

world, but was hindered, and to a large extent is still hindered, from diffusing the sweet and precious gospel of knowledge. Hindered by ages of violence and barbarism; hindered by devastating and wicked wars waged at the beck of some Alexander or Napoleon; hindered by ecclesiastical crotchets, and still worse ecclesiastical cruelties; hindered by the so-called unity of the church where she has been one, and by the jealousies of the war fragments where she has been divided; hindered by ignorance of the laws of political economy, leaving thousands needlessly to wear away their weary days in striving to live by bread alone, and not able to live by that; hindered by the pedantries of a false learning, and by the subtleties of a barren philosophy; hindered by the fastidiousness and selfish isolation of the higher classes; hindered by the improvidence and sensuality of the lower. In this, as in many other cases, the effect becomes again a cause, and runs on with an ever accumulating force. I do not lose sight of the brighter aspects of European civilization, nor forget the grand old work of science, literature and art. The far-off mountain peaks glitter in the sunlight, but only the more dreary seems the darkness of the valley below. The names of Bacon, Newton and Shakespeare, are enough to show what a wealth of intellect belongs to the Saxon race, but remind us also, how many a "Milton, pregnant with celestial fire," born amid the struggling poor, has waited in vain for some favouring breeze to kindle his genius into life, and has carried at last into another world the dormant faculties intended to illumine the darkness of this. Few educated persons feel that they have made the most of their powers. There are many palpable blunders, much waste of opportunity, many slumbering energies, and often a bitter sense of failure. If nations had souls, and could be awakened to an individual consciousness, how sad would be their knowledge of what they are as compared with what they might have been! How like rain would fall their scalding tears over their neglected gifts, their wasted years and their forsaken offspring capable of the highest spiritual life, but doomed to herd "like dumb driven cattle," though with a sense of misery that dumb cattle can never know. Such tears wept Jesus of Nazareth over Jerusalem, but we fail to realize how, through the long centuries, there has been room for similar lamentations over London, Dublin, Paris, nay, all the great cities of the globe. It is a terrible mistake to suppose that the degradation of the common people tells upon them alone. All the parts of a nation are members one of another. The filth of the hovel sends a plague to the palace, and the ignorance of the masses reacts more or less upon the entire life of the people. The neglected classes become also the dangerous classes, and furnish material for the work of the demagogue, the tyrant, and the religious imposter. Let education become universal, and descend as an heirloom from one age to another, and there will ere long grow up an enlightened public opinion, capable of holding in check the mad ambition of kings, the schemes of mercenary politicians, and the folly of those who retard Christianity by mingling with it dogmas of their own invention.

AIDS IN OUR EFFORTS TO DIFFUSE EDUCATION.

There is much yet to do, far more than is generally supposed, to perfect and extend the educational system established in this country, but having the advantage of an early introduction and a general approval, it will not be easily displaced or rendered inoperative. For along with the schools which we have provided for the people, we have extraordinary helps and resources inherited by us from our forefathers. We in a manner combine the advantages of youth with the accumulations of time. We have not like other nations to wait for the slow development of language; we speak already a tongue matured by the lapse of ages and enriched by spoil gathered from all languages of the earth. We have not to grope blindly for models of eloquence, of story or of song; Chatham and Burke, Macaulay and Gibbon, Burns and Dryden, Milton, Tennyson and Shakespeare are all our own. We have not to work out by a series of painful experiments the first problems of constitutional government; the parliamentary and judicial history lies spread out before us, with its precedents, its warnings, its inspiring examples. The military glory of Britain will make us strong, her battles teach us how to do or die. The mother country having planted us, enriched us, and seen us shoot up into bloom is supposed by some to be about to leave us alone to struggle with the storm. We would fain postpone the hour of abandonment, but if it must come we doubt not that we shall be able to live, sending our roots still deeper into the soil and our branches yet further to the sky. Nor need we altogether deplore the slow influx of European population to our shores. Could we use the type we might indeed pray for a large immigration, but often the classes that come are the classes we could best spare. This at least we shall gain by the delay—a better opportunity to lay in our own way unencumbered by violent mobs or evil traditions, the safe and sound basis of national weal. Let us not

