

ences will remain ; but they will be found at a higher general level of progress : they will be less glaring in their contrast, less pernicious in their effects. Nay, further, is not the presence of greater difficulty a reason for greater effort, not for less, in order that this initial deficiency may be as far as possible removed ? It is those who have least of beneficial home and social influence that most require the best influences that school can bring to bear. The shorter the time available, the more parsimoniously should it be economised, the more judiciously ought it to be employed. The feebler the capacity, the more earnest and wise should be the effort to draw it forth and stimulate its growth. In this way, nowhere have I seen more skilful and ingenious teaching than in the School for Idiots at Earlswood ; and while I have watched the process with the deepest interest, I have been tempted almost to wish that the children of the poor were generally nearer to that condition, if only they could thus be saved from the stupefaction and stultification of dry, dull, dead routine, and by more intelligent teaching roused from the mental lethargy which too many schools do more to deepen and to perpetuate than to remove.

Restrictions on Education.

The restrictions which are *in limine* proposed in education rest mainly on three grounds :—1. Social rank ; 2. Professional calling ; 3. Sex. All these deserve some consideration. The first and second cannot be wholly separated, although, did a more liberal estimate of education commonly prevail, and were there a closer connexion between the elementary and the secondary schools of the nation, whereby merit might be promoted and ability encouraged, position in life would be less than now determined by the accident of birth, and the whole nation would reap the benefit of whatever genius or talent or faculty is now latent or stunted. In face of the many examples we have of eminence attained in spite of humble origin, it is strange that origin should be so commonly accepted as the sign and seal of destiny. But it may be questioned whether those very examples have not fostered the notion that naturally superior ability will always force its way to recognition—that therefore no special aid is needed ; nay, that talent might only be thwarted and encumbered by early help. But talent does not always force its way. Eminence is due in no small part to other characteristics than mere talent—to energy and self-reliance, and self-confidence, sometimes akin to arrogance, qualities not always conjoined with talent. And even where talent does unaided force its way, it is at a sacrifice of ill-directed labour, and with a penalty of oneness, which bear with them lasting regret. Besides, it is not, after all, the exceptional few, but the undistinguished many, that chiefly claim consideration ; to raise the whole class is a grander thing than to raise an individual here and there out of a class ; and and if even the humblest sphere is adorned and exalted and blessed by mental culture : if even the humblest duties are the better performed by enlightened intelligence and refined motive ; then it is to be deplored that any barrier should wilfully be introduced in the way of culture.

Minimum Education Theory.

This " minimum education " theory, as applied to the humbler classes, that is, to the bulk of the community, has a strong light thrown upon it if we consider the reasons used to justify the interference of the State with education, even to the extent of rendering it compulsory. We are told, and with truth, that an ignorant, uneducated, untrained people are likely to be a turbulent,

improvident, intemperate, unhealthy, and vicious people, a source of danger to the commonwealth, and a threat of ruin to the State. Drunkenness and crime, and pauperism and insanity, and disease in all forms, are the natural results of neglect of education. But where education does not exist, the want of it is not felt ; it is even distasteful in proportion to the need for it ; the greater the need, the less the desire, the stronger the dislike. The State must, therefore, put forth its power, sweep all children into school, and compel them under heavy penalties on the parents, if not themselves, to receive—what ? a *minimum* of education ! To read after a fashion, to write, and to do a little ciphering, these being the results that are to be paid for, all else and all beyond being not forbidden indeed, but expected to come, if at all, of themselves. But will reading and writing, even with ciphering to boot, do much to cure or to prevent the great social evils which call for and justify the interference of the State ? Truly, a most lame and impotent conclusion ! It is monstrous to speak of reading and writing as the *basis* or *bases* of education, or even as its indispensable preliminaries. At best they are but among its instruments, though they may indeed become its substitutes. A mind trained to observe nature, animate and inanimate, to watch ordinary social arrangements, to classify what it has observed, to trace the relation of cause and effect, to reflect on consequences of different kinds of action, to guide conduct accordingly, to forego immediate enjoyment for the sake of greater good to self or others, may be produced without reading or writing, and is a far nobler product of education than the mere power to read and write, however neat the penmanship, or correct the pronunciation, or perfect the spelling. No doubt it will be said that there is no incompatibility between these two sets of things : that neither needs exclude, or ought to exclude, the other. True. Nevertheless, through prejudice grown inveterate, it is everywhere assumed that the less includes the greater, and that the acquisition of two largely mechanical processes must, or is likely to be, followed by the desired intellectual and moral results, though the word results is here singularly out of place.

Education too Literary.

This strange exaggeration of the efficacy of reading and writing is an inheritance from the still dominant bookishness of education. In early life, time spent not in reading books, but original observation and experiment, has too long been viewed as wasted in idleness. A book in always interposed between the eye and the object to be observed, between the mind and the subject to be studied. A learned man is a man " well read," even though he may (as has been remarked) have put so many books into his head that his brain has no room to move. If you travel in Switzerland, you see hosts of tourists, male and female, far more intent on their guidebooks than on the scenery. If you go to the theatre, you see many busy reading the book of the play instead of following closely the movements on the stage. A dispute arises about the nightingale, whether it sings by day or only at night, as its name implies. Forthwith the disputants do not go out into the woods and fields to listen for themselves whether or not the nightingale really sings by day. They fill successive Numbers of the " Classical Journal " with quotations from Greek and Latin writers of poetry or prose, who have written this or that about the nightingale. All this is but a consequence of the preponderating literary character of general education, to which I have already referred ; and so it is assumed that the power to read will develop the love of reading, and ability to understand and appreciate what is read, to choose only what is worthy, and reject what is unworthy in literature, will