

It is the glory of our age, and especially of this land, that educational advantages are widely diffused. In eminent examples of mental power we may never surpass the giants of other days, but the culture of our time has an infinitely higher praise, in that it reaches the people at large, stretching its impartial hand to those who among the most highly cultivated nations of antiquity would have groined in ignorance and bondage. The light which once illumined only the mountain peaks now floods the plains, and finds its way into the valleys. Under this diffusion of light the noxious vapours are scattered: the ghosts troop home to church yards; witches, hobgoblins and a thousand "gloomy spectres of the brain," with a thousand physical evils are driven away. What a famous monarch once prayed for, "that every peasant might have a fowl in his pot," has become a reality, at least in America; and what is more, every peasant has or may have his newspaper and his Bible, with the Common School and Sunday School for his children. Here, at least, we have the groundwork of national weal, and the first great stride towards the millennium. Thus the range of the teacher's influence has widened to the universal brotherhood of man. Like the preacher of the gospel he has become the friend of the poor, the liberator of the slave, the solace of the weary, and the instrument of a new social order. The love of freedom was not less strong in ancient times, but the conditions of freedom—the school room and the printing press—these were wanting; Men died for liberty, yet liberty died also. They could repel external aggression, but could not resist internal dissolution. An army of schoolmasters is found to be better than an army of soldiers. We eulogise Christianity as the last, best gift of heaven; and we do well. But one of the chief peculiarities of Christianity is that it begins and advances only by means of popular instruction. The old pagan religions amused the people with shows and corrupted them by superstitions; Christianity comes to them with a revelation of truth, and by her never-ceasing appeals to the understanding and conscience compels every system of worship to make good its claims as a "reasonable service." She alone of all religions demands and creates the school master; she alone does not fear him when he appears. This appeal to the court of reason in matters of faith is not indeed without its perils—all progress is full of peril—and the drift of much of modern thought is well calculated to give perplexity and alarm, to serious minds. The age is calling with a cry of anguish for the man who shall speak "the word of reconciliation" to the warring forces of the Church and the School. The voices of a thousand would-be peace makers do but add to the clamor of the strife. Yet no one whose opinion is worth having imagines that peace shall come by the slumber or slavery of the intellect. Nay, rather let us hope that as the continued exercise of political freedom is the best security for political order, so the exercise of thought and the universal diffusion of knowledge will eventually bring only greater honour and stability to the true religion.

We shall, I think, do well to cherish a strong faith in the *improvement of educational methods*. It was said by Dr. Johnson that "education was as well understood in his day as it would ever be." With