

cause they all honoured (cheers), and none more heartily than himself, obtained the appointment of a committee, which was the foundation of a commission on the subject. The next inquiry was in 1834-5, and that was followed by another inquiry in 1838, on the motion of the hon. member for Shrewsbury. But that last inquiry was of a very limited character, as it related merely to the state of education among the laboring classes of our large towns. It was followed by the establishment in the year 1830, of the Committee of Council, in which his noble friend the member for London had so large a share. That was 20 years ago. Since then there had been no inquiry, with the exception of that which was made on the subject of the Manchester and Salford Education Bill, and which was limited to the state of education among the laboring classes in those towns. (Lord STANLEY seconded the motion.) Mr. W. J. FOX in the course of his remarks said it had been assumed that education in this country was in a very progressive and satisfactory state. In that opinion he could not agree. (Cheers.) The facts were, indeed, very strong the other way. It was said that one child in nine was being educated, while 40 years ago the proportion was 1 in 17. But in this calculation the growth of the population and the proportion of the educated to the non-educated of the school age were entirely left out. The question was how many persons there were of the school age, how many were receiving education, and how many were uneducated. He found, upon examination of the latest statistical returns, that there was a larger number of children of the school age who were neither at school nor at work than in any previous returns. (Hear.) It was taken for granted that the secular system precluded the religious training of the pupils, but he challenged any hon. member to name any secular school of which this assertion could truly be made. The present educational machinery was a mongrel system of State interference and voluntary subscription. They were told they must not be in a hurry, but he thought that the friends of education had shown considerable patience. *In the colony of Canada schools of recent establishment had been scattered over the country, in which the use of Scripture was voluntary, and it was now the boast of the Canadians that education in that country was more extensive than in some of the American States that were foremost in the possession of a system of education.* (Hear, hear.) He knew of no one to whom the friends of education were more indebted than to the right hon. gentleman (Sir J. Pakington) who had brought this subject forward to-night (cheers)—whose Bill, introduced two or three years ago, was one of the most acceptable ever produced, and who had distinguished himself by his attendance at various societies with the view of enlightening the public on this subject. (Cheers.) The right hon. gentleman had proposed this commission, not to recommend his own theories or to endorse his own opinions, but to investigate the whole subject with calmness, to say what was being done, what was wanting, and what means would be best adapted to supply those wants (cheers.)

Mr. ADDERLEY thought they asked what it was which hindered the spread of education among the poorer classes? Why it was that their employers did not appreciate education. If public money had been given to the employers, to induce them to encourage education, then all that the right hon. gentleman desired would have followed. If employers could be got to demand educated labourers then the grave difficulty in the way of the spread of education would be got rid of.

Mr. COWPER, vice-president of the committee of education, thought the great hindrance to the spread of education appeared to be, not in the deficiency of educational supply, but in the unwillingness of persons to make use of it; and he thought, therefore, that an inquiry into the habits, the circumstances, and the characters of the children of the working classes, and into the causes which prevented them from using to the full those advantages which were provided for them, and would be most useful. He would ask what was meant by the present system of education? It meant that old system of elementary instruction which had been founded by the wisdom of our forefathers, which had sprung out of the opinions, habits, and feeling of the English people, which had received a vigorous impulse in the present century from our various religious denominations, and which had attained its newest development from the minutes of council instituted by Lord John Russell—a system based on the long-established principle that an elementary school for the children of the poorer classes was a necessary part of the machinery of a parish or of a religious congregation, combined with the further principle which had more recently gained ground—that it was the duty of the State to provide the means of educating those children in all that would be useful to them in ordinary life, and of teaching them their duty alike to God and man. (Hear, hear.) That system had many defects. In some respects it was inferior to the continental systems. But there could be little doubt that it was better suited to the English people than the German system; that it was, in fact, as well suited to the English people as the German system was to the German people. (Hear, hear.) At present the rights of English parents were so scrupulously respected that they were allowed not only to choose the school to which they would send their children, but to refuse, if they pleased, to send them anywhere. He did not believe, therefore, that there would be any utility in the commissioners inquiring into the

