

Charitable institutions we have by hundreds, and in proportion, it would appear, as they increase, so does pauperism grow strong and bold, not to say respectable. If it were otherwise, it would be unnatural. Churches and chapels of every form and creed have arisen so rapidly amongst and around us, that from a distance our towns look like dry docks, so thickly are they studded with spires; yet crime flourishes amongst us. We have Boards of Health, Sanitary Commissioners, and a fine police force; nevertheless it is scarcely possible to walk a hundred yards without the annoyance of having to contemplate human misery in its most loathsome form, or to inhale stenches the most repugnant to the olfactory nerves. These are sacred liberties of the subject. What does the machinery of charity, church, and police annually cost; and what does it do, in return for its enormous cost, to reform the class that requires reform? These agencies doubtless are, in different ways and degrees, of great importance to the State; therefore let him not be slighted or abandoned; but as it is equally clear that they do not meet the evils which most urgently require removal, because they most threaten our social peace and safety, it is manifest that, to remove or successfully combat these evils, no reliance can be placed upon these agencies.

What then is "the one thing needful" that legislators have overlooked, and that can help us in our extremity? We answer a rational system of National Education, and placing the schoolmaster in his proper sphere; and it is to be hoped that the three agencies referred to will lend their charity, their religion, and their civic experience, to bring about this desirable end.

The Voluntary System in theory is good, remarkably good; and nothing could be better, under other circumstances; but experience has taught us that it is of no use in the present state of things. Society, as we know it, may be divided into three classes—1st, Those who consider education all important, and who will therefore avail themselves of its best machinery within their reach. 2d, Those who are indifferent, but who may be persuaded either way by example or by precept. 3rd, Those who are prejudiced against schools of every kind, and who will not allow their children to go to them unless compelled.

It is not necessary to indicate from which of these classes emanate the crime that fills our gaols, the pauperism that swamps our charities, or the filth which keeps us in autumnal dread of pestilence; nor would it be more necessary to ask for co-operation in an attempt to force upon this sick portion of our community the medicine necessary for its comfort and recovery, were it not for the existence of error, prejudice, and jealousy.

The leading error is the confounding instruction with education; the most obstructive jealousy is the fear expressed by one denomination that the children of that third class will, under any Government scheme, be instructed in sectarian tenets different from their own; and therefore the most ignorant upon these points would rather let Class No. 4 remain a curse to itself, and to the community, than run the risk of a few of its representatives picking up a smattering of any subject which these broad-souled individuals deem unbefitting certain stations: while the most bigoted, it would seem, prefer to leave salvation alone, so far as others are concerned, rather than give them a chance of reaching heaven by any door other than their own. It is to be hoped that many such do not exist; but it is to be feared that their spirit finds its way to oppose all suggested plans of National Education in shallow though specious argument—about the liberty of the subject—the glories of the Voluntary System—that Christianity should not be propagated by the arm of the law—that the force of example will surely, though perhaps slowly, elevate the lowest to their proper platform—a great deal about the sphere in which it has pleased Almighty God to place No. 3, and the danger of over-educating the lower orders. As to the liberty of the subject, we might fairly ask which is the greater violation of it—to restrain the liberty of five thieves, or to restrain the liberty of one father to make thieves of his five children? As to the glories of the Voluntary System, why not extend it to the payment of Taxes, and the respect of property? As to the non-propagation of Christianity by the arm of the law, if there is anything in it, let publications and others open their houses during the hours of Divine service. If there is any sincerity in the objection, do away with our quiet English Sunday, and substitute for those who like it the French antidote to rest. If the force of example is sufficient for social progress, abolish our costly prison system, and point out to the unblushing pick-pocket taken in the act the good lessons taught him by the orderly citizen. And as to the sphere in which it has pleased Almighty God to pass the poor wretches, it may be equally true that Almighty God has placed No. 1 in the sphere to get No. 3 out of his hobble; and that if No. 1 neglect to do it, he will have to take the consequences. As the last objection, that is to say, the last we now notice, "the danger of over-educating," we quite admit it, but not in the sense in which it is used. A human being, as has been already stated, when it comes into the world, comes with the seeds sown in it, so to speak, of every virtue and of every vice. Whether the virtues are to live, or to be choked by the vices, depends upon circumstances. Some of those circumstances are the tones of the voices that fall upon its infant ears; the coarseness, or otherwise, of the touch that greets its tiny limbs: the cleanliness, the luxury, or the reverse, that characterizes the abode of childhood; the truthfulness in word and deed of those entrusted with its youth. Let but the genial rays of probity and intelligence shine upon the first fifteen years of youth, and the seeds of virtue will have developed

