

every class of society, and the advantage of which will be felt in future generations as well as in the present.

#### REFLEX INFLUENCE OF CHILDREN UPON PARENTS

You have been told, what in human nature might have been expected, that though instruction, moral and intellectual, in the ordinary course of nature, descends from parent to child, yet that sometimes that current will be reversed—that moral and religious and intellectual instruction will go upwards from the child to the parent; that when a child has been well brought up and instructed, and the parents have had the misfortune of being differently situated, the example of the child will operate upon the conduct of the parents—that the parents will be reclaimed from habits which bring them to poverty and disgrace, by seeing in the example of their children that which they will blush not to be able to imitate and follow. I cannot but believe that when the secretary shall this time twelve months read the report of the proceedings of the year which is about to begin, he will be able to assure you that this institution, although of comparatively recent establishment, has yet thriven like a vigorous plant, the branches of which have extended themselves until they overspread a large portion of this great and important town, and that the benefits which its founders contemplated have begun to be amply realized. (Loud cheers.)

## 2. RIGHT HON. LORD STANLEY, M.P.

#### POPULAR EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

On the 29th of October, Lord Stanley attended a dinner of the friends of the Warrington Mechanics' Institute (the number of books in the library of which is 4,000, and the annual circulation is from 10,000 to 12,000), and delivered the following address. After some introductory remarks, his Lordship said,—In speaking of the position and prospects of popular education in England, and especially in these districts, there are two difficulties to be encountered. In the first place, a speech on educational matters is not usually very attractive, either to hear or to read. One reason of this is to be found in the very importance which we all feel attaches to the subject. It is not a new thing to anybody, but one on which most of us have heard something, whether we wished it or no, and on which members of Parliament, generally speaking, have heard much more than they desired. In the next place, not merely educational matters, but all questions of home administration or concern occupy at this moment in men's minds a comparatively subordinate position. Perhaps the cause of education does not really lose by being less prominent in men's thoughts than it was a few years ago. We have time to reflect more calmly, and therefore to judge more fairly upon many points which were formerly involved in controversy and dispute; and with every year that passes we get a little, at least, of that practical experience, that invaluable teaching of facts, of which I believe most Englishmen agree in thinking that a very little is worth all the speculation and theory ever spun from the ingenious brains of men.

#### EDUCATIONAL CONCLUSIONS WHICH HAVE BEEN ARRIVED AT.—IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE.

There are one or two conclusions on the subject of education which appear to be universally come to. The first is, that on whatever system or principle you establish what are called primary schools, whether set on foot by landowners individually, or by rate-payers as a body, whether assisted by Government or left alone, still we must expect that a very large proportion of those who attend them, leaving them at the age they do, will acquire nothing but the bare rudiments of knowledge—the power to read, write, and cipher. Of course, there are many exceptions; but that, I believe, is the general rule. These schools are not places in which education can be given; they are schools in which opportunities are given to those who attend them—if at a later period of their lives they so please—to educate themselves. That fact being once admitted, I think this consequence follows—that the importance which has often been attached to the particular system on which schools are conducted is very greatly diminished. Provided you can get the children to attend them, that the masters are competent, and the discipline good, I for my own part care little on what system these schools are established, believing that they do not give education, but only give the means of acquiring it hereafter; and the direction which the studies of the man will take is very little determined by the accident of the school he has attended. The other conclusion in which I think people have come generally to agree is, that what we have to complain of in educational matters is not so much the number of children who attend any school at all, inconsiderable as it is when compared with the population as a whole, but rather the *irregular attendance* of those who do frequent the schools, and the early age at which they leave, with the consequent liability to lose altogether in later years even that small portion of knowledge which may have been acquired. If you could ascertain—which you cannot—the

proportion of young men who can read and write well at the age of 17, and the proportion of these same persons who can read and write well at 30, you would find the falling off between those two ages far greater, probably, than almost any of us have an idea of, even among those who have attended closely to the subject. Now, neither the irregular attendance nor the early leaving can be altogether remedied, because both are attributable mainly to the desire—natural and honourable in itself—which every lad has to get his own living as soon as he can, rather than remain a burden to his parents. We very often complain of parents taking away their children from school, but I believe in many cases the children have quite as much to do with it as the parents, because a lad feels himself more of a man, and has a natural pride on the first day he begins an independent existence and can carry home the earnings of his own labour.

#### REMEDY FOR IRREGULAR ATTENDANCE.

If, then, the time of school attendance must be short and the attendance itself irregular, and if at the same time there exists, as is undoubtedly the case, a very general desire among at least a part of the working classes for the means of further instruction, we are inevitably led to the requirement of some institution holding to the ordinary school a similar relation to that in which the Universities stand to the public schools of England, frequented by the higher classes. Hitherto the attempts to supply that want have been many, and their success various and unequal in different parts of the country. In some of the great towns, mechanics' institutes are really flourishing, and accomplishing the ends for which they were set on foot. As a general rule, however, these institutions, while supplying a want throughout the country which is generally felt, and while accomplishing much good, have undeniably fallen short of original hopes and expectations. Sometimes the libraries, on which they chiefly relied for attraction, were scanty or ill-chosen; very often the lectures, being desultory and inconsecutive, were not capable of imparting real information; sometimes political or sectarian feeling crept in, and of course ruined everything; and even where none of these causes operated, the public could have no sufficient guarantee for the efficiency of the teaching in the evening classes. Of late years there have been great efforts at improvement. The principal and most effective has been the associating together of various institutions, with the threefold advantage of attracting greater notice of, and publicity to the union than the small institutions could have commanded singly, of obtaining competent teachers to organize and direct local efforts, and—most important of all—of *establishing a competition for prizes and certificates*, taking in a sufficient area of country and number of candidates to make it a real and not nominal competition. In East Lancashire and in Yorkshire the experiment has been attended with marked success. In Manchester, also, the principle of association has been acted on, though the details are not precisely the same. Another step in advance has been the establishment of local examinations such as those of the Society of Arts, by which young men more than ordinarily proficient are brought under the notice of employers, and they and their parents enabled to feel that some practical good will come out of the time and trouble they have bestowed. It is impossible to say how far these plans may succeed; they have only been tried within the last few years; but, whatever may be the result, I am quite sure they promise better than anything otherwise attempted with the same object, which is one that we should do our best to promote.

#### HOW CERTAINLY INTELLECTUAL AND MORAL DEFICIENCY GO TOGETHER.

So much, gentlemen, as to the machinery of educational institutions. I am not going to waste your time by talking of the pleasures and advantages of knowledge, theories I have heard or read, but from such experience as chance has thrown in my way. For four years and a-half I have acted as chairman of the Kirkdale quarter sessions. In that time some hundreds of cases have come before me of the kind usually dealt with by inferior tribunals, and nothing has struck me more, in the course of their investigation, than the utter stupidity—I can use no other word for it—the utter absence of intelligence and common sense, and utter inability to comprehend the consequences of what they were doing, which seems to me to mark by far the greater portion of habitual offenders. The intellectual and moral deficiency appear to go together, and surely from that it is a reasonable inference that the more you can do to increase men's intelligence, and give them other interests and employments, since idle habits are those which lead to drunken habits, the more you will do to lessen the amount of at least the grosser forms of crime in this country, which constitutes nine-tenth of the whole. I don't mean to say that the mere power of reading and writing will make that difference; what will make the difference is the thoughtful habit of mind, the wide range of interests and ideas, the habit of looking to the past and future as well as the present, and the having some other pleasures besides mere physical excitement, and some other ideas besides those suggested by the routine of daily life.