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## GREAT ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL CONFERENCE.

On 22nd June, the first of the three general Conferences for fully discussing the English Educational question in all its bearings, especially in relation to the early age at which the children of the working classes are removed from school, was held at Willis' rooms, under the presidency of his Royal Highness Prince Albert, and a number of distinguished noblemen and gentlemen. Long before the hour fixed for the Prince to take the chair, the room was completely crowded, and the reception accorded to his Royal Highness on his arrival was most warm and flattering. He was supported by the Bishops of Oxford, London, St. Asaph, Manchester, Sir J. Shuttleworth, Sir J. Packington, Lord Ward, Earl Granville, the Bishop of Durham, Lord Brougham, the Bishop of Winchester, Archdeacon Sinclair, Lord Calthorpe, Lord Ingestre, and other noblemen and gentlemen.

His Royal Highness, who, on his rising, was received with prolonged cheering, immediately proceeded to address the meeting as follows: "Gentlemen, we have met to-day in the sacred cause of Education—of National Education. This word, which means no less than the moral and intellectual development of the rising generation, and, therefore, the national welfare, is well calculated to engross our minds, and opens a question worthy of a nation's deepest interest and most anxious consideration. Gentlemen, the nation is alive to its importance, and our presence here to-day gives further evidence [if such evidence were needed] of its anxiety to give it that consideration. [Hear, hear.] Looking to former times, we find that our forefathers, with their wonted piety and paternal care, had established a system of national education, based

upon the parish organization and forming part of parish life, which met the wants of their day, and had in it a certain unity and completeness which we may well envy at the present moment. But in the progress of time our wants have outstripped that system, and the condition of the country has so completely changed even within these last fifty years, that the old parochial division is no longer adequate for the present population. This has increased during that period in England and Wales from, in round numbers, 9,000,000 to 18,000,000, and, where there formerly existed comparatively small towns and villages, we now see mighty cities like Liverpool, Manchester, Hull, Leeds, Birmingham, and others, with their hundreds of thousands, springing up almost, as it were, by enchantment, London having increased to nearly two and a half millions of souls, and the factory district of Lancashire alone having aggregated a population of nearly 3,000,000 within a radius of thirty miles! This change could not escape the watchful eye of a patriotic public; but how to provide the means of satisfying the new wants could not be a matter of easy solution. While zeal for the public good, a fervent religious spirit, and true philanthropy are qualities eminently distinguishing our countrymen, the love of liberty and an aversion from being controlled by the power of the State in matters nearest to their hearts, are feelings which will always most powerfully influence them in action. Thus the common object has been contemplated from the most different points of view, and pursued often upon antagonistic principles. Some have sought the aid of Government, others of the Church to which they belong; some have declared it to be the duty of the State to provide elementary instruction for the people at large, others have seen in State interference a check to the spontaneous exertions of the people themselves, and an interference with self-government; some, again, have advocated a plan of compulsory education based upon local self-government, and others the voluntary system in its widest development. While these have been some of the political subjects of difference, those in the religious field have not been less marked and potent. We find, on the one hand, the wish to see secular and religious instruction separated, and the former recognised as an innate and inherent right, to which each member of society has a claim, and which ought not to be denied to him if he refuses to take along with it the inculcation of a particular dogma to which he objects as unsound; while we see, on the other hand, the doctrine asserted