

For the children of the poor there were, here and there, charity schools, in which the education was almost confined to the Church catechism, especially to that part of it which enjoined the learners that it was their duty to "submit" themselves to all their "Gouverneurs, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters," and to order themselves "lowly and reverently" to all their "betters." There were also a few schools similar in character to those of the *bourgeoisie* just described, but, of course, charging a lower fee, and, if possible, giving a worse education. To these schools the more respectable of the working classes sent their children. A vast majority of the children of the poor never went to any school, but, till they were old enough to be sent to work, ran about the streets in the towns, picking up all the evil to be found there, and in the country, where their faculties were not even quickened by the sights and sounds of the streets, sank into stupidity too dense for penetration.

The respectability of England saw nothing undesirable in this state of things; indeed, the squires and parsons, and the people who thought the opinions of squires and parsons oracular, started with holy horror at the idea of the education of the poor. Most of the arguments which they urged against it are even now faintly echoed by the anility (male and female) of the land, but there was one which is no longer heard, and it is very curious as showing what was meant by *education* in those days. The *Edinburg Review* for October, 1807, says: "It is the fashion now to say that a mode of education is provided by the State, and that the children may listen to the oral instructions of clergymen in the pulpit!" and contemporary writings show abundantly that this was considered one of the strongest arguments of the opponents of popular education. Even Dr. Bell, a man whose only claim to public notice was that he was an educational reformer, says: "It is not proposed that the children of the poor be educated in an expensive manner, or even taught to write and cipher. Utopian schemes for the diffusion of general knowledge would soon..... confuse the distinction of ranks and classes of society on which the general welfare hinges, and the happiness of the lower orders, no less than that of the higher, depends." Of course there were persons who felt interested in the education of the people and tried to promote it. The mere fact of its being opposed is proof of this; for as a cart raises dust only when it is in progress. The great bar to it was its costliness. The fees were the only source of income to a school, and a teacher could only live by having fees too high for the poor, or a school so large that he could not manage it; the objects of a reformer, therefore, would be at the same time to improve the quality of education and lessen its cost.

Such, then, was the state of education in England when Lancaster first became a schoolmaster. As I have already stated, his success was so great that in three years his school outgrew three rooms. With the growth of his school he had to face a great difficulty: his scholars were more in number than he himself could teach, while their fees would not enable him to engage an usher. He had, therefore, to do what had sometimes been done before—he had to employ those children who knew something in teaching those who knew less. Being a man of great fertility of invention and power of organization, he gradually reduced the plan of using children as teachers to an elaborate system. While he was doing this, other improvements suggested themselves to him; so that by the time his school was housed in the Borough-road he had developed a new system of education, of which it will now be my duty to give some account.

The schoolroom was a "long square." Right across the upper end of it was a platform. Facing this, all the way down the middle of the room were rows of desks, the sides of the room having no furniture. So much for the shell; we come now to the kernel.

When a new school was opened, the first thing to do was to classify the children presenting themselves. It is hardly creditable that a man writing in the year 1803 should have to urge this as an improvement in education. He who would now advance arguments to prove the advantages of classification would also advance arguments to prove that the whole is greater than its part; yet Lancaster had to use all his reasoning powers in denouncing the "common plan," and in proving that the proficiency of children would "be nearly doubled by being classed and studying in conjunction." But his classification was different from that now general, for he has a distinct classification for each subject, so that a boy might be in the first class for reading and in the fourth (or any other) for arithmetic. This division, of course, required that the whole school should study the same subject at the same time. There were about ten classes, but these were subdivided among monitors, each monitor having from half-a-dozen or a dozen of children.

The very essence of Lancaster's system was that it was monitorial. The master seems to have been left nothing to do except to superintend, organise, reward, punish, and breathe his spirit into the school. When a child entered, a monitor classed him; while he remained a monitor taught him; when he was absent a monitor inquired after him; a monitor periodically examined him; and when he made progress a monitor promoted him. In short, it would be difficult to mention a duty for the performance of which there was not an appointed monitor. The position of monitor was much coveted, for everything was done to make it one of honour. It was a reward for good conduct and rapid progress, and entitled its occupier to special privileges. Each monitor wore on his breast a leather ticket, on which was printed in gilt letters, "Monitor of the first class," "Reading monitor of the second class," &c. For each of these tickets there was a nail fixed in the wall. When school met the monitors took their tickets from the nails; the tickets left on the wall indicated the monitors absent, for whom a monitor-general appointed substitutes.

Lancaster introduced new methods of teaching reading. Children learning the alphabet one day imitated a monitor in forming letters in sand laid out on the desk before them (a specially constructed one). The next day they had to point out on a card the letters they had been taught to form. Lancaster's pupils could not afford to buy reading-books, and he could not afford to buy any for them. Just, therefore, as he had the alphabet painted in large type on a card, he had each of the lessons of a reading-book printed. No books were then needed. He calls this invention (for invention it was) "a method of teaching to spell and read, whereby one book will serve instead of six hundred books."

To save the expense of pens, ink, and paper, he introduced the plan of writing on slates, copy-books being used only in the upper-classes, and there only occasionally.

He also invented what he called an "improved method of teaching spelling by writing." This was what is now known in schools as "dictation," with the important exception that (as far as I can find) there was no provision for correcting what the children wrote.

In arithmetic, too, he invented a new method. He found that his children's knowledge of the subject was