

5  
Education  
Sir J. Pakington's  
Bill.

REMARKS ON SIR JOHN PAKINGTON'S

## EDUCATION BILL.

In a Letter

TO

THE RIGHT HON. S. H. WALPOLE, M.P.

BY

JOHN CAMPBELL COLQUHOUN, ESQ.

LONDON :

THOMAS HATCHARD, 187, PICCADILLY.

1855.

MACINTOSH, PRINTER,  
GREAT NEW-STREET, LONDON.



## REMARKS ON SIR JOHN PAKINGTON'S EDUCATION BILL.

---

DEAR WALPOLE,—I beg to address to you these remarks on our friend Sir John Pakington's Bill for Education. Whatever views I may be constrained to take of the Bill, I do full justice to the motives of the author.

No one can have had the advantage, which I have enjoyed, of labouring on public questions with him, without being convinced of the philanthropy which animates him. Though, in this case, I question the tendency of his proposal, I appreciate the object he has in view.

I would ask you to regard the measure on two sides.

I. The Plea.

II. The Plan.

I. The Plea is laid in Sir John Pakington's able argument, on the 16th of March.

He says, first, that the English are, as a nation, worse educated, more vicious, and criminal, than the Continental nations, or the United States.

Second, that, these nations have a good free public system of education, and that England has none.

Third, that, if we give to England this system of free public education, we shall remove, or reduce, our ignorance and crimes.

The Plea rests on these facts :—

English schools teach little—the teachers are inferior—the school-houses are bad—and, in dense populations,



where schools are most needed, they cannot be had, or kept up. The ignorance of the people corresponds with the defects of the schools. Four and a third millions of children ought to be in school. Of these, near a million are untaught. In five counties of the west of England the children of the paupers; in four counties of the east, one-third of six thousand militia-men, were uneducated. In the gaol of Worcester one-third of the felons, in the gaol of Preston one-half, were untaught.

Such was the condition of these men, that they might be described as African savages, "conversant with vice, familiar with crime, and steeped in debauchery."

From these facts Sir John Pakington draws a conclusion. He compares England with France, Germany, Switzerland, and the United States, and he pronounces it to be inferior.

I will take, first, the illustrations, and then pass to the issue of fact.

1. France, says Sir J. Pakington, has a complete system of public education. She has had this for a generation. It is now, then, time to test the effects. Read, I pray you, the statistics of Mons. Guerry, read the "Classes Dangereuses" of M. Fregier—read the Reports made to the French Government, in 1848, by M. Blanqui—read the scenes of Eugene Sue—and if you say that these are tales of fiction, ask the Minister of Police, M. Delessert, under Louis Philippe (whose information I enjoyed), or the Minister of Police and Interior, under Louis Napoleon, whether these fictions exceed the facts. Ask any priest or pastor, in any considerable town in France, what is the moral state, and what are the habits of its population? or take the history of the last seven years, which lights up the state of France with a glare of light. Why did every man in France, who had a purse or a house, take contentedly the rule of half a million of bayonets? He points to the abyss yawning under his feet, where millions are ready to slake their passions in a revolution of pillage



and crime. If it is said that these are the outcasts of French society, what becomes of Sir John Pakington's argument, drawn from the outcasts of our own?

But for every English outcast, there are ten, in equal number, in France. There are horrors in our social state, from which the eye recoils! but, there are depths broader and blacker in France, which have rent society from its top to its base. *Yet these are found among a people trained in free public schools.*

I cannot compare the English militia with that of France, but we can compare the soldiers of the two countries, and here the comparison is in our favour: the education and habits of the English soldier are superior to those of the French. But what of the peasantry? The soldiers form a rough good test of this.

But take other tests—one in eight is the education of England;\* one in seventeen of France. Sir John quotes the routine of study; I quote this fact; and I add this to it, that there are twice as many of the peasants, who cannot read and write, in France as in England.

