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THE

ADVANTAGES OF EDUCATION.

AN ADDRESS

DELIVERED BY THE

Right Hon. W. E. Gladstone, M.P.,

ON THE OCCASION OF HIS

VISIT TO DENTON,

OCTOBER, 1853.

'Tis Education forms the common mind;
Just as the twig is bent the tree's inclined.

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The Advantages of Education.

On Thursday, October 13th, 1853, the Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Manchester (Dr. J. Prince Lee) consecrated Christ Church, Denton, after which the sermon was preached by the Bishop of Oxford (Dr. Samuel Wilberforce) to a crowded congregation.

At the collation which was served afterwards in the Schoolroom, the Earl of Wilton presided, and the meeting was addressed by the Bishop of Manchester, the Bishop of Oxford, the Rev. Richard Greswell, and Mr. W. E. Gladstone, Chancellor of the Exchequer.

In the afternoon, immediately on the conclusion of Mr. Gladstone's remarks, the company, including Sir Stephen Glynne and others, quitted the Christ Church School and proceeded through the township, calling at the ancient church of St. Lawrence, of which the late Rev. William Parr Greswell was for many years incumbent, to the site given by Mr. Jacob Fletcher Fletcher (only surviving son of the late Ellis Fletcher, Esq., of Clifton House) for the erection of new schools for St. Lawrence's Church, or as it is more commonly called "Denton Old Chapel.". The site is admirably chosen

for the townships of Denton and Haughton, being part of a field on the Grange Farm occupied by Mr. James Lever.*

A very large number of the inhabitants and others had assembled, and the usual formalities of laying the stone were performed amidst loud cheers by Miss Fletcher (who has not yet reached her eighth year). The Right Rev. the Lord Bishop of Oxford very briefly addressed the assemblage, and he then engaged in prayer, beseeching the audience to join with him heartily and faithfully, and not as a matter of form.

Mr. Gladstone afterwards mounted the stone and said: "My friends, although I am reluctant to speak words among you which I am afraid must detract from the solemnity of those to which we have just been listening, and in which I believe we have sincerely joined, yet it is matter of no small pleasure to me to assure you that I rejoice to meet this great assemblage of the inhabitants of this vicinity, assembled for the purpose that has now brought us together. I interpret your presence here to-day, my friends, in more ways than one. I think that you have intended by coming here to manifest a sentiment of respect and gratitude towards the excellent person through whose exertions and whose efforts, mainly, these schools are to be built,

* Reprinted for circulation among the young people of Denton and Haughton, by Ellis Lever, of Bowdon, who, as a youth living on his father's farm, had the privilege of listening to the eloquent address of Mr. Gladstone, and to whom he is deeply indebted for the lessons conveyed in that impressive speech.

and are to be, we trust, a fountain of blessing to your descendants through many generations—(hear, hear)—but, besides paying a mark of respect to him, I am confident that your presence here shows, in truth, that you have little need to be exhorted on the subject of the advantages of education. Thank God, the time has gone by when that question was an unopened question for the people of England; the time has gone by when it is necessary to argue and contend in order to convince men of the duty of multiplying the means of education. In every part of England—and most of all, perhaps, in that part where we now stand, the inhabitants of which have been blessed by Providence with gifts inferior to those of no population in the world—it can be little necessary to dilate upon this subject. If, indeed, we did want a lesson upon the subject of the blessings of education, we might reflect upon the case of our more northern neighbours. We well know that that portion of our island which is called Scotland is inferior to most countries of the globe—greatly inferior to England, mainly inferior to most parts of the continent of Europe—in the fertility of its soil and in the aids which a genial climate gives, for bringing the kindly products of the earth to maturity. But that country, bristling with rough and shaggy mountains—that country, poor as it is comparatively in those original materials on which the first industry of man sets to work—has taken a place among nations second to no other; and even among Englishmen, Scotchmen are not found to fall

