

unity throughout the country to the means and agencies which have been brought into operation within the last thirty years, with great benefit and advantage, but notwithstanding in a manner unequal, and, unfortunately, in many cases on the principle of giving the most help to those who are in the greatest need. The people of this country would not be disposed to swear away at a stroke that vast mass of educational organization which not only the general benevolence, but the Christian benevolence of the country in particular has put in action. Whilst we feel it most desirable to bring out the animating influences of religious zeal and love in aid of the cause of general culture, we feel that it is not less imperative to open, if we can, the advantage of general knowledge to the whole population without imposing a religious difficulty. The mode which has been suggested of effecting that object has been by what is commonly termed the conscience clause; and I am sanguine enough to hope that that provision is in itself, so reasonably founded as it is upon a double liberty—the perfect liberty of unimpaired religious teaching on the one side, and the perfect liberty of withdrawal to those who do not belong to a religious community on the other—I cannot help thinking that such a provision is so reasonable, and has so much of a primitive character, that it may be the means of solving in a great degree the difficulty, and enabling us to offer secular advantages of education to those to whom we are not able to give the advantages of Christian teaching. If that be so, I think I am bound to say that there is another change that ought to be made in the system of teaching as it now prevails. Schools, which are called secular schools, ought not to be proscribed. Undoubtedly, if you ask me, I prefer a school where religion is taught to one where it is not taught. But if there be benevolent individuals who are disposed to give, or assist in giving to their own families or the families of others, the advantages, not only the positive knowledge of a school, but the moral habits of a well-conducted school, I do not think it a sufficient reason for withholding public aid from the school, and placing it under a ban, that religious instruction does not form part of the system of that school. Because, after all, it is to be recollected that the very many persons who may wish to found a school simply secular in its character may limit the sphere of that school, not out of disrespect to religion, not from undervaluing its inestimable blessings, but because they feel afraid of its becoming a source of discord in the school, and think it better therefore to leave that to the pastors and the parents. Whether we adopt that opinion or not, it is fair to keep that possibility in mind; and I own it would not be altogether equitable and fair—on the contrary, it would be decidedly inequitable and unfair—if we were to say that because a school conveys secular knowledge only, that therefore it is to be regarded as unworthy of public assistance. Next to that comes the question of technical education, with respect to which Oldham appears to have taken already a very distinguished position. I do not doubt that the attention of public authority has been directed, in an increasing degree, to subjects of this class, but on the other hand, I would venture to say that your main reliance on such subjects must be upon yourselves. The Governments of other European countries are, for the most part, constituted upon principles different from ours—upon principles on which the Government assumes to itself a great deal more, and allows to the people a great deal less. When that relation of things is established, and it becomes habitual in a country, it is much easier for the Government to assume and to exercise the office and the influence of teacher.

## 2. RIGHT HON. H. A. BRUCE'S EDUCATIONAL REVIEW.

### FUTILE EFFORTS TO FOUND A SYSTEM OF EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

After thirty years of discussion and controversy in the press, in Parliament, in every diocese, in every town, almost in every parish in England and Wales, it seems a bold thing to say that the subject of national education has never thoroughly possessed itself of the public mind, has never occupied that place in the heart and conscience of the nation to which its vast and pressing importance entitles it. Books and pamphlets, sermons and lectures in abundance have been published and delivered; there have been many debates in Parliament, and innumerable public meetings; many millions of money, public and private, have been freely given and spent, and great individual exertions and sacrifices have been made. The Church has founded its central and diocesan societies, and its clergy have, as a rule, displayed an energy and self-devotion above all praise; the Nonconformists have shown an ever-increasing zeal and activity; yet after all said and done, it cannot be denied that the subject has never been grappled with in that earnest and vigorous spirit which is the fruit of a strong conviction of a great evil to be removed, and a great good to be won. Education, instead of being discussed on its own merits, has been made the battlefield of religious parties; and the adoption of a real and effectual