2. I turn, with Sir J. Pakington, from France to the United States. One advantage they enjoy, they can throw off on the unoccupied lands those outcasts who hang on our flanks; yet, even with this, their state is not better than ours. Sir J. Pakington cites our gaols and chaplains: will he take those of the United States? the chaplains of Sing Sing, Charleston, or New Orleans? Take the evidence of my friend, Mr. Butler, and other ministers of religion in New York, they will give him the darkest pictures of popular crime; but pass from the criminal into the street, notice the class of desperadoes, who tar Abolitionists, burn printing presses, gouge, lynch, and use the bowie knife. What shall we say of these? What of the outlaws, who fill the backwoods, live a life of sullen solitude, and die

\* See the pamphlet, published under the auspices of the Committee of Privy Council, "Present Measures for the Preservation of Education in England." Tenth Edition. Ridgway. 1839.



like brutes? What of the miscreants, who flock to California, stain its streets with murder, and live the life of savages? What of the Stephanists and Shakers, types of gross credulity? What of a whole State of Mormons, a few knaves, and a population of dupes?

Do I cite these facts to extenuate them? No; but to warn, that in all States, even in America, with its rare advantages, crime and ignorance abound, and, whatever be the cause, *free-schools are not the cure*.

Sir John Pakington has sought to give us the statistics of American education; he has spoken of one in five, and one in six, as being the proportion educated in the States; and he has contrasted this with one in eight, the proportion educated in England. From whatever authority Sir John Pakington has borrowed these facts, it has misled him. If he had consulted any of our popular writers, he would have discovered his mistake. An early\* writer reports, that out of a population of twenty-two millions, five millions are wholly uneducated, and that that is on the increase. The latest† authority informs us, that, out of a population of 2,020,000, Massachusetts has 37,000, who are not at school: a proportion‡ as great as Sir John has reported at Manchester. But I am surprised that, on such a question Sir J. Pakington did not consult the indisputable authority of Mr. Tremenheere.§

Mr. Tremenheere gives us all we require for information—he takes the picked American States, of New England, New York, and Philadelphia, and he draws his information from the School Committees. Take a few specimens.

\* See "Marryatt's Travels," vol. iii., p. 280.

† Chambers' Travels.

‡ Manchester, with a population of 300,000, has 30,000 not at school; but if we make the comparative deduction for age, (for five years not three is the age I have taken for the States,) the actual amount uneducated is 24,000.

§ "Notes on Public Subjects," &c. London, 1852. By Hugh Seymour Tremenheere.



(1.) Rhode Island, Fall River. Population, 11,000. Children from 5 to 15 in 1850, 2,502; average attendance, 1,304.

(2.) Ohio, Cincinnati. Children enrolled, 11,544; average daily attendance only 5,090.

(3.) New York. Children between the ages of 5 and 15, 100,000; average attendance, 40,000.\*

The explanation of this enormous absence is the same as in England: "in the busy seasons of the year the children are required by their parents to aid them in various domestic employments;" and "the indifference and the cupidity of parents are the great obstacles to the regular attendance of the children; the consequence is, that not half, that pass through the schools, are educated."†

Add to this the utter neglect of *religious* education; not 30 per cent. in some cases, not 50 per cent. in others, attending Sunday-schools; "notwithstanding the exertions of all the religious denominations, aided by donations of clothing when required." In fact, high wages, reckless parents, insubordinate and demoralized children; these features, the counterpart of our condition, attaching to the best conditioned States of the Union, will correct that part of Sir John Pakington's statements which refer to America.

3. I return to his illustrations from Europe. Prussia, he says, is superior in education to England. If it were so, it would be no plea for his measure, for he does not give us, what Prussia has, *seven years of compulsory education*.

But his own facts tell against him. If, by force of law, Prussia can drive only *one in six* into school, what force of intelligence there must be in England to gather, without compulsion, *one in eight* into school? But let us leave generalities and pass to details. One in eight, says Sir John, is the amount of education in Liverpool

\* Tremmenheere, pp. 12, 17, 19, 20, 22, 25.

