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## RECENT STATISTICAL INQUIRIES INTO EDUCATION IN ENGLAND AND WALES.

Ten years ago a statistical inquiry into the state of popular education in England and Wales was engrafted upon the general census, and a similar inquiry was proposed as part of the forthcoming census of 1861. The Government did not consider that it was necessary, or at least justifiable, inasmuch as some expense had already been incurred in a statistical investigation pursued by the Royal Commission on Education appointed in June 1858. The report of the Commission, which has just been presented to Parliament, embodies the results of this investigation, and they are by no means unimportant.

The first noteworthy fact is this—that the provision made for popular education in this country, and the extent to which the people take advantage of it, cannot be considered unsatisfactory when compared with other countries. In 1858 the proportion of week-day scholars to the estimated population of England and Wales was 1 to 7.7. Now, in France the proportion is only 1 to 9.0; in Holland, 1 to 8.11; and in Prussia, 1 to 6.27. Our voluntary system, therefore, has achieved results which fall very little short of those of the Prussian compulsory system—a fact which indicates the direction in which State interference with education is not required in this country. Of the 2,535,462 scholars in week-day schools in 1858, as many as 1,675,158 were in public schools; 860,304 were in private

persons. Of the 1,675,158 scholars in public schools 1,549,312 were in week-day schools supported by the various religious bodies; 43,098 were in Ragged, Philanthropic, Birkbeck, and factory schools; 47,748 in workhouse, reformatory, naval, and military schools; and about 35,000 in collegiate and the richer endowed schools. The religious bodies are therefore the chief supporters of education.

The number of scholars in Sunday schools in 1858 was 2,411,554, and in evening schools 80,966. Evening schools, although rapidly increasing in number, are as yet far too few. This fact is to be regretted when it is remembered that such schools are absolutely necessary to carry on the education of children who quit the week-day schools at an early age to meet the demands of what is commonly termed the "labour market." In fact, in a busy manufacturing and commercial country like England, it is hardly possible to overrate the importance of infant schools, which take up children early in life; and of evening schools, which carry on the education of the young after their attendance at the week-day schools has come to an end.

As far as the quantity of education is concerned we have little to complain of. The number of scholars under week-day instruction in schools is satisfactory. Their attendance, however, is exceedingly irregular. In the first place, the statistical report which the Commissioners have issued proves that of the total number at any one time on the registers of week-day schools the centesimal proportion attending daily is 76.1. In private week-day schools this proportion is 84.8; in evening schools only 67.6, and in Sunday schools 74.2. The annual amount of attendance in elementary public week-day schools is quite as unsatisfactory. The percentage of scholars on the registers who attended less than 50 days in the year was 17.4; who attended 50 and less than 100 days, 18.9; who attended 100 and less than 150 days, 20.9; who attended 150 to 200 days inclusive, 24.4; and above 200 days, 18.4. It follows therefore that the percentage of scholars in public as distinguished from private adventure week-day schools, who attended less than 100 days in the year, was 36.3. These percentages of attendance partly explain the fact that the great bulk of the scholars pass out of the elementary schools without an intelligent knowledge of their own language,—in short, without the power of reading intelligently; and when it is remembered that during the last few years the teaching in schools for the poor has gradually become more ambitious in