

and thus to express his strong sense of the great importance in this community of Birmingham of the teachers in all your schools. Now, I am always sure to say something that some people do not approve when I have to speak to a great number of my fellow-countrymen. I shall be very careful to-night not to give any reasonable offence to any one; but I was going to say that I am not sure that it would have been possible for the Mayor to have sent out cards of invitation to five, or six, or seven hundred persons of any other class in Birmingham where he would have had so much that is important to the present and the future of this great community. Suppose he had brought 500 or so of the most skilful artisans—and no town in England, or perhaps in the world, could find 500 men superior to your best 500; but then these 500 work merely in the dead metal; they make something beautiful for ornament and valuable for use, but it is made and it is done with, and it is subject to no further change: it has no special influence upon the future. But if he had taken another class and he had sent for all the ministers of religion—ministers of the Established Church and of the Nonconformist bodies—not for the same number—there are not, probably, so many in the town—but if he had had so many, I venture to say that even they are not so important in a community like this as are the teachers whom I am now permitted to address. It has always been a subject, not of wonder, but of grief, that I have been compelled to believe that there is hardly any effort—so great effort—in any direction with so little result as the effort that is made by the ministers and teachers of religion. Ministers of religion have to speak mainly to, and teach, adults. They have a material that is not plastic and upon which they can make little impression! I think there is hardly anything more to be lamented, to feel more sorrowful about, than the knowledge that many men should work hard as ministers of religion and produce so little effect upon those among whom they minister. The teachers in your schools are in an entirely different position. They have a plastic material on which they

are able to impress their minds and their sentiments, and there is no doubt whatever, that, though that plastic material may be moved and worked and impressed for evil as well as for good, seeing that, I hope, the great mass of the teaching in all our schools tends infinitely more to good than evil, we may expect that they may make an impression of lasting benefit upon the young minds with which they constantly come in contact. Now, I must make another observation, and that is with regard to what we mean by education. It is not books alone. It is not what they call the "three r's." If you want a simple, a plain education, reading, writing and arithmetic, those things are very good, and for the bulk of men they are sufficient for their work in life. It is not even classics and mathematics, of which, in my day, when I was young, I knew nothing, and of which I have not acquired any knowledge since. I regard what are called classics—that is, the ancient languages of Greece and Rome—as rather luxuries than anything else. It is a great luxury to know anything that is good and innocent. It is a great luxury to know a great deal of the past, not that it makes you more powerful to do much, but it gives a great pleasure to the person who knows, and I do not believe myself that there is anything in the way of wisdom which is to be attained in any of the books of the old languages which at this moment may not be equally attained in the books of our own literature. Therefore, I think a man may be as great a man, and as good a man, and as wise a man, knowing only his own language and the wisdom that is enshrined in it, as if he knew all the Latin and Greek books that have ever been written. But now, I say, there is another sort of education beyond that of books. I think Milton describes this sentiment in speaking of some ancient people or person; he speaks of him as deep-versed in books and shallow in himself; and there is no doubt that there are people who know almost everything that can be known in the library, and yet can hardly make their way from one street to another. But what I want to say, and I will not take up your time many mo-