† P. 22.



and York. Thus stand the towns of Prussia:—Stettin, one in ten;\* Berlin the same; Dantzic, one in eleven; Posen and Aix la Chapelle, one in thirteen. The towns of England, are, therefore, far ahead of the towns of Prussia.

4. I pass to Austria; one of the best educated countries in Europe. Sir John twice repeats, again one in eight is the education of England.† One in ten is that of Austria. Crime, says Sir J. Pakington, is less in Austria than in England; he gives no proof of this, and I find none.

Wirtemberg and Bavaria, he says, surpass us. They, too, have a *compulsory* law, which requires children to attend eight years at school; but even so, they are behind England. Bavarian statistics I don't find, but Wirtemberg has *one in seventeen*, i.e., not half the actual education of England.

From figures which fail him, Sir J. Pakington passes to witnesses. He cites Mr. Kay. Mr. Kay is the able advocate of an educational theory; but the place of an advocate is not in the witness box, but at the bar. If he seeks a witness, I beg him to consult Mr. Laing: he gives us a narrative of the moral state of Germany, not seen through Mr. Kay's green spectacles, but through the eyes of a shrewd observer. The picture is not favourable, and it is confirmed by facts. In the broad glare of the revolutionary history of 1848; in that chaos of confusion, delusion, and dreams, where the Socialist raved, and the infidel and the mob plundered, the leaders were the schoolmasters, and their scholars the masses. Our state in England needs reform; but it is not yet as desperate, as Government schools and their training have made the condition of the Germans.

So much for the comparison of England with other countries.

From illustrations of their state, I advance to, the

\* See Recent Measures.

† Recent Measures, &c.



real issue, the state of our own. Let me state the points on which I agree with our friend, before I come to those on which I differ. In these three propositions I agree with Sir J. Pakington :—

1. In our towns there are masses of men, growing up as vicious, lawless, and untaught as savages.

2. In our country parishes, many of our peasants may be found sensual, brutal, and attached only to animal enjoyments.

3. These two classes rear children, the counterpart of themselves, rarely entering school—or entering but to leave it; the remnant passing in it eighteen months or two years, to forget in a twelvemonth what they have hardly learnt. These are the incidents of our state, and deplorable. For these evils the Bill offers us, as a remedy, the provision of free schools.

We can submit the efficacy of this to a decisive test. There is a court of fourteen houses, close to your familiar quarters of Lincoln's-inn: wide stairs, open balustrades mark the wealth of former times: under carved ceilings, hanging with cobwebs, a sewer rolls through the rooms its stream of stench; the windows are close shut, to keep out pestilential air, for in front runs an open stream, which creeps, thick and deep, till it falls at last and spreads its foul layer on the court below. In that den one thousand living beings are penned; sick and well, old and young, the ruffian and the child, the bedrid and the lusty, the drunkard and the feverstricken; through the air, charged with stench and death, rise from morning to midnight shouts, groans, shrieks, curses, and yells. Is this a single case? it is a specimen. St. Giles's gives you many more. Westminster its quota, Bermondsey, Bayswater, and Notting-hill, theirs. Read Mr. Grainger's Report to the Commons in 1851; Captain Hay's Report to the Lords in 1852; the Reports of the Sanitary Commissioners; the evidence of the police. Trace the results in the mortality attested by the Registrar, and then estimate the class which, out of our metropolitan population of two millions



and a third, is thus debased ; and, remember, it has its counterpart in most of our towns. The last authority \* tells us that that class is to be measured in London by tens of thousands. Mr. Bickersteth describes this class "as utterly devoid of all moral sense, living in utter disregard of the restraints or requirements of religion, in whose creed theft is no crime, immorality no disgrace, intemperance no reproach, who know nothing of self-respect, who see nothing degrading in falsehood, and whose standard of superiority is dexterity in crime, persons who never use the name of God but to blaspheme, who know no more of the doctrines of the Gospel than if they had been born in the darkest region of heathen superstition." . . .

