

THE EDUCATIONAL CUI BONO?

THIS question is often wrongly answered because it is misunderstood. It is, if not generally, at least very frequently, taken to mean, what is the use? or, in colloquial phrase, *what's the good*, of this or that? So put, it is a very easy question to raise, and equally difficult to answer. Let us take an example. Certain dead languages are taught in all the English public schools, and not only taught but made the staple of education. England is studded from one end to the other with grammar schools of ancient foundation, most of them dating as early as Edward VI. or Elizabeth, called grammar schools, because the basis of education as carried on in them was Latin and Greek grammar. Boys were then sent to school at about as early an age, say eight or nine, and remained about as long as they do now. No larger proportion of them probably pursued these studies at the universities, or in after life than at present; and yet that six years' training in the rudiments of language, progressing so far as to enable the pupil, by the time he left school, to construe an easy Latin or Greek author with tolerable readiness—such a training was deemed sufficient for the ordinary purposes of life. A lad would proceed thence, and take his place with credit and respectability in a merchant's office, or behind a tradesman's counter. With what a slender stock of attainments boys were, in the good days of old, entrusted more or less with the property and interests of other people, is horrible to contemplate. Boys were probably no better and no worse in themselves than they are now, and their Latin and Greek grammar, however intelligently mastered, was no palladium against the ordinary temptations incident to young lives between the ages of fourteen and twenty-one. Yet on the whole it may be doubted whether the adult male population were worse men of business or less honest citizens, more wanting in loyalty, or less under the influence of domestic virtues, than they are at this day. And yet there is so strong a *prima facie* case against the utility of such a foundation for practical life, that we have ourselves been often tempted to ask, what is the good of imbuing, or trying to imbue boys' minds, up to the age of fourteen or so, with a slight smattering of two languages, neither of which they will ever be called upon, or would ever be able to speak or write, and neither of which they will probably care to read? We want an answer which shall do more than satisfy the requirements of a few, and which shall, if possible, settle for the next generation of alumni a question which has been, in England especially, so terribly unsettled in this. One step towards settlement is to realize the difficulty of the position. Some ques-