

The man who in this world foolishly thinks he has no task before him, or he who is found unable or afraid to do it, is but a useless weed, occupying the place of a worthier plant; and he must inevitably, by the pressure of society, be rooted out, or ploughed into the ground to rot for the enrichment of the soil by which his more useful and more energetic successor is to be supported. It is quite true that the errors of which the present condition of Ireland is the result, have been the growth of circumstances which now happily belong to history alone; but we must recognise that for the reparation of those errors it is by no means sufficient for those circumstances to have ceased to operate. Totally new conditions and new influences must be brought into action for their atonement: we must use our best exertions to base the future prospects of the country upon a system of enlightened and remunerative labour; we must endeavor that the mental and physical powers of her inhabitants shall be brought fully and harmoniously into play for her improvement, by the cordial co-operation of peasant and of noble, of landlord and tenant, and thereby suppress that growth of social disorganization which has its strongest roots in sloth and ignorance. But to do this each man should be made aware that he must have a business, and that he must learn it; that he must be industrious and be educated. He who remains unconscious of his position must be content to learn that society will progress without him, and that he cannot be allowed to live in sloth upon the fruits of the exertions of more useful and more estimable men.

Before, however, the duties of society can be fulfilled in Ireland by those to whom our observations specially apply, it is imperative that the great obstacle to improvement, the general absence of practical industrial knowledge, should be removed. In Ireland instruction must precede improvement; that is, if it be really wished that the improvement of the country should be for the advantage of its inhabitants—a postulate which, as we believe we are safe in assuming, we shall not place under discussion. The corner-stone of whatever social edifice is to be erected or preserved in Ireland, must be the practical instruction of the people; and we therefore believe that we require the aid of the Board of Education far more than of the Board of Works; and we further believe that for every shilling that any plan of practical instruction could cost in Ireland, there would be repaid to the state tenfold the sum in smaller charges for extra-police, national defences, and special commission trials.”

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“Though we have above stated that, for observing the full results of education, we must watch the progressive development of the boy into the man, we still fully admit the general accuracy of the adage, it is never too late to learn; and we consider that in the improvement of this country the instruction of the adult population must occupy an important place. But that is not education: instruction is a totally different thing. In the boy you should form his mind, his habits of thought,

his morals; in the man you can only teach him to do properly a thing which he did not know how to do before. Even this will be doing a great deal under existing circumstances; and we consequently rank among the most efficient means of ameliorating the condition of Ireland, the practical instruction of the adult population.

We therefore consider that for the full educational improvement of the people of this country in industry, there should be the means afforded of supplying:—

- 1st. Instruction in practical agriculture to the adult farming classes.
- 2nd. Agricultural education in its full and proper sense to the rural population in the primary schools.
- 3rd. Agricultural education of a more advanced and scientific character in the academies or colleges in which the children of the middle and higher classes are educated.”

Under the head of practical instruction of the adult agricultural population, the writer pays a merited tribute of praise to Mr. Blacker, of Armagh, to whom agricultural improvement in Ireland is deeply indebted. This gentleman many years since proposed to the Irish landowners the importance of having experienced agriculturists to manage their estates; men capable of giving familiar oral instruction in the best systems of cultivation, adapted to the means of the people, and the wants of the country. We believe that Mr. Blacker's exertions were the means of forming several agricultural societies, and of eliciting a spirit of enquiry and desire for improvement among a considerable portion of the adult population. The agricultural instructors that were sent out last year under the patronage of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant, and his Grace the Duke of Leinster as President of the National Agricultural Society, were the means, judging from their excellent reports, of creating a wide and deep interest in the cause of rural improvement. These men were wisely selected from among the Irish people, who consequently understood their peculiar habits and wants—and whose knowledge of agriculture *had been acquired in the field* as well as from books. It is to be hoped that this valuable agency will be continued. On agricultural instruction in Primary Schools our author observes:

“With the views which we have already endeavoured to express of the true nature and powers of education, it will be well understood, that it is to the operation of the national system of education we look for great improvement in the social condition of this country. Build up as you may with Corinthian capitals, or any other architectural ornaments, painted or gilded to entrap the admiration of the mere passer-by; if the building mate-