13] Martha Gutman, "The Physical Spaces of Childhood," in *History of Childhood in the Western World,* 249-66, esp. 250.

[14] "Horace Mann," *Monthly Religious Magazine and Independent Journal* 22 (Sept. 1859): 201-7, esp. 202.

television, movies, and advertisers.[15] This advocacy on the part of the state was based on the assumption of childhood innocence first located in the school reports of Horace Mann.

As the twentieth-first century begins, many have lost confidence in both the image of the innocent child and the capacity of the state to credibly and efficiently intervene in the education of children. The boundary between childhood and adulthood that appeared so clear to people like Horace Mann seems today blurred as worldly-wise children adroitly avoid state protections while navigating the darkest streets of the World Wide Web on their own. The sentimentalized nineteenth-century depictions of children as miniature angels appears transparently fictionalized as we observe children killing other children both in the United States and abroad. Many wonder if American schools have gone too far in codling and miniaturizing children. The view put forward by Mann that there is a "secret grandeur of each child," in which "glorious, beauties, wonders dwell!" is as much a proposition for debate today as it ever was.[16] In our longing or in our disgust or in our skepticism, the image of childhood innocence first brought to our attention by Horace Mann remains with us today.

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[15] Neil Postman, *The Disappearance of Childhood* (New York: Vintage, 1994); Michael Grossberg, "Liberation and Caretaking: Fighting over Children's Rights in Postwar America," in *Reinventing Childhood after World War II,* ed. Paula S. Fass and Michael Grossberg (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2012), 19-37.

[16] "Horace Mann," *Christian Inquirer* 13 (Aug. 27, 1859): 2.

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Cleveland Gazette
Greenfield [MA] Gazette and Mercury
La Crosse [WI] Tribune and Leader-Press
Liberator
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