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MODERN SYSTEMS OF EDUCATION AND THEIR FOUNDERS.

JOSEPH LANCASTER. BORN, 1778. DIED, 1838. ÆTAS 60 YEARS.
No. VI.

Joseph Lancaster was born in Kent Street, Southwark, on the 27th of November, 1778. His father was a Chelsea pensioner, who had served in the British army during the American war. To the pious example and early instruction of his parents he always attributed, under the divine blessing, any acquaintance he possessed with the power of religion. "My first impressions," he says, "of the beauty of the Christian religion were received from their instructions." There is a touching beauty in his own account of himself as a little child, retiring to a corner, repeating the name of Jesus, and as often reverently bowing to it. "I seemed to feel," he says, "that it was the name of one I loved, and to whom my heart performed reverence. I departed from my retirement, well satisfied with what I had been doing, and I never remembered it but with delight." This little incident was an epitome of the man, and, inconsistent as it may seem to be with his future religious profession as a member of the society of Friends, it truly shadowed forth the enthusiastic, not to say passionate feeling, which through life so eminently characterized him.

About this period, and that of his attaining the age of eighteen, he seems to have been an assistant at two schools, one a boarding, the other a day school; and thus, as he afterwards states in a letter to Dr. Bell, he became acquainted with all the defects attendant on the old system of tuition in both kinds of schools. At eighteen he commenced teaching on his own account in his father's house, and the following description of the undertaking, extracted from an old report of the Borough Road School, is from his own pen. It refers to the year 1798.

"The undertaking was begun under the hospitable roof of an affectionate parent: my father gave the school-room rent free, and after fitting up the forms and desks myself, I had the pleasure, before I was eighteen, of having nearly ninety children under instruction, many of whom I educated free of expense. As the number of scholars continued to increase, I soon had occasion to rent larger premises."

On the outside of his schoolroom he placed the following printed notice:—"All that will may send their children and have them

educated freely; and those that do not wish to have education for nothing, may pay for it if they please." This filled his school.

As the number of his pupils increased, a new schoolroom was provided, chiefly through the benevolent aid of the late Duke of Bedford and Lord Somerville, "who," says Lancaster, "appeared to be sent by Providence to open wide before me the portals of usefulness for the good of the poor." "The children," he adds, "now came in for education like flocks of sheep; and the number so greatly increased, as to place me in that state which is the mother of invention. The old plan of education, in which I had been hitherto conversant, was daily proved inadequate to the purposes of instruction on a large scale. In every respect I had to explore a new and untrodden path. My continued endeavours have been happily crowned with success." Nothing can be more beautiful than the account given of his position and character at this time. He was always domesticated with his pupils. In their play hours he was their companion and their friend. He accompanied them in bands of two, three, and (on one occasion) of five hundred at once, to the environs of London for amusement and instruction.

Nor did he care only for their intellectual necessities. Distress and, privation were abroad:—he raised contributions, went to market, and between the intervals of school, presided at dinner with sixty or eighty of the most needy of his flock. "The character of benefactor he scarce thought about; it was absorbed in that of teacher and friend. On Sunday evenings, he would have large companies of pupils to tea, and after mutually enjoying a very pleasant intercourse, would conclude with reading a portion of the sacred writings in a reverential manner. Some of the pupils would vary the exercise occasionally by reading select pieces of religious poetry, and their teacher would at times add such advice and observations, as the conduct of individuals, or the beauty and importance of the subject required. Is it any wonder that with pupils so trained, to whom so many endearing occasions presented, evidences should abound of affection, docility and improvement! In them he had many ready co-operators, and, however incapable of forming designs, never were agents more prompt and willing to execute." These were his best and most joyous days.

He was now rapidly becoming an object of public attention. His school-room was visited by "foreign princes, ambassadors, peers, commoners, ladies of distinction, bishops and archbishops;" his publications were passing rapidly through editions, each larger than its predecessor; his school, ably and zealously conducted by youths trained under his own eye, and imbued with his own enthusiastic spirit, was forsaken for lectures in all the principal towns of the kingdom, in every part of which he was received with the most marked and flattering attentions from all classes; even the monarch did not disdain to admit him, uncovered, to his presence, but sustained, encouraged, and applauded him. This interview is too characteristic to be omitted.

"On entering the royal presence, the king said: 'Lancaster, I have sent for you to give me an account of your System of Education, which I hear has met with opposition. One master teach five hundred children at the same time! How do you keep them in order Lancaster?' Lancaster replied, 'Please thy majesty, by the same principle thy majesty's army is kept in order—by the word of command.' His majesty replied, 'Good, good; it does not require an aged general to give the command—one of younger years can do it.' Lancaster observed, that, in his schools, the teaching