

for being in existence, or for having on their books a certain number of scholars, or a certain amount of attendance, but that it ought to be given for a certain amount of efficiency. The State's business is to ascertain results and pay in proportion to those results. (Hear, hear.) These are the five principles which I think may be taken as agreed upon with regard to education, and therefore I shall say no more on that point, but proceed to where the disputable matter begins, and that is, when we come to consider what is the precise duty of the State with regard to the communication of instructions. Now, of course, there are many different opinions on this subject. For instance, Plato thought so very highly of the duties of the State on this subject, that he would not trust any parent with the education of his own child, and in order that the parent might not interfere with the education of his own child, he took precautions which I need not now dilate upon that no parent should know his own child and no child his own father. (Laughter.) I think we need not go quite so far as that. I do not think it is necessary, in order to educate the people, to do as Plato wanted to do—to destroy the institution of the family, round which all the other institutions of this country group and cluster themselves. But I think that in the main—though he may have carried his principle a little too far—Plato was right. He regarded the education of the youth as the primary duty of the State. He did not put it as a duty to be taken up after other duties were discharged, but as assisting other duties. He said that persons who were well educated would be able to govern themselves—that every man putting a restraint on himself would require nothing to keep him in the path of duty. I do not go so far as that, because it was said of small communities, but I say that the education of the people is as much a part of the duty of the State as the making of laws, the administration of foreign affairs, of the army, and navy, and police; and the Government is no more excusable for neglecting that than they would be, for instance, in neglecting the protection of personal property, the maintenance of the national honour abroad, or making such laws as are demonstrably necessary for the welfare of the subject. (Cheers.) That is the principle from which I start; and now let us see how far we come up to it. I am sorry to say that the existing system falls very short of that principle, because the existing system in England that Government shall admit its duty, but not occupy the position enabling it to do its duty. The initiative is not with the Government. We have no minister of Education. The initiative is given to private individuals. The Government cannot create a school where it is wanted; all they can do is to assist it. The consequence is that, as money is generally forthcoming in those places where education is most abundant, the Government gives assistance where it is least wanted, and withholds it where it is most wanted. That is the cardinal defect of the system, and inherent in its very nature, because a system being based on religious feeling necessarily implies a voluntary system, for it is manifest that you cannot create religious zeal and feeling by Act of Parliament, but can only act upon it where it exists and is willing to put itself in motion. So long as the system exists, the Government must follow the will of private persons, and the Government must therefore stand with folded arms while the masses of the population are growing up in vice and ignorance from want of that assistance which is being lavished on places where there is often quite enough money to support schools without Government assistance. That is a very serious defect, and, theoretically, nothing can be more objectionable. But I confess had it not been for recent occurrences I would have been disposed, defective as the system is, not to meddle with it; because it is impossible to supplement the system without destroying the voluntary principle on which we rely. Since it is manifest that if, by withholding contributions, people can get what they want, we are giving a premium upon those who do not contribute. Also, it is not to be concealed that this system, though partial, is one of great efficiency, and I think it may compare favourably with any system in the world. In America the State makes grants for the purposes of education to assist townships, but the grant is not given in the least with regard to any system of inspection. Examination, as practised under the Revised Code in England—and I sincerely hope soon in Scotland also—is totally unknown, so that money given in assistance to schools is granted without any test of their efficiency. I must also say that that system has another recommendation. It is homogeneous with the habits and feelings of the people, and especially in the country districts of these islands; and it enlists in its support the best local agency which can be found—the gentlemen and clergymen of the parish. For these reasons, among others, I should always have been unwilling to meddle with the system. It is an existing thing; and to alter it would imply, I have no doubt, a considerable sacrifice of efficiency, and a great dislocation of energy and effort. But we have now arrived at a time when we ought no longer to deliberate on this question. I will not go into political matters; but we are all of us aware that the Government of the country—the voice-potential in the Government—is now placed in the hands of persons in a lower position of life than has hitherto been the case. Now, it is not merely desirable, it is all-important and essential, for the preservation of the institutions of this country, that those persons should be able, properly and intelligently, to discharge the duties entrusted to them. (Cheers.) Even assuming that those persons who have been enfranchised possess that knowledge which is necessary, I say we require a much better guarantee than we at present possess that those persons who come after them shall possess that knowledge also—(hear, hear)—