question whether there should be a power given, as in Germany, to compel parents to send their children to school. The proposed inquiry was to be directed to the question whether the present system was sufficient for its object. That might be construed to mean, whether the Parliamentary grants distributed under the minutes of council had attained their object. Now, the first set of minutes stated that the grants were intended to promote the general improvement of education—first, by improving the buildings; second, by raising the standard of the masters; third, by the employment of pupil teachers; and fourth, by the improvement of the books. Investigation into those points could hardly now be required. The regulations under which the grants were applied secured that for every shilling given from the public purse 2s. must be subscribed by voluntary agency. Those who complained of the red-tapeism and rigidity with which the grants were distributed should remember that a relaxation of the conditions would weaken the stimulus now afforded to private exertions. The grants were not designed to supersede those private exertions, but to supplement and to encourage them, as well as to obtain a marked improvement in the quality of the teaching. The two great hindrances to the general spread of education were the early age at which the children now left the schools and the irregularity of their attendance—evils attributable to the indifference of their parents. These impediments existed not in this country only, but in France, where, the attendance not being compulsory, there were 850,000 children who did not go to school at all, and a vast number who went only two or three days a week, or for only half the year. So urgent and permanent were the demands for children's labour that he despaired of seeing any measure adopted that would induce the working classes to keep their children at school long enough to acquire a complete education. Attention ought not to be too much concentrated on the primary schools. It would be sad to think that the beginning and end of the education of the children of the working classes must take place in those schools. A foundation only could be laid there. The children of the poor would never be properly instructed until the schools were adapted to their circumstances. It was while these young persons were earning their daily bread that they could hope to enable them to follow up the commencement they had made in the elementary schools. Happily, in various parts of the country great efforts were being made to establish evening schools, and the Privy Council had not neglected that important subject. They now gave gratuities to teachers employed only in the evening, and who did not adopt education generally as a profession. They had also been extending grants for giving aid to schoolmasters who devoted themselves to the visiting of night schools and other seminaries connected with mechanics' institutions and similar organizations. There was not, in his opinion, a nobler field for the exertions of benevolent and philanthropic individuals at the present time than that in which they could render services as volunteers in evening schools for adult persons. (Hear, hear.) They had had in the metropolis some remarkable instances of the success of schools of that kind, and in those schools in which the success had been greatest it had depended on two conditions—first, a careful classification of the students, so that the young should not be mixed with the old, or the more advanced with the less advanced; and, secondly, a proper selection of the topics of instruction which were those that the class of persons frequenting the schools were the most desirous of being instructed in. In connexion with King's College, London, there were some evening schools, and there the professors left it to the students to select the subjects of instruction for themselves. A class so constituted had been formed, and it had answered admirably. The subjects most in request among the students in it had been French, Latin, and others in which the House would scarcely at first have supposed the class of persons in attendance would have any great desire to be instructed. The Working Men's College, in London, had also met with great success. That, indeed, was a means of instruction from which he hoped great things. (Hear, hear.) The Privy Council had not neglected another point—namely, industrial training both for boys and girls, which had met with every encouragement. A complaint which was frequently made, that girls in schools were not sufficiently taught needlework and domestic economy, the Privy Council had endeavoured to remedy by requiring that every girl before becoming a pupil teacher should be examined in those branches. He (Mr. Cowper) found the returns for last year showed that while there was school accommodation for 875,000 children, the average attendance did not exceed 570,000. He believed education owed almost all its force and support to the religious bodies and to the Government of the country. The great bulk of the owners of property and of the middle classes, he feared, did not appreciate education to the extent that those persons did who were actively employed in carrying it on.

Mr. HENLEY said he had privately asked his right hon. friend (Sir J. Pakington) if he would consent to limit his inquiry to the two great matters which most pressed upon the House, about which all wanted to obtain information, and to which all desired to apply a remedy. What were those two questions? One had been stated very fairly by the opposite name of "the half-time system." The larger view of it was to ascertain why children left school at so early an age, and to en-