

am describing only the body ; the soul was Lancaster himself. He entered into his work with immense enthusiasm, and he succeeded in warming his pupils with a part of the zeal which was burning him up. He made them think, and, what is far more, he made them feel that the honour of the school depended upon them individually, and that the child who committed a fault sinned not only against good morals and good manners, but also against the reputation of the school. There were thus not one, but a thousand, striving for the excellence of the institution, and rejoicing in its progress.

The faults of Lancaster's system were many and obvious. Just as in a corrected exercise the erasures show where the original was wrong, and observation of the points in which our system differs from his will indicate where the experience of three quarters of a century has been able to amend the latter. Monitors, though of considerable service in giving a good "tone" to the school, were very imperfect instructors. They could not teach what they did not know ; many of them could not teach what they did know. Still even the most hostile of Lancaster's critics admitted that the results produced in his school were surprising. They judged it by the other schools of the day, and no wonder that, measured by such a standard, it should be considered admirable. The pupils of Lancaster were kept constantly employed, and constant employment, though only under a monitor, is sure to produce better results than intermittent activity (like that of a clock bell which rests an hour and works a second) under a master. But perpetual activity was no less the secret of the progress than of the good order of Lancaster's school. One of the most bitter of his detractors says : " In this respect (that is, in respect to order) Mr. Lancaster's school is quite a prodigy considering the vast number of scholars it contains." I am afraid that we moderns would not think the order prodigious ; the discipline was doubtless good, but the din was deafening. Here is a little unexpected evidence on the point. Speaking at a *soirée* of the British Teachers' Association, on the 25th of January, within the walls of what is left of Lancaster's schoolroom, Mr. Baines, of Carshalton, said : " I cannot help comparing the aspect of this room with what it was thirty-seven years ago. Then I was a student here Round the room were six hundred or seven hundred boys in little drafts, singing 'le-a-p, leap—to jump.' The Babel was such that I remember on one occasion trying if I should be heard singing 'Black-eyed Susan.' I sang, and no one noticed me." Mr. Baines quietly added, " I was monitor of order at the time," a remark which was followed by shouts of laughter. It is true that Lancaster was not master then, but the school was carried on according to his system by a teacher probably as able as he.

I have alluded only to one of the defects of the monitorial plan ; many others might be pointed out. Nor was this the only part of Lancaster's system which was faulty. The method of teaching arithmetic, for instance, one would fancy to have originated in the famous Academy of Projectors at Lagado, which proposed to extract sunbeams out of cucumbers, to calcine ice into gunpowder, and to manufacture poetry and philosophy, arts and sciences, by machinery. Still it was thought wonderful at the time. A very able writer in the *Edinburg Review* for November, 1810, says :—" It is manifest that any rule in Algebra may be communicated by the same process, from the simplest to the most intricate and refined ; from the addition of two quantities to the methods of infinite series and fluents. Every part of geometrical science may be taught by similar means, from the first theorem in Euclid to the sublime

propositions of Newton and Laplace..... By a few simple additions to this machinery, the method may be made to embrace even other branches of knowledge, and in short we do not hesitate to affirm that it is applicable, or may soon be applied to the whole circle of human knowledge This method may, therefore, most truly be pronounced a capital discovery in every point of view ; and we have little doubt that it will speedily be extended from the sciences to the arts, which seem all to admit of being taught upon similar principles."

The system of rewards and punishments, be it good or be it bad, was founded on a thorough knowledge of the nature of children. It was, however, far too elaborate for this "working-day world." Indeed, Lancaster fell into the error common to inventors of thinking more of the means than the end, of the system than its object.

With all its faults Lancaster's system was a great improvement upon anything which preceded it as the "Rocket" or "Puffing Billy" was upon the stage coach, though it would suffer as much by comparison with the more perfect system of the present day as those primitive locomotives would by comparison with the "Flying Dutchman." He was very proud of it. Indeed, "proud" gives but a very faint idea of his state of mind : he was inordinately vain of it, and promised from its operation as many wonders as a quack doctor does from the application of his *nostrum*. The objects to be attained by an educational reformer were efficiency and cheapness, and Lancaster proclaimed that he had reached both. In a work published in 1806 he says : "The result, as far as it has been attained at present, is that by an entire new system of education one thousand children may be taught in one schoolroom under the care of one master, and a great proportion of these may begin and finish their education in twelve months, the education comprising the art of reading, writing, and arithmetic..... the whole expense not exceeding seven shillings each child for twelve months, and probably may be reduced by the perseverance of the inventor under unmerited opposition to four." The curious thing is, that Lancaster's estimate of his system was accepted even by his enemies. I might make dozens of quotations from their works to support this statement ; one will serve as a specimen. In a sermon preached against Lancaster the reverend speaker says : "A scheme of instruction has been devised of incalculable celerity and of boundless extent ; so cheap that poverty itself may purchase, so easy that dulness itself may comprehend."

Having now given an outline of Lancaster's system, I must return to my history of him. Even before he commenced work in the Borough-road, he had attracted the attention of several Quakers who helped him by paying for the education of the poorest children. When in a better room, and a perfected system, he felt so confident of the support of the public that he determined (in 1801) to make his school altogether free. He therefore posted outside the building the following notice :—"All who will may send their children and have them educated freely ; and those to whom the above offer may not prove acceptable may pay for them at a very moderate price." He soon had a thousand children around him, and he and his school became objects of curiosity. "Foreign princes, ambassadors, peers, commoners, ladies of distinction, bishops and archbishops, Jews and Turks, all visited the school with 'wonder-waiting eyes,' and were equally desirous of carrying home a memorial of the interesting scenes they had witnessed." This caused Lancaster, in 1803, to publish a short account of his system. The school at the