Sir J. Pakington's remedy for this evil is a free school. But Mr. Bickersteth, who appeals for confirmation to every clergyman, Scripture-reader, and city missionary in London, says that every part of his great parish is visited ; he has *the best schools* at a low charge, and Ragged-schools to which children *too poor to pay are freely admitted* ; he is constantly urging parents to send their children ; and yet he tells us that he fails, because when men, women, and children are herding like beasts, moral improvement is impossible, and the desire of education dies. For such a class there is no want of schools ; they have no *mind* to enter them ; the difficulty is not the schoolroom, but the children.

We are apt to imagine that these outcasts have no wits or work, and, that when a school is opened, they would flock into it. This is a great error. They have wits sharpened by exercise and knowledge of highest power. Sharp, haggard faces, prematurely old at twelve, mark the development of their powers : they have, with high gains, intense pleasures ; but the problem (and it is yet unsolved) is, how to win them from these pursuits to educational discipline, which they dislike, and restraints which they won't endure. The few, that are gained to school, are won only by kindness,

\* There could not be a higher. See Lecture by the Rev. Robert Bickersteth, Rector of St. Giles's, on the "London Poor."



by a loving heart and a gentle hand. Free-schools, with stiff pedagogues, they would not approach. Cover London, Manchester, and Birmingham with such schools, put masters in them, the best that art can supply, not one straggler of that outcast class will enter, or, at least, stay, in our schools. We shall spend millions, and reap, as those do, who shut their eyes to facts, disappointment. If any one doubt this, I refer him to a recent testimony—one so practical that I ask your leave to cite it.

Messrs. Walker \* and Sons thus describe the state of the Staffordshire population:—Wages from 5*s.* 6*d.* a-day up to 17*s.*: many families earning from 6*l.* up to 10*l.* a-week. No savings—no provision for sickness or old age. The great curse, intemperance; the money spent in the beer-shop. “In all the scattered country, and all the highways, and bye-paths, and out-of-the-way places, the beer-house is the constant object in the landscape.” What is the remedy for this vicious and sad state of things? The first, they say, is a *Maine Law*, or any law that shall compel the closing of these fever-houses; the other remedy is, educate the people.

Sir J. Pakington thinks it is poverty, or want of schools that prevents education? Hear Messrs. Walker:—“Let Legislators, if they wish to know whether it is poverty or not that keeps back education, look to these mining districts for an answer. They will find an affluent working population almost, if not quite, as uneducated as the negroes of the West Indies. It is not poverty but ignorance.” How does this act? “Having no education themselves, they cannot see the value of it for their children. The consequence is, there is no disposition to send their children to school, and there is every inducement to send them to work. . . . . Remonstrate with them on the folly of thus sacrificing the child for money, the answer outspoken is, ‘We’ve had no larning. Don’t see why the kids should’nt do as well as the old ’uns. Besides, we can’t afford to keep them idling, doing a’nothing.’

\* See Letter in “Times,” April 5, 1855.



We say most unreservedly, these people will never be educated till you shut away work from their children and compel the parents to send them to school by law."

I add nothing to this evidence. For such evils, free-schools do not offer even the semblance of a cure.

Now test Sir J. Pakington's plan in country parishes. Of some plan to elevate our peasantry there is need. Is this the requisite? Again, I appeal to facts. We have at this moment hundreds of schools, half empty, ill-filled, in rural districts (you will find evidence of this in the Reports of the Inspectors); is it for want of money? Of that bye and bye. The want is—*children who will stay in school.*

No doubt there are improvements in progress; the greater attractiveness of schools, the greater activity of ministers of religion have told on the country. Still, with all this help, *two years* is, I fear, the average period of a boy's stay at a rural school. The parents are reckless; if you press them they become sullen; they can't spare the boy; he must stay at home to look after the younger children, or he must go out to earn his bread, by herding sheep or scaring crows. Parents are deaf to entreaties. What do men, whose enjoyments are animal, care for moral and intellectual progress? If the child learns to read, it is all they care about. This explains, why our school teaching is restricted to reading. Can any one imagine that a clause in an Act of Parliament will alter this?

