

The second speech was delivered on February 25th, at the distribution of prizes in the Birkbeck Literary and Scientific Institution. This second speech, perhaps, contains more that is remarkable in it than the former. It exhibits in a marked degree the strong love of culture and the sincere sympathy with popular progress which is the truly pleasing feature of both speeches. After a few introductory remarks, His Royal Highness said :

I am particularly glad to see the stress which your programme lays on technical education. We Englishmen may be justly proud of the character for mental and physical strength and capacity which our artisans bear all over the world ; but our pride is sadly dashed by accompanying criticisms on the ignorance and the indifference to anything which needs thought, which too often render that native vigour of intelligence a comparatively useless thing. Properly instructed, I believe that our British artisan need fear no rival in the world ; but if he goes out untaught and ignorant into the battle of life, he is in danger of being outdone by the more carefully trained skill of foreign workmen. Against this danger your institution offers a bulwark whose importance it would be hard to overrate. I am glad, too, to see the eagerness with which modern languages are learnt in your classes. Foreign nations are not merely our competitors, but our friends, and nothing, I believe, is likely to create so true a feeling of friendship and sympathy between one people and another as a practical knowledge of each others speech. Sometimes, perhaps, as the proverb says, we take what is unknown to be magnificent, but oftener, I think, we take it to be something unfriendly and distasteful to us—something which if we did know it we should not like. But we find that with every real increase of understanding of our fellow men of different races some unkindly illusion disappears ; we learn to realize their likeness to ourselves, to sympathize with their national character, to co-operate in their efforts after the common good. But I need not go at length into the advantages to be derived from each of the subjects which your curriculum embraces ; there is not one which may not be of great service to the practical career or to the mental development of the zealous student. And there is so much similarity in the conditions of all effort and success, that even the studies which seem most remote from active life may always furnish a moral which life can adopt and employ. For instance, I notice that in what is called the "Miscellaneous Department," of your curriculum you

provide instruction in the game of chess. This is not the most obviously practical of your subjects ; but it has struck me that even those, if any there be, who desire to limit their education to this branch alone, may learn some not unimportant lessons of life from the manner in which you teach it. "Particular attention," I see your programme says, "is paid to the study of the openings." Now, is it not true that in life, as in chess, it is often the opening, and the opening only, which is under our own control ? Later in the game the plans and wishes of others begin to conflict unpleasantly with our own. Sometimes it is as much as we can do to avoid being checkmated altogether. But for the first few moves we are free. We can deploy our pieces to the best advantage ; we can settle on the line of action which best suits our powers ; and we sometimes find that it will repay us to sacrifice a pawn or a piece so as to gain at once a position which may give us a decided advantage throughout the whole game. Does not this, too, remind us of early life ? Must we not often be content to sacrifice some pawn of present pleasure or profit to gain a vantage ground which may help us to successes which self-indulgence could never have won ? I am sure that among the bright young faces which I see around me there are many who have known what it is to labour against the grain ; to begin a lesson when they would rather have gone to the theatre, to finish it when they would rather have gone to bed. And I am sure that such efforts of self-denial and conscientiousness form at least half the real benefit of education ; that it would do us little good to wake up and find our heads magically stocked with all manner of facts, in comparison to the good which it does us to fight for knowledge, to suffer for her, and to make her at last our own. In great things as in small, this principle of self-help is a peculiarly English spirit. How much has been accomplished in this country by private initiative, by spontaneous growth ! We have trusted that men like Dr. Birkbeck would arise—men who felt the needs of others as their own, and could not rest without spreading widely round them the privileges which they had themselves enjoyed. We have trusted that such men would arise, and they have arisen.

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Learning is a commodity the demand for which grows with the supply. We need not fear a glut of science or of intelligence as we might fear a glut of cotton goods or of indigo. All the knowledge which we who now live can gain, can assuredly be made useful both to ourselves and to those who come