

and partial process. The system has been now in operation for about 18 years, and I must say that, though with regard to those children who are under education it has been very successful, it has not spread so rapidly or so extensively as could have been wished. Let me ask, then, what is to be done? You are not making any very great progress, because, I believe, if any one will look at the amount and increase of the grants, and then look at the increase of the number of children, he will find that at least the 70,000 who have been added recently to the list of scholars are receiving grants from the State to a much larger proportionate amount in money than the 500,000 who first received the benefits of the system. (Hear, hear.) If that is the case, I think it is deserving of inquiry how the system can be beneficially extended. I can conceive many ways in which it might be beneficially extended. For example, I believe that in many cases the clergy of the established church, as well as the ministers of dissenting denominations, would be willing with their congregations to contribute to a certain amount, not, perhaps, complying with all the conditions of the Committee of Privy Council, but yet making better schools than now exist. Would not that be a desirable object? (Hear, hear.) I believe we have greatly improved the quality of education, but we ought not to lose sight of quantity, and if we find in certain districts education is making no progress, is it not desirable to examine whether, by restricted grants and less stringent conditions, we may not be able to extend the present system? (Hear, hear.) A bishop of the established church has told me that he thinks much might be done, and pointed out to me that there were whole districts in his diocese in which there were no schools of any value whatever. (Hear, hear.) I have heard others who have great practical experience say that while in their own places there were schools very well conducted, that the grants of the Privy Council were not only sufficient but were munificent, you might go for 10 or 12 miles from their parishes and not find a single locality in which a valuable school existed.

You cannot at present inquire into these facts; your inspectors cannot tell you anything about them. Is it not worth while then to have an investigation which shall inform you as to the actual state of things? (Hear, hear.) The right hon. Mr. Henley has truly said that in any plan of education which I have proposed I have always insisted upon at least a knowledge of the Bible being communicated to the children. I think it would be a very great misfortune if, in order to smooth over difficulties and put an end to jarring among different sectaries, any system of secular education were established by which religion should not be made the foundation of the instruction to be imparted in the schools. (Hear, hear.) I cannot but think that mere secular education would be regarded in this country in no other light than as being adverse to the Bible. (Hear, hear.) The people of England may, however, in my opinion, without adopting any such scheme, or indeed any very general scheme, be induced to extend that system of education which is already in force. It is said that the appointment of a commission would be productive of considerable expense. I may, however, remark that, as we have been told this evening 600,000*l.* are annually spent for educational purposes, we may very legitimately endeavour, by means of the labour of the proposed commission, to ascertain whether that sum might not be so managed as to go further than it now does in the extension of education in this country. (Hear, hear.) I am, then, of opinion that if this motion be carried, a very considerable object will be effected. It binds us to no particular system of education, while it lays the groundwork of future improvement. We possess in this country the inestimable advantage which the people enjoy in being at liberty to read at their schools the great works of our English authors. They are brought up in habits of liberty suitable to our constitution. No compulsory action could produce anything like the advantages which result from that freedom, and I for one cannot give my assent to any scheme which would tend to deprive them of its happy influence. (Cheers.)”