forget that it is from this foreign element and its medieval superstitions that has come the chief danger to our common schools, and which even threatens the school system of the neighbouring republic. Much as we have been harassed by a section of this foreign population in the recent villainous attempts of Fenian hordes, there are events transpiring constantly in the United States sufficient to show that it is far better to meet these miscreants on the border as foes than to harbour them among us as citizens and friends. May all such emigrants continue to find a settlement in the great republic until we shall have reared a rational generation capable of outnumbering and controlling them. Then when our educational institutions are well established in the hearts of the people, and the country is pervaded by the leaven of a Protestant Christianity, we shall less fear "the blind hysterics of the Celt," and welcome more largely the ignorant and degraded of all lands—

"Nor heed the skeptic's puny hands
While near the school the church-spire stands,
Nor fear the blinded bigot's rule
While near the church-spire stands the school."

NEEDS FOR WATCHFULNESS TO KEEP DOWN IGNORANCE.

But let us remember that Canada has no exception from weeds of native growth. No patron saint has given us perpetual security from vermin. Both country and town will breed their respective evils. It is only by unceasing vigilance and well-considered efforts that we shall keep down the growing heathenism. It is for the state so to shape her educational measures that there may be no exemption or exclusion from the common enlightenment. Religious agency must for many reasons be left to voluntary endeavours, but as regards the common school, I, for one, hesitate not to accept, when necessary, the principle of compulsion. We recognise the rights of the parent, but we recognise also his duties; and we recognise in no one, whether parent, priest or potentate, the prerogatives of arbitrary power. No government hesitates to interfere with these imaginary rights. As the parent may be restrained from inflicting bodily torture upon his child, as the husband is compelled to share his property with his wife, as the citizen is compelled to contribute to the maintenance of public order, so also should the parent be compelled, when necessary, to give his child the elementary training provided by the state. Of course there are difficulties and objections, but these are more than counter-balanced by the evils of ignorance. There is to be considered not merely the interests of the child but of the community; and not only for to-day but for generations to come. It is the cumulative power of such evils that we have to dread. The stream may be small at first and disregarded, but it will gather volume as it goes, until at length it will sweep on with a defiant and desolating flood. We must aim from the first at a national system, which means not merely schools open to all, but serviceable to all. We must keep to it as a political creed that no one has a right to be grossly ignorant, that no one in Canada has occasion to be so. Really the world has so long gazed on the picture of a degraded humanity that the result of human folly is almost mistaken for a law of God. But why should the darker aspects of European society form a part of our young ideal? Providence has given us a new world for a new and better order of things. We hope for forms of civilization that shall outdo the past, if not in the way of special excellence, and the elevation of particular classes, at least in the way of a wider diffusion among all classes of the benefits intended for all. We hope that it is possible to have nations Christian in a better sense than any are now so; that it is possible so to organise society that homeless children and ruined women shall no more be numbered by hundreds of thousands; nay, that it is possible to have nations without paupers, without heathen, without brothels, without tyrants, and without wars. (Applause.) I seem to hear as I pass along the voice of the scoffer deriding all this as a dream. But I believe in dreams, and also in visions. The dreams of our better nature are prophecies, and many such a prophecy of olden time is embodied in the history of to-day. Faith and hope are truer guides than skepticism or despair. "All despair," says Bacon, "is a reproaching of the Deity." Despair of human progress is eminently so, and a reproaching of the Holy Scriptures in particular. If we believe in a millennium let us not divest it of reality, or doubt of there being a road toward it. When it comes it must "give our faith the life of fact."

"And better than we dare to hope
With Heaven's compassion make our longings poor."

WHAT SHOULD A CHILD LEARN?

Adverting to topics somewhat more immediately within our reach, I find few of more importance than the question of what the child should learn, and what the instructor should teach. A rational answer is not to be expected from the pupil, often not from the parent, and sometimes not even from the teacher. It is certainly a