into growths too strong to be overcome by the weeds; on the other hand, suffer but for a like period the blighting influences of ignorance and vice to brood over the lad, and he can scarcely fail to prove a moral deformity beyond the hope of perfect cure. In this sense there is a danger of over-educating; in this sense thousands of English children are daily being over-educated; but that a child can be over-educated in righteousness, is impossible. In another sense, also, we agree with the enemies to over-education, viz., that in which, by over-education, they convey the idea that children can be imprudently instructed, over-instructed, or too rapidly instructed; that the kind or extent of instruction which is requisite for one position in life, is not only not necessary, but may prove baneful, to its recipient in another. With this to the full it is easy to agree; and even to go further and to say, that incalculable injury is constantly done, in our schools for the poor, by teaching children to read before they have been passed through a proper preparatory training, before a taste for wholesome knowledge has been inculcated. It is well to note who the patrons are of the trash which daily gushes from the foul springs of a certain portion of our cheap press. Are they not, for the greater part, those who have been taught, at our lower public schools, to read: but not having been taught more, use (and they are not to be blamed for it) the power they possess, in storing their minds with falsehood, and their hearts with yearnings that can never be honourably gratified?

The distinction we draw between education and instruction, then, is this: by education we understand a drawing out or development of the physical, intellectual, and moral being; and consistently with our definition and explanation before given, this may be done so as to develop all that is lovable or all that is hateful in the being educated, so as to make him a blessing or a pest to himself and to society. And therefore, what we conceive should primarily be the aim of any national system of education, is to supply so far as is possible the education of the good to those whose home-influence is calculated to develop only or mainly the bad. By instruction, we understand the imparting of information upon any particular branch of human knowledge; and as it is self-evident at the time that children of the class in question can afford to give, must be limited, it is at least prudent to turn it to the best account, and to impart that species of knowledge likely to prove of the greatest use in after life. What we consider it the duty of the nation to provide is, that in every district throughout the kingdom there should be schoolrooms sufficient to admit all the poor of the locality; that these schoolrooms should be kept unexceptionably clean; that no child should be allowed to enter the school till its face and hands are washed, and its hair properly brushed; that therefore there should be attached to every school-building the requisite lavatories for the use of those whose parents neglect to send them to school in a proper condition; that there should be a covered gymnasium attached to each school-building; that no child should be allowed to learn to read till its mind is stored with proper and entertaining anecdotes of men, women, and children, who, by virtue and industry, have become ornaments of society; that a taste for refinement should be cultivated by covering the walls with pictures of merit; that the educator should be selected from a class as far as possible above that of the educated, and that no parent should be allowed to absent his child from school within the years of four and ten, without liability to penalty.—*Educational Times*

#### ON TEACHING SPELLING BY DICTATION.

A VARIETY of methods have been employed for teaching spelling, of which the most important are the following:—

1. Learning to spell lists of words by rote.
2. The correction of misspelt words.
3. Transcription.
4. Dictation.
5. Reproduction.
6. Composition.

In the case of reproduction and composition, this is a subsidiary, but still a very important part of the result which is desired as the effect of the exercise. The method which is most generally followed, and which we propose now more particularly to consider, is that known as dictation. This deservedly popular and much-used method has, however, we conceive, been very frequently, too exclusively, and almost always, injudiciously used. The teacher can often do more by a judicious variation and alternation of methods, than by an exclusive and slavish adherence to a single mode of instruction.

It would be altogether out of place to say more here of the exercises named above, as reproduction and composition, the teaching of spelling not being their principal object; but they conduce so far to that object, that it was necessary to include them in our list of methods.

With respect to the method which we have placed second on the list, very little consideration ought to convince the teacher that it is both unfair as a test, and unsound as a mode of instruction. It is with the latter consideration that we have to do here. It is an established principle in psychological science, that whilst the feelings and emotions are most easily affected through the medium of the ear, the intellectual faculties, and amongst them the memory, are most effectively acted upon by means of the eye. Whatever is frequently presented to the eye is easily remembered. If, then, we