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I. Recent Educational Addresses.

DR. PLAYFAIR'S OPENING ADDRESS TO THE EDUCATIONAL SECTION OF THE SOCIAL SCIENCE CONGRESS, NEWCASTLE, ENGLAND.

In the address delivered by Dr. Lyon Playfair before the National Association for the promotion of Social Science, he began by referring to the lamentable position of English education at present. Speaking of the Act of last session, he pointed out that it deals with the quantity of education, and not with its quality; and insisted on the absolute necessity of introducing instruction in Science into our primary schools. The following are some of the more important passages of the address on this point:—

NECESSITY OF SCIENCE IN OUR PRIMARY SCHOOLS.

The educational principle of continental nations is to link on primary schools to secondary improvement schools. The links are always composed of higher subjects, the three R's being in all cases the mere basis of instruction. Elementary science, and even some of its applications, is uniformly encouraged and generally enforced. I shall not detain you with examples, as they are to be found in any work treating of continental schools. But as we have no schools corresponding to the secondary improvement schools for the working classes, we suppose that we can do without the higher subjects used as links. With what result? Our primary schools, on the whole, do not teach higher instruction than a child of eight years of age may learn. In our class of life, our children acquire such knowledge as a beginning; with the working classes, they get it as an end. What an equipment for the battle of life! No armour-plate of knowledge is given to our future artisan, but a mere thin veneer of the three R's, so thin as to rub off completely in three or four years' wear and tear of life. I am speaking on official record, for we are assured by inspectors, that nothing under Standard IV. suffices for permanent use, and yet the Committee of Council tell us that four-fifths of the children of ages at which they leave school pass only in lower standards. Recently, under Mr. Corry's minute, inducements have been given for subjects higher than the three R's, but for some reason it produces scarcely any result. So, under our present system of elementary teaching, no knowledge whatever, bearing on the life-work of the people, reaches them by our system of State education. The air they breathe, the water they drink, the tools they use, the plants they grow, the mines they excavate, might all be made subjects of surpassing interest and importance to them during their whole life; and yet of these they learn not one fact. Yet we are surprised at the consequences of their ignorance. A thousand men perish yearly in our coal-mines, but no school-master tells the poor miner the nature of the explosive gas which scorches him, or of the after-damp which chokes him. Boilers of steam-engines blow up so continually that a committee of the House of Commons is now engaged in trying to diminish their alarming frequency; but the poor stokers who are scalded to death or blown to pieces, were never instructed in the nature and properties of steam. In Great Britain alone more than one hundred thousand people perish annually, and at least five times as many sicken grievously, out of pure ignorance of the laws of health, which are never imparted to them at school; they have no chance of learning them afterwards, as they possess no secondary schools. The mere tools of education are put into the hands of children during their school time without any effort being made to teach them how to use them to ply for any profitable purpose whatever; so they get rusty or are thrown away altogether. And we fancy that we have educated the people! Our pauperism, our crime, and the misery which hovers on the brink of both, increase terribly, and our panacea for their cure is teaching the three R's up to Standard III. The age of miracles has passed by, and our large faith in our little doings will not remove mountains. It is best to be frank. Our low quality of education is impoverishing the land. It is disgracefully behind the age in which we live, and of the civilisation of which we boast; and