

tion to their report. They, speaking to an English audience, were able to a certain extent to give it the go-by, and, in their report, to treat public school education as "a phrase which is popular and sufficiently intelligible," without attempting to define its precise meaning. But this, at any rate, is not so in America, and their example cannot be followed in these pages. What gives the subject such interest as it possesses for Americans is the almost entire absence, even in the Eastern States, of educational constitutions answering the purposes which the nine schools, and their modern rivals, serve in the United Kingdom. However democratic a nation may be in spirit and character, and in its political and social constitution and organization, the time must come when it will breed a gentry, leisure class, aristocracy, call it by what name you will, as certainly (as Mr. Emerson has said) as it will breed women. The more vigorous and prosperous the nation, the sooner will the class arise; and the more healthy the class, the more certain will it be to insist on the highest culture attainable for its boys and girls.

But the highest culture cannot be brought to every man's door. However good your common-school system may be, you cannot have a thoroughly satisfactory school, so far as instruction is concerned, except in great centres of population; and, in those great centres, though the school-work and teaching may be as good as you require, the conditions of life are not the best for boys (leaving girls out of the question) from twelve to eighteen, the years between the home school-room and the university. Besides, a large portion of the class in question live too far from the great centres to make use of the best common schools, without sending their boys for long periods from under their own roofs. Some system of boarding-schools, therefore, must be established; and the problem is how it can be best done, what conditions of government, discipline, and instruction, will suit the national character and habits best, and turn out the kind of men whom the commonwealth needs most.

That the English public-school system, with all its faults and shortcomings, has done this work for the old country in a fairly satisfactory manner is an unquestioned fact, and might perhaps be safely assumed here. We prefer, however, to cite the highest testimony on the point. The Public Schools' Commissioners in their report, after a very searching criticism on many parts of the system, confess the obligations which England owes to the schools, "which, were their defects far greater than they are, would entitle them to be treated with the utmost tenderness and respect;" and, after speaking

of the service they have rendered in the maintenance of classical literature as the staple of English education, "a service which far outweighs the error of having clung to these studies too exclusively," continues: "A second and greater service still is the creation of a system of government and discipline for boys, the excellence of which has been universally recognized, and which is admitted to have been most important in its influence on national character and social life. It is not easy to estimate the degree in which the English people are indebted to these schools for the qualities on which they pique themselves most—for their capacity to govern others and control themselves, their aptitude for combining freedom with order, their public spirit, their vigour and manliness of character, their strong but not slavish respect for public opinion, their love of healthy sport and exercise. These schools have been the chief nurseries of our statesmen; in them, and in schools modelled after them, men of all the various classes that make up English society, destined for every profession and career, have been brought up on the footing of social equality, and have contracted the most enduring friendships and some of the ruling habits of their lives; and they have had perhaps the largest share in moulding the character of an English gentleman. The system, like other systems, has had its blots and imperfections; there have been times when it was at once too lax and too severe—severe in its punishments, but lax in superintendence and prevention; it has permitted if not encouraged some roughness, tyranny, and license, but these defects have not seriously marred its wholesome operation; and it appears to have gradually purged itself of them in a remarkable degree. Its growth, no doubt, is due to those very qualities in our national character which it has itself contributed to form, but justice bids us add that it is due likewise to the wise munificence which founded the institutions under whose shelter it has been enabled to take root, and to the good sense, temper, and ability of the men by whom, for successive generations, they have been governed."

In the case of nations of the same race, and so nearly identical in character and habits as the people of the United States and the English, it may reasonably be assumed that a system which has borne such fruits in the one is at least worth the careful examination of the other. We purpose, therefore, in a future number to recur to the subject, and consider what is of the essence and what are the mere accidents of the English public-school system, in the assurance that, whether it may or may not approve itself to the American people, an intelligent understand-