

that no education can be sound which does not rest on religious instruction, and that religious truth is too sacred to be modified and tampered with, even in its minutest deductions, for the sake of procuring a general agreement. [Much cheering.] Gentlemen, if these differences were to have been discussed here to-day, I should not have been able to respond to your invitation to take the chair, as I should have thought it inconsistent with the position which I occupy and with the duty which I owe to the Queen and the country at large. I see those here before me who have taken a leading part in these important discussions, and I am happy to meet them upon a neutral ground; happy to find that there is a neutral ground upon which their varied talents and abilities can be brought to bear in communion upon the common object; and proud and grateful to them that they should have allowed me to preside over them for the purpose of working together in the common vineyard. I feel certain that the greatest benefit must arise to the cause we have all so much at heart by the mere free exchange of your thoughts and various experience. You may well be proud, gentlemen, of the results hitherto achieved by your rival efforts, and may point to the fact that, since the beginning of the century, while the population has doubled itself, the number of schools both public and private has been multiplied 14 times. In 1801, there were in England and Wales, of public schools, 2,876; of private schools, 487—total, 3,363. In 1851 [the year of the census] there were in England and Wales, of public schools, 15,518; of private schools, 30,524—total, 46,042; giving instruction in all to 2,144,378 scholars; of whom 1,422,982 belong to public schools, and 721,396 to the private schools. The rate of progress is further illustrated by statistics which show that in 1818 the proportion of day scholars to the population was 1 in 17; in 1833, 1 in 11; and in 1851, 1 in 8. These are great results, although I hope they may only be received as instalments of what has yet to be done. But what must be your feelings when you reflect upon the fact, the inquiry into which has brought us together, that this great boon thus obtained for the mass of the people, and which is freely offered to them, should have been only partially accepted, and, upon the whole, so insufficiently applied as to render its use almost valueless? [Hear.] We are told that the total population of England and Wales of children between the ages of three and fifteen being estimated at 4,908,686, only 2,046,848 attend school at all, while 2,861,848 receive no instruction whatever. At the same time an analysis of the scholars with reference to the length of time allowed for their school tuition shows that 42 per cent. of them have been at school less than one year, 22 per cent. during one year, 15 per cent. during two years, 9 per cent. during three years, 5 per cent. during four years, and 4 per cent. during five years. Therefore, out of the two millions of scholars alluded to, more than one million and a-half remain only two years at school. I leave it to you to judge what the results of such an education can be. I find further, that of these two millions of children attending school, only about 600,000 are above the age of nine. Gentlemen, these are startling facts, which render it evident that no extension of the means of education will be of any avail unless this evil, which lies at the root of the whole question, be removed, and that it is high time that the country should become thoroughly awake to its existence and prepared to meet it energetically. To impress this upon the public mind is the object of our conference. Public opinion is the powerful lever which in these days moves a people for good and for evil, and to public opinion we must therefore appeal if we would achieve any lasting and beneficial result. You, gentlemen, will richly add to the services which you have already rendered to the noble cause if you will prepare public opinion by your inquiry into this state of things, and by discussing in your sections the causes of it as well as the remedies which may lie within our reach. [Cheers.] This will be no easy matter; but even if your labors should not result in the adoption of any immediate practical steps, you will have done great good in preparing for them. It will probably happen that, in this instance as in most others, the cause which produces the evil will be more easily detected than its remedy, and yet a just appreciation of the former must ever be the first and essential condition for the discovery of the latter. You will probably trace the cause of our social condition to a state of ignorance and lethargic indifference on the subject among the parents generally; but the root of the evil will, I

suspect, also be found to extend into that field on which the political economist exercises his activity—I mean the labor market—demand and supply. [Hear.] To dissipate that ignorance and rouse from that lethargy may be difficult, but with the united and earnest efforts of all who are the friends of the working classes, it ought, after all, to be only a question of time. What measures can be brought to bear upon the other root of the evil is a more delicate question, and will require the nicest care in handling, for there you cut into the very quick of the working man's condition. His children are not only his offspring, to be reared for a future independent position, but they constitute part of his productive power and work with him for the staff of life; the daughters especially are the handmaids of the house, the assistants of the mother, the nurses of the younger children, the aged, and the sick. To deprive the laboring family of their help would be almost to paralyse its domestic existence. [Cheers.] On the other hand, carefully collected statistics reveal to us the fact that while about 600,000 children between the ages of three and fifteen are absent from school, but known to be employed, no less than 2,200,000 are not at school, whose absence cannot be traced to any ascertained employment or other legitimate cause. You will have to work, then, upon the minds and hearts of the parents, to place before them the irreparable mischief which they inflict upon those who are entrusted to their care by keeping them from the light of knowledge, to bring home to their conviction that it is their duty to exert themselves for their children's education, bearing in mind at the same time that it is not only their most sacred duty, but also their highest privilege. Unless they work with you, your work, our work, will be vain; but you will not fail, I feel sure, in obtaining their co-operation if you remind them of their duty to their God and Creator. [Cheers.] Our Heavenly Father, in his boundless goodness, has made his creatures that they should be happy, and in his wisdom has fitted his means to his ends, giving to all of them different qualities and faculties in using and developing which they fulfil their destiny, and, running their uniform course according to his prescription, they find that happiness which he has intended for them. Man alone is born into this world with faculties far nobler than the other creatures, reflecting the image of Him who has willed that there should be beings on earth to know and worship Him, but endowed with the power of self-determination, having reason given him for his guide. He can develop his faculties, place himself in harmony with his divine prototype, and attain that happiness which is offered to him on earth, to be completed hereafter in entire union with Him through the mercy of Christ. But he can also leave these faculties unimproved, and miss his mission on earth. He will then sink to the level of the lower animals, forfeit happiness, and separate from his God, whom he did not know how to find. [Much cheering.] Gentlemen, I say man has no right to do this, he has no right to throw off the task which is laid upon him for his happiness; it is his duty to fulfil his mission to the utmost of his power; but it is our duty, the duty of those whom Providence has removed from this awful struggle and placed beyond this fearful danger, manfully, unceasingly, and untiringly to aid by advice, assistance, and example, the great bulk of the people, who, without such aid, must almost inevitably succumb to the difficulty of their task. They will not cast from them the aiding hand, and the Almighty will bless the labors of those who work in his cause. [His Royal Highness concluded amid continued and enthusiastic cheering.]

The Rev. J. G. Lonsdale, the Secretary, then read the report, which was to a large extent an echo of His Royal Highness's speech. It also pointed out in detail the course which the business of the Conference was to take. It stated that there had been expended, since 1839, through local voluntary agency, aided by the State, a sum of more than £2,000,000 in the erection of new school buildings, &c., which had afforded the means of education to half a million more children than were previous to that time educated; that the sum of £1,250,000 was annually expended upon the working classes; and that, in addition to those amounts, large sums had been expended for building and maintaining schools, of which no precise return had been procured. The Secretary concluded by calling upon Lord Brougham, who, he said, had been for forty-six years taking an active part in educational movements, to address the meeting.