behind in any gift, in the capacity for any work, or any vocation of life. (Hear, hear.) It was not so in former times. If we go back 300 or 400 years, they were then a nation in the rear of Europe; they are now in the front, in the van. If we ask, what is the reason of this great, this astonishing change, in their relative position, I believe the reason is to be found in the one great advantage they have now enjoyed for more than two centuries, in a degree far beyond any other country—far beyond England—namely this advantage, that every labouring man in Scotland has had the means of sending his children to a school where they would receive the benefits and blessings of education. (Hear, hear.) And the consequence of that has been, that there is an appreciation of those blessings among the people of Scotland, continually growing with the enjoyment of them. (Applause.) What has been said, in an evil sense, of the craving for wealth may with truth be said, in a good sense, of education—that the appetite for education grows with that on which it feeds. (Applause.) That appetite has now sprung up among ourselves. Every man who hears me knows that in the pursuit he has to carry on, the command of knowledge is greatly available to the development of his purposes and his capacities, and to the attainment of success. He knows more than this, more than that the blessing of education helps him in his trade, his art, his vocation, whatever it may be; he knows likewise that education, if it be rightly given and rightly used, helps

him to fulfil those great responsibilities which rest upon him, those responsibilities which belong to him in respect of wants and needs higher than the wants and needs of the body, that it helps him to cultivate and train his mind—helps him to open out and to use the various gifts with which it has pleased Providence to endow us, whose beneficent will it was that our views, our thoughts, and our desires should not be limited to the narrow scope of visible objects, and to a few short years in this vale of uncertainty and trouble, but that we should pierce beyond the curtain that encloses us with the objects of sight—that we should pierce beyond the bound which death affixes to our temporal existence—that what we do not see here should be the object of our cares, and that the life we are to lead in another world should be the main objects of our hopes. (Hear, hear.) These are the subjects to which education introduces us. Those things are now well understood, and there cannot be any more conclusive proof that they are understood than is afforded by the masses gathered around us to-day, when meeting to perform this simple unostentatious but most important work of laying the foundation stone of schools for the township of Denton. There are only two other remarks I will venture to make to you. My reverend friend (Mr. Greswell) who is the main instrument in this happy and beneficent work, has no sooner completed one beneficent work than he begins another. Is not that a lesson for us all ? (Hear, hear.) Does not that teach us all that our motto as men must be 'Onward'—that there

is nothing we can do in this world upon which we ought to rest—that our possessions, our distinctions, be they what they may, are in fact not to gloat upon, not to sleep upon—(hear, hear)—but as incentives to further honourable exertion—as helps to advancement in the path of duty. (Applause.) That is the lesson which we learn from seeing that our friend makes the achievement, the consummation, of one work, not an occasion for indolent repose, but an occasion for summoning up his energies to undertake the commencement of another. (Applause.) One other word, yet. What is the work that he has seen consummated to-day? It is the consecration of a church. What is the work of which he undertakes the commencement to-day? It is the foundation of a school. The Church is to us the symbol of spiritual truths and powers; the school is to us the symbol of a varied instruction, founded and based upon religion—(hear, hear)—but likewise extended to those branches of knowledge which bear directly upon the performance of our common duties in our trades and vocations. (Hear, hear.) And what lesson do we learn from the happy union we have seen to-day, between the consecration of the Church and the foundation of the school? We learn this. That there is no natural opposition between the training and cultivation of the human intellect, and the offering up of the soul and body of man, of all his powers, of all he can have, and all he can do, to God his Maker, from whom he has received them. On the contrary, that there is the closest and the happiest

harmony between the two,—that he commits a profanation against God and against human nature who would attempt to disown them—that where the truths of the Christian faith are fully taught and rightly received, there will you best and most faithfully pursue the work of that temporal and secular training which is the specific object of the school. Those are the truths that we learn from the union which my reverend friend has been enabled to present to day, between the two objects. And, gentlemen, I am sure that there is not one of us who does not heartily re-echo, with all the powers of his soul, those prayers which have been offered up to heaven, that it would please the Almighty to bless this great work—to bless it in its beginning, in its continuance. I would not say in its termination, for I trust that it will never end. I believe, on the contrary, that every blessing which this neighbourhood derives from these schools, will have within itself a multiplying power, and that each generation, as it grows up to manhood, will derive from them, if they be conducted in the spirit in which they have been founded, a continually growing power, both to discharge aright duties that belong to man upon this earth, and likewise to lay up for themselves in heaven a better treasure than any that this earth can confer." (Applause.)

Three cheers were given for the Queen, for Mr. Gladstone, and for the Bishop of Oxford, and the assemblage then dispersed.

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