

CONTEMPORARY OPINION ON EDUCATIONAL TOPICS.

PRINCE LEOPOLD ON EDUCATION.

H. R. H. Prince Leopold has been recently making two speeches in London, on the subject of education, which are well deserving of the notice of the public. The least enthusiastic person would be prepared to allow, that not only in their thought, but also in their purity of diction they are remarkable productions for a young man of under twenty-six. And it is only natural that they should possess especial interest as coming from a Prince of the blood, and a son of the Prince Consort. We propose, therefore, to call attention to some of the more remarkable passages.

The first of these speeches was delivered at a meeting held at the Mansion House, on February 19th, last, on the subject of University teaching. The meeting had been convened at the instance of the London Society for the extension of University Teaching. Prince Leopold in proposing a motion—after remarking how gratifying it was to Englishmen to see the part the old Universities, of which they are so proud, had taken of late in important educational reforms, continued :

There is, however, one advantage possessed by German Universities which must strike everybody. They diffuse knowledge throughout a much wider class of the community than Oxford or Cambridge have hitherto reached. Learning in England has been too much regarded as the privilege of a particular class. The conditions of residence at Oxford and Cambridge, however valuable or necessary for their own purpose, have kept away students of narrow means. The University of London has in a great degree removed this barrier, and now the older Universities unite with her in offering to all Londoners a cheap course of instruction, given by teachers of the same calibre as those who carry on the work of the Universities themselves. The undertaking of this great

additional task indicates that a very strong spirit has arisen in those old seats of learning. I cannot call it a spirit of benevolence, for these lectures are in no way a work of charity, and will, it is hoped, be self-supporting after the first few years. But it is a spirit of active sympathy with the wants and wishes of a very large class, whose needs in the direction of higher education have been too long ignored; and the impulse of which these London lectures are the outcome is not shown in one way only, or felt in one University alone. It is to Professor Stuart and other Cambridge men that we owe the establishment of those systems of lectures in the great manufacturing centres which are gradually developing into permanent institutions strong and living children of the Alma Mater who gave them birth. But it is not only in Cambridge that it has been felt that men of learning and of culture could hardly have a worthier aim than that of carrying high thoughts and elevating knowledge into homes which perhaps know few other joys. Of such aims we in Oxford have had a great, an inspiring example. We have seen a man in whom all the gifts of refinement and of genius meet, and who yet has not grudged to give his best to all—who has made it his main effort, by gifts, by teaching, by sympathy, to spread among the artisans of Sheffield and the labourers of our English fields the power of drawing the full measure of instruction and happiness from this wonderful world, on which rich and poor can gaze alike. Such a man we have seen in Professor Ruskin. And among all the lessons which those who have had the privilege of his teaching and of his friendship must have gained to carry with them through life, none, I think, can have sunk deeper than the lesson that the highest wisdom and the highest pleasure need not be costly or exclusive, but may be almost as cheap and as free as air, and that the greatness of a nation must be measured not by her wealth or her apparent power, but by the degree in which all her people have learnt to gather from the world of books, of art, of nature, a pure, and an ennobling joy.

The remainder of the speech was occupied with a consideration of the work that lay before the society in London.