and if they do not possess it, as I fear will be the fact in very many cases, there is nothing we ought not to do; there is no effort we ought not to make; there is no sacrifice, either of money or of prejudice and feeling, which we ought not to submit to, rather than allow a generation in whose hands are placed the destinies of us all to grow up in ignorance. (Cheers.) Therefore, gentlemen, though I should have been very glad to have allowed this system to have gone on extending itself quietly and peacefully and unostentatiously, as it has hitherto been doing, I am firmly of opinion that the time has arrived when it is our duty to vindicate for the State its real function in this matter—that it is our duty to place the State, not as the handmaid or follower of private enterprise, but as the representative of the whole community, having a vital interest in the education of every one of its members. And I wish to submit to you what I consider would be the fitting outlines of a plan by which this should be carried out. I cannot do justice—indeed, I could not, without travelling into considerations that trench upon politics, do justice to the importance which I attach to this. It is a thing which must be done, and done immediately. We cannot suffer any large number of our citizens, now that they have obtained the right to influence the destinies of the country, to remain uneducated. It has been a great evil that they have so long remained in that condition—it was an evil, a reproach, and a moral stigma upon us, but now it is something more; it is a question of self-preservation—a question of existence or the non-existence of our Constitution. (Cheers.) And, if Parliament does not deal with the matter with a strong and a determined hand, so as to provide some measures whereby the means of education may be placed within the reach of all the citizens of the country, I say Parliament will be wanting in the performance of its duty; and upon those who delay or prevent the passing of such a measure will rest a responsibility the very vastest that mortal man can possibly bear. (Hear, hear.) Some time ago, my friend, Mr. Bruce, had a scheme which was a very good one, and which I should most willingly have supported. It permitted persons to tax themselves for the purposes of education, but in the emergency in which we are now placed, I consider that not nearly sufficient. We must go much farther, and do considerably more, in my opinion, than merely permitting. We must compel, and insist by some means that education shall become general in this country. We must carry out the great scheme of the Reformers of Scotland when they placed a school in every parish in the country. (Cheers.) I will now show you, as far I can, how that can best be obtained. I think the first sacrifice that the advocates and friends of the present system must be called upon to make is that we must give up denominational inspection. (Loud cheers.) I think the State will have to confine itself altogether to the secular part of education, and give up that joint partnership which has hitherto existed with the different religious bodies. (Cheers.) You will see in a moment why I am so anxious to put this in the front. The present schools must be made as efficient as possible for all classes of Her Majesty's subjects, and that the people should not be called upon by the State to give money unless what is called the "conscience clause" is introduced, so that persons of all denominations should not have to pay if anything is done which would trench upon or violate their religious opinions. (Hear, hear.) These things being premised, I would say this to the State—Commence an educational survey of these islands. Do not wait for the people to come to you and say they want some of the public money for educational purposes; but with the system of inspection which you have already organised, commence an educational survey in Great Britain, district by district, parish by parish. Get at the number of schools and the number of children in every parish, and then let a report be sent to the Privy Council of the educational wants of each parish, and of what is required to be done to place within the reach of the people a sufficient means of education. When that has been done, it should be the duty of the Privy Council to give notice to a parish that they should found a school, or whatever may be wanted, for their purposes. If the parish should found a school, I think it would be the duty of the Privy Council to assist it in the same way in which they assist many schools now. I ought also to say that we ought not to disturb schools which are already existing, except that we ought to provide that they must submit to an undenominational inspection, and the provision of having the conscience clauses. If the parish does not agree to what is done, then I think there ought to be a power vested in the Privy Council, or the Secretary of State, or some other responsible officer, to make compulsory upon them a rate for the support of the school, and the school should be entitled to the same inspection, examination, and assistance, as in the case of the schools now in existence. This simple machinery would, in a short time, alter the whole face of education, and place it within the reach of every one of the Queen's subjects, and then, and not until then, would it be right to talk of compulsory education. There is nothing more unjust or unfair than to punish a child for its not being educated—to say that a man shall not employ a child which has not been educated, when the State has not taken the pains of placing that child within the reach of education. (Cheers.) That is the outline of what I have to say on this subject, and it resembles in many respects the report of the Commissioners who have been sitting upon Scotch education. That report, so far as an Englishman may be permitted to give an opinion upon it, is founded on sound principles, and characterized by a great deal of good sense; but I hope that in Scotland there will be no delay in the introduction of the revised code. So far as I