

AN INAUGURAL ADDRESS ON EDUCATION.*

BY PROF. GOLDWIN SMITH, M.A.

YOU will not expect me to sing the praises of education. Education has no longer any enemies, and, therefore it needs no defenders. If a prejudice lingers in some secluded nooks, it lingers only like the snow in the hollows, soon to melt beneath the advancing sun. I did hear the other day of a gentleman farmer who thanked heaven that he had not been left long at school, for, if he had been, he should have got ideas. A Spanish priest, or a statesman of the Spanish school, may dislike knowledge because it banishes superstition; but nobody in a country like ours can fancy that superstition is in any respect worth preserving, or doubt that a society in any degree founded upon it would be in a most unsound and perilous condition. We need not overestimate the value of merely intellectual training, or ascribe to it powers of magically conjuring away the faults of men or communities which it does not really possess. Character, I fully admit, not intellect, is the chief thing to be considered. Character is the main source both of our usefulness and of our happiness in this life, and the sole earthly ground of any hopes we may have beyond. Character is the only thing belonging to us which

is not utterly swallowed up and lost in the vastness of the material universe, or which we can imagine to have in it the germ of immortality. But there is no opposition between character and intellect. Without a certain measure of intellect, no character but that of a monk or a fakir can exist. Without a certain degree of culture, we shall hardly, as a general rule, have those sensibilities which are essential to moral beauty. In a political point of view, whatever may be the case under a despotism, general education is the vital necessity of a free State. "We must educate our masters" were the words that leaped from the lips of a Conservative but keen-sighted statesman as soon as the Reform Bill of 1867 had passed. The phrase is needlessly harsh. Our object is that nobody should be master or servant, in a political sense; but that all should be coequal members of a community having the good of all for its end and rule. But though the phrase is harsh, the truth is momentous, and the governing classes have shewn that they feel it to be so. I do not think it possible for any one acquainted with American society not to be convinced of the immense political value of popular education. We

* [By the courtesy of Mr. Goldwin Smith we are permitted to give publicity in our pages to the following address delivered by that gentleman as President, for the year 1877-8, of the Salt Schools, Shipley, England. These Schools are called by the name, and dedicated to the memory, of Sir Titus Salt, whose munificence not only found expression in founding them, but in creating the almost Utopian town of Saltaire—an industrial village formed of the homes of the work-people employed by that philanthropic Baronet and worthy merchant prince.—ED. C. E. M.]