

THE TEACHING OF CIVIC DUTY.*

JAMES BRYCE IN THE "CONTEMPORARY REVIEW."

"IN Britain, as in most countries, each step in the extension of popular education has been due to some antecedent political change. Men have not received the franchise because they had been already sufficiently instructed to exercise it, but have been provided with the means of instruction after the franchise had been given, partly because they used their new power to demand those means, partly because it was felt that the education of the citizens had become more directly and pressingly needful for the welfare of the State. It was soon after the establishment of Household Suffrage in the boroughs by the Act of 1867 that Mr. Robert Lowe delivered his famous counsel, 'Educate your masters.' It was under the impulse of that Act that the reformed Parliament of 1868 passed the Elementary Education Act of 1870. In 1884 and 1885 we had in the County Franchise and Redistribution Acts two still more sweeping measures of Parliamentary reform, by which government of the country was fully, and as all are agreed, irrevocably committed to the hands of the masses of the people. That great change has been followed, as was to be expected, by a general stirring of the popular mind, by a desire to use the power thus gained to carry sweeping legislative measures and effect large changes in the social and economic sphere. Here, as in other countries, the air is now full of new schemes. Efforts are made in all directions; cries are heard from all quarters. The need for knowledge

and judgment among the voters who have become the rulers is even clearer and stronger than it was in 1870.

"Strangely enough, Mr. Robert Lowe, whose phrase became famous as the expression of what everyone had begun to feel, was of all the British statesmen who have had to deal with education, the one who, despite his literary culture and his brilliant natural gifts, took the narrowest views of what education ought to be and might effect. His Revised Code did much to tie the teacher down to merely elementary subjects and to deprive him of due opportunities to train and widen the pupils' minds, and of the motives likely to stimulate him to use those opportunities. For the kind of training that would help him to bear his part in governing it made no provision. To teach reading, writing and arithmetic, became nearly the whole of the teacher's function; and it is only by slow degrees that our schools have reverted to that larger and freer, but not yet sufficiently large and free, system under which they are now at work. It was a grave error to lay so much stress on these mere mechanical instruments of education, reading and writing, and to neglect the objects they were to serve. Reading and writing are no more education than the lane that leads into a field is the field itself; and you might as well try to feed a flock of sheep on the flints of the lane as send children away from school and hold them to have been prepared for their life's work with the mere possession of reading and writing. It is not the power of reading that makes the difference between one man and another so much as the being taught what to read and how

* Abridged from an address delivered to the London Association of Head Masters of Public Elementary Schools, December, 1892.