Lord Shaftesbury proposed that the *parent* should be held responsible for the teaching of his child. The laws of foreign States compel him to keep his child eight years at school. These are remedies. These touch the case. All the proposals of the Bill graze the surface. Pass the Bill, and I engage that, ten years after, another Member of the House of Commons shall present us with the same graphic pictures of ignorance, blasphemy, and crime.



## II. The Plan.

Thus much of the state of the people. And now a few words on the state of our schools. On this head I have many points of agreement with Sir J. Pakington.

First. Many of our schools are taught by indifferent teachers, with insufficient salaries.

Second. Many parishes are without means to build a school.

Third. Other parishes have a school, but cannot maintain it.

These are three evils for which we want a remedy.

Sir John Pakington's remedy is this:—He professes to preserve existing schools. There are 44,000 day-schools, with 2,000,000 attending them. Of these 20,000 are \* voluntary public schools. 1,000,000*l.* is raised to support these schools, with a vote of the Exchequer of 200,000*l.* a-year. Whatever may be our defects, our population is better taught than in France, Wirtemberg, and Austria (every one of which enjoys coercive laws). It is not far below Prussia. In towns it is its superior. It presents an amount of knowledge superior to the rest of Europe, and, a popular character, known for its energy, and practical power.

These are facts indisputable. You will agree with me that we ought not to disturb the institutions to which we owe them.

Sir John Pakington's Bill, if passed, would destroy them. I proceed to the proof.

1. The Bill provides the appointment, by the rate-payers of a town or union, of a School Committee (all, whose property is valued at 30*l.* a-year, being eligible), which is to form the Educational Parliament of a borough or union. This Parliament is to choose nine persons to manage (ss. 46, 47) schools erected under the Bill.† It is to deal with the schools which enter into union (ss. 20,

\* Public Education, by Sir J. K. Shuttleworth.

† Ss. 41, 42, 43, 45.



21, 22, 24, 26, 27),\* and to elect a registering Committee of four to overlook these, and to place or remove scholars from them (ss. 28, 29, 30).

The education to be given is marked by two requirements: positive (s. 24), that it shall include writing, reading, arithmetic, grammar, history, geography, and needlework for girls; negative, *that no child shall be required to learn any distinctive religious creed, catechism, or formulary to which the parents or guardians object*; to attend or abstain from attending any particular Sunday-school or place of religious worship; and no child shall be refused admission on account of his religious creed. From these principles, these results follow:—

1st. All our present schools must cease. It is hard work now to raise yearly subscriptions for a school. This is one of Sir J. Pakington's pleas. But rate a parish for education, the subscription list falls; no man will attempt it. Thus disappears what Lord J. Russell rates at 500,000*l.* of yearly income.

Schools are to be free. The parents then won't send their children to a school with fees. The second source of school income, children's pence, disappears, and another 500,000*l.* drops. This is a change, not merely financial. One special feature of England, the foundation of half its religion and four-fifths of its education, is withdrawn,—the voluntary income of industry and kindness, the foundation of our peculiar independence. What is the gain? A long bill, which may be put thus:—one-sixth of our population, (that is, three millions,) are to be at school.†

£1† per annum for each child gives (s. 33). £3,000,000

Repairs of school-buildings, say, yearly (s. 39) 500,000

\* Ss. 37, 38, 39, 40.

† Sir J. Pakington's calculation is, in fact, four millions and a-half. I don't take advantage of this to swell the Bill, because every practical man sees the error of such a calculation.

‡ By the Bill, each child is to cost 5*d.* weekly, and 4*d.* if a girl.