national system has been kept subordinate to the interests, or supposed interests, of Churchmen or Dissenters. The first modest efforts of Government to promote it were received with distrust and opposition. The advocates of our existing voluntary system point to the great increase in the number of our schools, to the improvement in their character, to the growing intelligence and zeal of our people, who, they affirm, will, as they awaken to a sense of their wants, take measures to supply them. With the aid of time, and by a relaxation of the conditions on which the Government grant is dispensed, they indulge a diffident, hesitating hope of seeing the wants of the people ultimately supplied. The advocates of a more comprehensive and systematic scheme, on the other hand, point to the fact that a large portion of our population is still allowed to grow up ignorant and untrained. Admitting, for the sake of argument, that in process of time, and with some improvement in our existing machinery, education might gradually permeate our whole population, in how many generations, they ask, may this hope reasonably be expected to be fulfilled? and whether this sort of patience is really a virtue which Christian men ought to practise? While we wait for a millennium, which may never come, are tens of thousands of innocent children to be allowed to grow up in ignorance and vice, in that intellectual and moral debasement which those only know who, like Howard, "have surveyed the mansions of sorrow and pain, have taken the gauge and dimensions of misery, depression, and contempt, have remembered the forgotten, attended to the neglected, and visited the forsaken?" Under no system, they urge, which could possibly be adopted in this country could voluntary effort or religious zeal be dispensed with. The rate levied to erect or maintain a school would they acknowledge, be of little use if good and earnest men ceased to devote themselves to the management of its affairs, and they ask whether the compulsory provision of educational funds has damped voluntary ardour in the United States, or whether, as a matter of fact, the very highest examples of well-directed, voluntary devotion may not be found in the managing committees of the schools of New England, New York, and Pennsylvania? They do not deny that the denominational system affords a stimulus which would be wanting to an education supplied by means of a public rate. That is an unfortunate result of our religious divisions; but an imperfect education is better than the heathenism of utter ignorance; and zealous ministers would find means to supply the deficiency of dogmatic teaching in our schools. Such is a brief and meagre outline of the arguments employed on either side of this great and difficult controversy.

### THE QUESTION OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION—EXAMPLE.

Dependent upon its decision is another question of great importance and equal difficulty. When a sufficient supply of schools has been secured, shall the attendance of children of a certain age be voluntary or compulsory? Are we to rely upon the parents' sense of duty, or are we to call in the aid of the law in order to compel those who neglect their duty to perform it? That excellent institution, the Manchester and Salford Education Aid Society (an institution which affords an example for imitation in every town of the kingdom), have taken steps for a systematic canvass of the town, and have found that everywhere a majority of the children between the ages of three and twelve are found to be neither at school nor at work. This was not owing to the poverty of the parents, for "in many districts" (I quote from the report of this year) "the number of children who are not sent to school, but whose parents are able to pay school fees if they were willing, approaches very nearly to the number of those who are neglected on account of poverty." In one district, out of 142 children not at school, only 31 were found to belong to parents too poor to pay for their education. In the districts already examined, of 5,787 children, neither at school nor at work, 2,175 had parents able to pay for them, 3,612 were the children of parents unable to afford this expenditure. In other words, out of every 19 children absent from school, 7 were so by the wilful negligence, 12 by the poverty, of their parents. Their latest returns show that while they have made 24,000 grants to enable these latter children to attend school, only half of that number, or 12,000, have availed themselves of this aid. And this fact is attributed to the apathy of the parents. It is clear—and this fact is one which must never be forgotten during the discussion of this subject—that it is not the employer of labour who is the competitor of the schoolmaster. Of the children between three and twelve years of age, less than one in fourteen is at work, while out of every twenty-two of such children only nine are at school.

### EDUCATIONAL CONDITION OF ENGLISH CITIES AND TOWNS.

Miserable as this is, it seems to be hardly as bad as that which remains to be revealed. The committee has hitherto shrunk from visiting some of the worst and most populous districts in Manchester and Salford, because so large a proportion were below the reach of their influence. There is a lower depth yet to be sounded. While