

## THE PROGRESS OF EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

MR. FRANCIS PEEK, in an article under the above title in the *Contemporary* for August, gives some interesting facts and statistics illustrative of the great advance made in elementary education in England during the last half century, a few extracts from which may be of interest to our readers. "The earliest movement towards a system of national education," he says, "may, perhaps, be said to date from 1832, or about the time of the passing of the Reform Bill. The position of the country at that time is, perhaps, fairly represented by the City of Manchester, where, out of a population of 200,000 only 11,000 scholars were found attending school, although the number of children needing education was over 34,000. Thus about two-thirds of the population were growing up in entire ignorance." The quality, too, of the education that was given, as described in a report of the Statistical Society in 1834, was miserable in the extreme. Half of the schools were the so-called "Dame-Schools," kept by females or old men "whose only qualification for this employment seemed to be their unfitness for every other." Generally these schools were held "in very dirty and unwholesome rooms, frequently in close, damp cellars, or old, dilapidated garrets;" most of them had but two or three books among all the scholars, while the terms of tuition varied from twopence to sevenpence per week. Nor were the common day-schools, "kept by private adventure teachers," much better.

Further evidence of the deplorable state of educational affairs is found in

the fact that in 1838 only nine out of every hundred criminals were able to read and write, their leading characteristic being "a heathenish ignorance of the simplest truths of religion and morality."

The Government at last took the matter in hand, making grants in aid of education and contributing towards the building of schools. By 1868 "almost every parish church had a school attached to it, while various Nonconformist bodies, especially the Wesleyans, were also actively providing for the education of the poor." In 1870 Mr. Forster's Elementary Education Act was passed, providing that every child should receive a certain amount of education, and making parents responsible for their children's attendance at school.

At the time of the passing of this act, Mr. Forster stated that voluntary effort had provided 11,000 day and 2,000 night schools. There were 1,450,000 children on the registers, the attendance being very irregular, and averaging only 1,000,000. "Only two-fifths of the children between the ages of six and ten years, and only one-third of those between the ages of ten and twelve, were receiving even this insufficient amount of education;" the standard being very low in the inspected schools, and probably lower in those uninspected. "In Birmingham, Leeds, Liverpool and Manchester, with an estimated population of 1,500,000, the average attendance in elementary schools was 124,000," while in four such towns in Germany 250,000 children would have been found attending schools daily for eight