

lation among that class who frequented the schools. The hard-working artisan who cared about education took advantage of the present system; the man who could be persuaded by religious bodies to entrust them with the care of his children availed himself of it; but those whom they had to deal with were neither of these classes, and the danger arose from that cause.

There was another important branch of the subject. Although neither the House nor the country would consent to one religious denomination being aided more than another, or to the public money being given for religious teaching, yet there was a strong feeling in the country that they should in no way interfere with or discourage religious teaching. A very large number of working-men care about religious teaching, and he did not believe any measure would be popular which tended in any way to check it.

There were many other difficulties. There was the difficulty of rating; the difficulty of giving aid from the Consolidated Fund; and the difficulty as to the securities which should be given for good teaching. Then they came to the two questions, whether schools ought to be free or not, and whether they should look forward to compulsory attendance. The time had not come for expressing an opinion on either of these points; but he must say he believed the establishment of free schools in large towns would, to a large extent, have the effect of swallowing up all the other schools, or making it necessary that they should be free also. As to the question of compulsory attendance, he thought the argument that it would be un-English was an absurd one, and it was an argument the force of which was destroyed by the Legislature having compelled the parents of children who were at work to send them for education. But while he was of that opinion, he must say that he thought there would be great difficulty, considering the English mode of Government and English ideas, in putting the machinery for compulsory education in operation, and making the law anything more than a *brutum fulmen*. The experience of Germany had often been cited. In that country compulsion was not necessary now, because every parent sent his child without any compulsion; but he believed that if compulsion had not been provided for, the same result would not have been witnessed. America was rather more in point, and the experience of New England in this matter was rather curious. The Rev. Mr. Fraser, who was sent out as an education commissioner to the United States, made a most able report, in which he stated that there were compulsory laws in New England for the attendance of children at school. This was afterwards denied by Mr. Elihu Burritt, and Mr. Adams declared that Mr. Burritt was right and Mr. Fraser wrong. When Mr. Fraser was asked how he came to make such a statement, he proved that such an Act was in existence; but it afterwards turned out that though the Act existed, it was so contrary to American feeling that it had not been made use of for so long a period, that its existence was forgotten. He believed that attempts had recently been made to put an Act in operation, but he did not know with what success.

Allusion had been made to the number of Bills that had been brought forward on the subject of education. The year before last his right hon. friend the Home Secretary and himself tried their hand at legislation, and their experience showed the difficulties which surrounded the question. Public opinion made marked progress between that period and last year. Whereas, the year before last the measure was only for permissive rating, it afterwards contained a power of compulsory rating in those districts in which it could be proved that there was no other mode of providing schools. They discovered that the converts they obtained were, generally speaking, a few months later than the time at which it would have been possible to pass the Bill proposed. Very powerful support was given to the Bill of 1867, when they found it necessary to bring in the Bill of 1868. That only showed that not only had they to deal with a difficult subject, but with a changing and a progressive opinion. It was the duty of Government to take up the question, and it must be dealt with in a comprehensive manner.

Mr. Mundella said Germany had been spoken of as a country that was governed by centralisation, but it could not be said that Switzerland was so governed. He was familiar with Switzerland and Saxony. He had gone through Saxony, where he had been an employer of labour, and he had never, in the city, in the fields, or in the mountains there, met a child ten years of age who could not read and write with facility. More than that, he was borne out by a return which was made to this House last year. Lord Stanley, who was then Foreign Secretary, requested the Secretary of Legation at Berne to prepare a return. That return was of a remarkable character, and it completely upset all the theories that had been advanced against compulsory education. Mr. Rumble in that report said that in Switzerland the people were proud of their institutions, and convinced that the only sound and lasting basis of them was to be found in as widespread a scheme of public education as possible; and he went on to show that after little more than thirty years the state of education was such that they could state in sober truth that hardly a child in the Confederation was incapable of reading and writing with facility, unless physically and mentally incapable. Mr. Rumble attributed this to compulsory education, and showed that although only thirty years had elapsed since it was estab-

lished, compulsion was no longer necessary. He himself had examined large schools in Saxony, and conversed with the heads of schools, and they had assured him over and over again that the idea that we had that it would be necessary to call in the aid of the police was absurd. In Switzerland, in the canton of Zurich, they had an Educational Board. The children were all registered, and every house was registered, and every child of six years of age was required to attend school, and continue at school until it was twelve. If the parent did not send the child the schoolmaster reported him to the Educational Board, who fined him a franc or two, and it was considered there to be as disgraceful for a man to refuse education to his child as to refuse it food or clothing.

He could never realise to his mind that we could not accomplish the same thing as was accomplished in Switzerland by the will of the people. He believed that if the people were educated the cost would be amply compensated for by the decrease of pauperism and crime, and by the absence of that squalor and misery which they now saw in their large towns.

He had taken the statistics of 12,000 persons employed in labour, and not 20 per cent. could write a letter decently, and he did not think that 50 per cent. of them could write at all. That was a disgrace to the country, and he hoped they would soon agree on a measure to give education not only to the children in large towns, but to every child in the country.

Mr. Jacob Bright remarked that in his intercourse with workmen he always found that they cared very little about theological teaching, and he believed they would always send their children where they could get the best secular instruction.

Sir John Pakington believed that two things were necessary to secure a satisfactory solution of this question. The first was that there should be a strong Government, and the second was that that Government should be determined to settle the question. Now the first of these requirements they already had, and the only thing that remained was to see whether they would grapple in a determined spirit with this matter. It could scarcely be expected they should bring forward a measure this session, because there was already sufficient business to occupy their entire attention, but he hoped that next year they would see their way to dealing with it. He had changed the opinion which he had often expressed, which was that the present system of education had been tried enough, and that what they wanted was a better one.

Mr. Alderman Carter, thought that all the ignorance of the country was not concentrated, as some hon. members seemed to suppose, in the large towns, but the rural districts had their full share. He knew well the feeling of the working classes, and he had no hesitation in saying that in the large towns the people were almost unanimously in favour of the compulsory system.— They were satisfied that the present denominational system had failed to reach and educate the great masses, and therefore they must have a system which would not merely take hold of the pauper, the criminal, and those who were connected with them, but would reach that class which happened to be between these, and thus prevent them from becoming criminals.

“ALWAYS LATE.”

GAZE on this picture. I am old;
My palsied arms will scarcely fold;
I crawl on crutches.
“Shut out, shut out!” groan I and fret;
“Too late! too late!” I cry, and yet
Too soon, I know, the grave will get
Me in its clutches.

Shut out! That tale began the day
I took my sad and sinuous way
To Mother Molly’s,
Late, and with lesson still unlearned,
And faltering, trembling, home I turned;
I knew she had a birch that burned
To lash my follies!

Shut out! attained to man’s estate,
I found myself, and found too late,
An ignoramus:
I laboured low, and hard, and long,
And grubbed amid the common throng,
And gabbled about right and wrong,
And cursed the famous.

So here I sit, a sack of bones
Upon the highway, breaking stones:
I have reputed,
Too late, of course! And could a slave
E’er boast a stone above his grave,
This is the epitaph I’d crave.—
“The LATE lamented.