

NOTES ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS

A letter lately published in the *Gazette* again brings up the subject of Higher Education. There are two distinct questions to be considered in regard to this matter. First of all: Is it the duty of the State to provide Higher Education? and secondly, supposing this to be granted: Of what is the Higher Education to consist? The correspondent concerned himself with the second of these questions, directing all his resources of argument and ridicule against the study of Classics. Without begging the question, as to the former, which we do not by any means suppose to be axiomatic, we will for the present attend solely to the simpler matter of whether the Classics should form a necessary part of Higher Education.

In a series of Propositions submitted by Dr. Robins to the Quebec Convention of Teachers, he based his claim for Higher Education upon the duty of the State to provide a training, not only for the mass of toilers, but for those who will direct the toilers. Upon this basis it will be best to discuss the question of the Classics. None will be found to deny the necessity of Latin as a part of such education in the past. It was the language of International transactions, to some extent also of Law and of Theology. Comments upon most learned books were written in Latin, which was useful as a common tongue, as it is at the present moment in such subjects as Chemistry and Botany. Few would contend that ignorance of the Classics unfits a man for the position of clergyman or doctor; and but a small proportion of those who actually receive Higher Education are destined for a Profession. The greater number go into business, where classical knowledge is absolutely useless. Nor is any deep knowledge of Latin requisite to enable a student to master the Latin terminology of the sciences. Lord Chesterfield is no mean authority as an educator; few men have spent more thought on the subject than he did. Yet his reason for requiring his son to study the classics was as follows: "Classical knowledge, that is, Greek and Latin, is absolutely necessary for everybody; *because everybody has agreed to think and call it so.*" Thus even in his day the Classics were looked upon as a mere accomplishment, and the conditions of education are vastly different here and now from what they were in England during the last century.