

language, it will be applied only to the superior in intellect and character. Education therefore will cause crime to disappear, will open countless avenues to escape from poverty, and will ultimately reassert the equality of men, so long obscured by monopolies and privileges.

This is the theory in its most consistent—or shall I say its most relentless?—form. The majority of believers in it may not venture beyond the confident assertion that education *tends* to do all these things. But let the reader remember that, if at the same time men proclaim the indefinite progress of our race; if, instead of predicting cycles of growth and of decay, like the ancients, they look forward to irreversible conquests over the ills and weaknesses of men, then the statement that any cause tends to a great effect is a mere modest postponement of what is really inevitable. I propose now to review the practical steps actually taken for the realization of this theory, and to estimate the actual gains or losses which these measures have entailed. We shall then be in a position to revert to the theory, and consider how far it is sound, and, if sound, how far it is likely to meet with irreducible obstacles.

The last twenty years have been marked not only by the progressive nations of the Continent, but among the careless and dilatory English, who hate new theories, by great new systems of instruction, organized by the State, and imposed upon its citizens with little regard to that liberty of the subject which was once thought the goal of all civilisation. In the larger part of Europe compulsory schools have been imposed upon the people, taxes are levied to raise funds, and parents are coerced to send their children to be taught. The old Roman theory of the absolute right of parents to do what they will

with their offspring has given way to a theory akin to Plato's, that all children, as possible citizens, are the wards of the State; and so we have come to this strange condition of things, that while the law is still very shy about interfering with physical cruelty in parents, the moral cruelty of having their children ignorant is promptly punished. Nor is this compulsory instruction confined to the mere elements of knowledge: there are grades and standards; handbooks and compendiums of science which, if learned off by heart, will earn rewards for both pupil and teacher, and astonish the parents at home with the wonders of modern knowledge. In Ireland these primary schools are supplemented by a great Intermediate system, wherein the masses are prepared for higher instruction by examinations, prizes, and result fees, which, instead of coercing, now coax the growing child with bribes, and soothe any remaining qualms about overwork in the parent by exhibiting pecuniary returns, instead of outlays, as the result of acquiring knowledge. The edifice is crowned by the creation, not only of University Extension Lectures, which are supposed to bring all the benefits of the highest culture to the common man's door, but by the endowment and chartering of new bodies, called indeed universities, but only imitating the ancient seats of learning in that they give examinations and confer the titles of learning on those who have learnt some books, and can answer part of what they are asked about them. All this is now done for such small fees as make it possible for the poorest classes to call themselves Masters and Doctors, and consider themselves on an equality with the literary classes of a less enlightened generation.

But all this elaborate multiplication of examining bodies, these cheap titles and degrees, these reductions of