

EVENING CLASSES—RECREATIVE AND PRACTICAL.

EDUCATIONAL problems, like the problems of theology, vary in phase and in points of pressure ; and in each case the solution of one leads to the formulation of others. A few years ago the question was, How to provide for every child in Britain a sufficient and efficient elementary education ? To this the Act of 1870 was an honest attempt at a reply, and by means of it a vast stride has been taken in the right direction, although much still remains to be done. The problem of to-day grows naturally enough in great measure out of that other ; for the question which now demands attention, and presses under the severest pains and penalties for solution, is, How to conserve and turn to practical account the education given at tremendous cost in our public elementary schools ? It is practically the same question on a larger scale as that which Sunday-school teachers have long been asking with the gravest anxiety—How may we retain our elder scholars ?

“Nobody will deny,” said Lord Derby, not long ago, “that the years between fourteen and twenty-one are the most important years of life.” Lord Derby is right ; and yet as a people, as a State, we are *practically* giving it the most emphatic denial. Those are the very years of which our educational system takes no account. While nearly every other civilized nation provides for the continuance of the elementary education of its youth, and especially for the technical training of its artisans, we, who have most to lose by such neglect, allow our boys and girls to run wild in the streets, and “finish their education” amid the poison of the pot-house and the penny-gaff. Their education proper, costing the country about £7,000,000 a year, ceases when it has really only just begun. At the very age when the mind begins to awake, and