Expenses of voting, printing, clerks, &c.	
(ss. 4, 6, 9, 11, 17), say	500,000

Yearly	4,000,000
--------	-----------

Original outlay of building new schools,\*

say 300 <i>l</i> . for a school of 100 children	£9,000,000
---	------------

In fact, the EDUCATION-RATE simply lays a second poor-rate on the over-burdened shoulders of householders in towns and yeomen in the country; and for this they gain nothing,—no abatement of ignorance, no decrease of crime.

This is the first result.

2d. The next result is more serious: it poisons and paralyzes the quality of education.

On the main object of education, you will, I think, agree with me, whether it is the education of our own children or of the poor. We don't aim at making children in school philosophers or pedants. We want to give them a taste for knowledge and a love of it; once acquired in youth, they are pursued in life. There is one thing more: we seek to give them, by early training, the priceless habit of self-control.

(1.) Now trace the effects of the Bill, and first its intellectual: our schools are inferior; the Bill is to raise them. In section 24 it prescribes a course of study. There is not a parish-school in England in which the same course is not prescribed. I have already said why it is not followed,†—boys run away from school. What can the best master teach an illiterate child in eighteen months? To read,—hardly that, little more. The course of study is extended abroad, because children remain six or eight years at school; it is restricted here, because we can't keep the children in school. But nothing in the Bill

\* This is a very low estimate.

† The Spitalfields school has a most admirable master and the supply of every requisite which benevolent wealth can provide, and yet the children do not remain at school, on an average, above eighteen months.



tends to enlarge it; it is not children's pence that are the obstacle; whenever education is desired, these are provided. Sir J. Pakington admits that, in the last thirty years, we have doubled the amount of education in England; one in seventeen was our educated proportion in 1818; one in eight in 1851. The improvement in quality is quite as remarkable. The Reports of the Inspectors abundantly attest this. Forty training schools, which have cost above 350,000*l.*, and which now instruct 1,800 pupils, with a yearly income of 44,000*l.*; 2,700 certificated teachers, attest the change.

It is the popular desire for education that is wanting; and so far from that desire being stimulated by gratuitous education, it is found, as a matter of fact, that such education is less valued.

(2.) But I pass to a more important matter, the effects of the Bill on the *moral quality* of education,—that which influences the dispositions and character of the boy.

This, the true work of education, has been rightly understood in England. In this lies our difference from the Continent. We have seen, that to give a few facts to a child was a small thing; to give dispositions was to give character and happiness. Many a boy leaves school with little knowledge, but with tastes and habits which have developed his character. Our gallant soldiers have shown this; their patience, energy, and forbearance, are qualities characteristic of the English people, and wrought into their minds by good training of a good school.

This characteristic our schools derive from their peculiar *management*. Sir J. Pakington speaks of religion, and compares the religion in schools abroad with that which is given here. The two things are different. Foreign schools teach religion as a branch of knowledge. But boys are not made good by learning sacred history, or getting by heart a creed. What they want are motives to act, and powers of self-restraint. These can only be gained, through practical religion, religion taught by men who



reverence it. I don't say that this is done always in our English schools, but it is aimed at; it is the governing idea, and it gives our schools their moral power. Why we have it, and foreign schools have it not, is, that the latter are managed by men indifferent to religion; our schools are managed by those who, whether laymen or ministers of religion, have this object in view.

This is the strength of English education. Measure it by its studies, it is defective; test it by its power of moral influence, it is eminent. It is this which produces, in thousands of our people, virtuous hearts and happy homes.

If this Bill shall pass, this great work is at an end. Trace this for a moment: if I want aid from the rate for my school, I must take it on these terms:—*Not to teach any distinctive religious creed to any child whose parents object to it.* (Ss. 25 and 50.)

On these terms no man, who has the faintest sense of religion or philanthropy, will take the aid.

