

had a glimmering of that idea, but the times were too dark, too stern for them. During the whole of the Middle Ages we see little more than cathedral and monastic schools, chiefly intended for the education of the clergy, but opened in certain places to the laity also. Schools for the nation at large, and supported by the nation at large, there were none. Then came the Reformation, the very life-spring of which was the reading of the Bible by the laity. The reformers at once called for schools, but it was like a cry in the wilderness. Much, no doubt, was done by the reformers, many of whom were excellent schoolmasters, many of whom knew but too well how even Christianity could be degraded and well-nigh destroyed in countries where the education of the people had been neglected. Every Protestant clergyman became *ipso facto* a schoolmaster. He had to see that the children of his parish were able at least to read the Bible and to say the catechism. This is the historical explanation why, in Protestant countries, the school has so long remained a mere appendage to the church. After a time, however, the clergyman, having plenty of work of his own to do, secured the assistance of the sacristan or sexton, who, in addition to his ordinary duties of bell-ringing, organ-playing, waiting at christenings and weddings, and grave-digging, had now to act as schoolmaster also, and teach the children to read, to write, and to count. This was the beginning of our schools and schoolmasters; but in Germany even these small beginnings were soon swept away by the Thirty Years' War.

When, in the eighteenth century, people began to breathe again, and look about, the state of the lower and middle classes in Germany, as far as education was concerned, was deplorable. There were church schools, town schools, private schools, scattered about here and there, a few good, some indifferent, and most of them bad; but as to any efficient machinery that should secure the proper education of every child in the country, it was even never thought of.

It was my *alumnus*, it was old Basedow, who, about a hundred years ago, raised the first war-cry for national education in Germany. It would take me too much time were I to attempt to give you an account of his life I had lately to write for the "*Deutsche Biographie*," published by the Bavarian government. It was a chequered life, as the life of all true reformers is sure to be. Perhaps he attempted too much, and was much in advance of his time. But whatever his strong, and whatever his weak points, this one great principle he established, and it remained firmly established in the German mind ever since, that national education is a sacred duty, and that to leave national education to chance, church, or charity, is a national sin. That conviction has remained ingrained in the German mind, even in the days of our lowest political degradation; and it is to that conviction, that Germany owes what she is, her very existence among the nations of Europe.

Another principle followed, which, in fact, as matter of course, as soon as the first principle was granted, was this, that in national schools, in schools supported by the nation at large, you can only teach that on which we all agree; hence, when children belong to different sects, you cannot teach theology. However irresistible the argument was, the opposition which it roused was terrific. Basedow thought, for a time, that he could frame a kind of diluted religion, which should give no offence to any one of the Christian sects, not even to Jews or Mohammedans. But in that attempt he naturally failed. His was a deeply religious mind, but national education had become with him so absorbing a passion, that he thought that everything else ought to give way to it.

I confess I fully share myself the same conviction. If it were possible to imagine a religion, or a sect, that should try to oppose or retard the education of the people, than I should say that such a religion cannot be a true religion, and the sooner it is swept away the better. I say the same of national education. If there were, if there could be, a system of national education that should exclude religious education, that system cannot be the true system, and the sooner it is swept away the better.

Poor Basedow soon came in conflict with the Church; he was deprived of his professorship in Denmark, though the King, more enlightened than his people, granted him his full salary as a pension for life. In Germany he was excommunicated, not by the pope, but by the Protestant clergy at Hamburg, who excluded him, and every member of his family, from the communion. The mob at Hamburg was roused against him, his books were prohibited, and he found no rest till the Duke of Dessau, a man who dared to think and to act at his own peril, invited him to his capital, to help him to introduce into his small duchy a more perfect system of national education.

All these things have become matter of history, and are almost forgotten now, even in Germany. Many of Basedow's theories had to be given up, but the two fundamental principles of national education remain firmly established, and have never been shaken. They

have spread all over Germany; they are adopted in Denmark, Sweden, Russia; they have lately found their way into Italy, a country which is making the greatest efforts for national education, knowing that her very existence depends on that.

Two countries only, France and England, still stand aloof. Yet, when we hear a Minister of Instruction in France (Jules Simon) say, "Yes, there are schools, many schools, but one thing is still wanting, and it is for this that I do not die; we have not yet obtained compulsory and gratuitous instruction;" when in England we see that convictions with regard to national education become too strong for party; that Mr. Forster would rather break away from his friends than yield his deep and honest convictions; that Mr. Cross is more liberal, more bold than even Mr. Forster, in favour of compulsory national education; when you consider how one of the most distinguished divines of the Church of England, whose death the country is mourning this very day, insisted all his life on the separation of Church and school teaching, as the only solution of the educational problem; nay, when you remember the words spoken not long ago by your own excellent and outspoken bishop, that it was better for the Church to surrender her schools than to allow the existence of one single inefficient school; you may be certain that the time has come when England also will recognise these two fundamental principles, education by the nation and for the nation, and complete separation of school teaching and Church teaching. And, believe me, as soon as these two principles are acknowledged, most of the difficulties that now beset the educational question, whether theological or financial, will vanish.

Then, no doubt, the whole charge for national education, a large portion of which is now covered by private charity, will have to be paid by the nation at large, as in the case of the army, the navy and the civil service.

Whenever I state this, the ready answer I receive is: "Yes, it is very well for a foreigner to say that, but it is an utterly un-English idea; no sensible Englishman would listen to it for one moment."

I always look on that answer as a most hopeful sign; it shows that all other argumentative ammunition has been expended, for no gentleman would fire off that blank cartridge if he still possessed one single ball-cartridge in his pouch.

I am the very last man to say that the German system of national education should be transplanted to England. I speak only of certain broad principles, which are either right or wrong in themselves, and have nothing whatever to do with national character or historical circumstances. No one could have lived half his life in England and half his life in Germany, without knowing how utterly impractical it is to try to transfer English institutions to Germany, or German institutions to England. Germany has had to pay heavy penalties for attempting to copy the English form of constitutional government, and national education in England would be a certain failure, were it to be a mere imitation of the German or the French system. You do not want a Minister of Public Instruction who could look at the clock, and then tell you that at this moment every child in France is reading, "*Gallia est omnis divisa in partes tres*." But if you could have a president of the council who could look at the clock and say, "At this moment no child over six or under thirteen is loitering in the streets," would that be so very intolerable?

How much should be left to local boards and authorities in the management of schools, what subjects should be taught, what books should be used, what hours should be kept, what fees should be paid, all these are matters of detail, which would admit of great variety, if only the great principle was once recognised, that the school belongs to the State, and that the State is responsible for its efficiency, as it is responsible for the efficiency of the army, the navy, nay, even of the post-office. It is a misdemeanor to convey a letter otherwise than by the post. It is criminal to sell poison. Would it be carrying the same principle too far, if Parliament insisted that no one should open a private school, unless the Government was satisfied of the wholesomeness of the moral and intellectual food sold in these schools to helpless children? Paternal government, I know, has not a good sound to English ears; but if anybody has a right to a paternal government, surely it is "these little ones, who should not perish."

These are not questions of politics, they are questions which concern every man, be he English, French, or German. They are religious questions, in the truest sense of the word.

I hardly wish to touch on smaller points connected with the great question of national education. However large they may appear at present, they would dwindle away, if once national education was looked upon in the light of a national duty. Take, for instance, the financial difficulty.

By making national education an annual charge on the national exchequer, what is it you do? You simply substitute a national and rational taxation for an irrational and haphazard taxation. It is John Bull who pays the taxes; it is John Bull who pays the