In the first place, they cannot take it legally. You have seen, doubtless, the Petition from the National Society, signed by the influential name of the Primate. There is not a trust-deed, which binds our schools to that Society, or any other; not one, which the Privy Council has called into existence, which does not bind the managers, in the very teeth of this provision, *to teach a distinctive religious creed to every child in their schools.* They are not bound to the Church Catechism; that is a matter of choice: that question, in the Education Society with which I am connected, we leave to the judgment of local managers. But to teach religion fully, effectually, and to all, all are bound, by deed, precedent, and law; therefore all our schools, Church or Dissenting, are struck off, and flung aside by this provision. But suppose the schools have no deeds, no connexion with Church or Dissent, no management clauses, the result is the same. There is not a school in England, worth anything, which could take aid from the rate. There is an obligation higher than



deeds, and more onerous than law—the obligation of the conscience. Would you train childhood to virtue? The Word of God says, train it by religion. We must have this Christian faith in our schools in all its fulness. No true-hearted man will consent to teach a school on any other terms.

This Bill, then, proclaims to every one in England, who cares for truth and youth, that his school shall receive no aid from these local funds. The schools of the sceptic, and the reckless may be helped—not these: no, not one of them. Thus the whole of the 20,000 schools,\* which have grown up through voluntary effort, are by this Bill cut off and destroyed. The real end of the Bill will then be attained: *Free-schools will be established, in which there is no provision even for the teaching of the Bible*; no training of morals, no lessons of virtue; in which the teacher is named by those with whom no minister of religion can associate;† who will show us, the characteristics of Germany, Socialist doctrines, and an infidel life, and give us its fruits, the teacher's arrogance, and a demoralized people.

But are France and Germany the only specimens of this? The case of the United States is even more pointed.

Mr. Tremenhoe inquired into this very point, the effect of the Free-schools of the States on the morals of the people. Thus he sums up:—‡ “To a considerable number, therefore, of the children under education in the public schools, in the places above referred to (including a tolerably wide range, and much diversity of character),

\* These schools would either be dropped altogether at once, or would languish on for a few years in a hopeless struggle. Or as would be the case in towns, managers would convert them into schools for the middle classes, which pay well, and would abandon, as no longer attainable, the education of the poor.

† None could sit on a Board for the promotion of a secular system of education.

‡ “Tremenhoe's Notes on Public Subjects,” p. 27.



the education actually imparted will be almost purely secular;\* for the giving five or ten minutes daily to reading a few verses of the Bible, without comment, cannot be called, in reference to the education of youth, religious instruction; nor can its place be supplied by the mere moral teaching which is enjoined, and practised, as far as opportunity offers, and the ability of the teacher extends to give it. And in reference to all who do not attend the Sunday-schools, it may be added, without, I think, much fear of contradiction, and without in the least degree undervaluing the zealous and self-denying efforts of the immense number of voluntary Sunday-school teachers throughout the land, both here and in the United States, that the religious instruction given by persons unaccustomed to teach, and usually not trained to deal with the subject in the manner most capable of presenting it in all its parts to the minds of children, cannot be so precise and effectual as when it forms, as in all our Church and denominational schools, a prominent part of the business of the school for an hour of every day in the week."

But the case of the New England States is even more decisive; there Puritan habits might be supposed to correct the defects of the law. Yet here is the testimony of an unexceptionable witness, Dr. Edson, the Rector of St. Anne's Church, Lowell:—"My experience, of near thirty years, as a pastor, has, I am sorry to say, forced upon me the painful conviction, that *our public school system has undermined already, among our population, to a great extent, the doctrines and principles of Christianity.* I perceive, also, its effects distinctly in the modes of thought and action of the young people who flow into Lowell from the neighbouring States, and, in fact, supply the demand for labour that is constant here. I find, in my frequent intercourse with them, that they possess a knowledge of none, or nearly none, of the distinctive principles of the

\* Sir J. Pakington's Bill does not even provide for this. Lord J. Russell's Bill does, but the provisions are in all such cases, as in America, inept and worthless.



Christian faith, and that many are in a state of mind beyond that of mere indifference, though not precisely in that of those imbued with the principles of the French and German schools of infidelity. I find in them a considerable indifference as to what sect they may belong to, thinking all religions alike, and generally showing a great ignorance of the Bible, which they profess to take as their guide. I find many not only unable to repeat any of the Ten Commandments, but entirely unaware of there being any Ten Commandments at all. I find them generally well grounded in the ordinary elements of what is called common education, and clever and acute as to all worldly matters that concern them, but very lax in their notions of moral obligation and duty, and indisposed to submit to any authority or control whatever, even from a very early age." . . . . .

The closing words of this witness deserve your notice: "Allow me to say, that it gives me the greatest satisfaction to learn that in England you are alive to these dangers. I earnestly pray that you may not fall into them." I leave on your mind these sketches of the effects of free secular schools.

III. But you may say that I have admitted many of the evils which this Bill professes to meet—want of schools—and of resources for them. What is the remedy? At all events, if my view is just, the Bill supplies none, and it aggravates our evils.

But if we seek a remedy, a simple one lies before us: keep the income that we have; don't harass the rate-payers with a needless burden; don't ask the public exchequer for two millions, where one is ample. Give to each school, guaranteed by public inspection, the yearly aid it requires; take this aid from the public Exchequer, *by a capitation rate for each child*; let *two-thirds of the cost* of erection of school-houses be supplied, in destitute districts, from the public grant. We thus gain securities for good teaching, a settled income for the teacher, yearly maintenance for the schools—relief to local parties, and



permanence to educational effort. We give in proportion to what we get : the education supplied is effective ; nor do we wrest the management from those who now hold it, who have earned it by disinterested effort, and deserve it by public confidence. Above all, we leave undisturbed religious belief, and respect the Christian conscience.

If, in any parish, schools are not found, let this want be made known ; if, in any district, any section differing from the religion of the majority, are excluded from school, let these cases be published. I am so certain that the good sense of Managers, in the one case, and the liberality of the public in the other, will meet the bulk of these cases, that the remainder will be easily dealt with. No doubt there are other points required—but which this Bill does not approach. But it is not my place to dwell on these.

What I have done is to prove the inefficiency and the mischief of this Bill. I have not touched its details ; I have not dwelt on its secondary evils—its enhancing the powers of the Committee of Privy Council—its assigning to them the impracticable duty of arbitrating between contending sects (s. 50) ; its injustice in making the school suffer for the truancy of the child (s. 34) ; its burden of four millions, yearly, thrown on a burdened people ; its weakness as a permissive Bill ; its more grievous defect in not constraining reckless parents. All these points I pass by.

The one great evil stares us in the face. What have our people done that we should inflict upon them, by the education which this Bill entails, an enormous wrong ? Surely they deserve the care of Parliament. Their habits of order, their submission to the laws, give them an irresistible claim. Sons of labour, they have not assailed the rights of property, nor do they grudge to men of wealth their advantages ; nor that special advantage we have of devoting eighteen years to the education of our children. The poor cannot do this ; they can hardly rescue, from the



claims of labour, two or three interrupted years. If, during that time, their child is not taught truth, and trained in virtue, he has no other chance. Yet of these advantages this Bill would deprive them. It would destroy the schools, which have hitherto given them this instruction, to substitute other schools, from which truth and moral training are banished.

Interpose, I intreat you, and arrest this Bill. I do not wonder that the Secularists hail it; it is welcome to all who defy the religious sentiment of the people of England. But for the sake of the people, in the interests of Christianity and virtue, I ask you to oppose it. This is a question too grave for personal considerations, and transcending the interests of party. One characteristic belongs to England: the high character of a free people. That character grows out of the Christianity of our schools. Do not rob us of this.

I remain, DEAR WALPOLE,

Very faithfully yours,

J. C. COLQUHOUN.

LONDON, *April 19, 1855.*