

and most sacred duties. The system of examinations which has been organised is no novelty. Those who come from the Universities have had long experience upon that subject: and if you are told that the effect of competition is to introduce an ungenerous rivalry into the minds of youth, if you are told that the stimulus given to schools will lead to the neglect of the mass of the pupils, in order that there may be more time and greater opportunity in the higher cultivation of a favoured few—if you are told, as you are sometimes honestly, but erroneously told, that the effect of competition is to give an undue preponderance to the intellectual, as compared with the moral elements of character—rely upon it that those who speak from an experience which has extended now over centuries, will tell you that you may safely dismiss from your minds at once all such apprehensions. *I say frankly and fearlessly that there is nothing more generous than sentiments which are inspired into the breast of youths by rivalry, such as that to which I am now referring.* It is in itself essentially incompatible with selfish ideas and objects. Learning is not a limited quantity in such sense that he who obtains it causes his neighbor to lose it. On the contrary, every one who obtains it becomes a standard-bearer for others; and the treasure to which he invites them is a treasure which is acceptable to all mankind. And as to schools, depend upon it that is an idle apprehension, and that the schools which pay the greatest attention to their best boys will, as a general rule, pay the greatest attention to all their boys. As to the apprehended preponderance of the intellectual over moral qualities, I will venture to say to those who make such an objection, that they are under an error as serious as can well be conceived; for if there is one more fact more generally and conclusively established than another, by examinations of the teachers of youth, it is this, that diligence, and the self-denial which diligence involves, are in themselves a test of moral qualities, no less than the promise of intellectual distinction. I see with pleasure the resumption by the ancient Universities of the country of their true relation to all classes of the community, as institutions which have been the pride and glory of Christendom, and which ought to dispense their benefits to all ranks of our fellow-citizens. This was the true aim of the Universities upon their first foundation. They never were intended to be the monopoly of the rich. They were intended to work the deep mines of capacity and of character which exist throughout the whole of every great civilized community; they were intended to draw forth from the hidden corners and recesses, wherever they existed, the materials of genius and excellence for the glory of God and the advantage of the country; and that aim they fulfilled. Go back to the periods when the great movements of the human mind commenced, and see where it was that those processes were elaborated, and whence it was that 400, 500, 600, 700 years ago, light flowed in England. It was from the Universities; and as one great poet, Milton, has called Athens the "Eye of Greece," so well and truly may it be said, in reference to their early history, that the Universities of Oxford and Cambridge were the eyes of England. I do not say that at present that function is fully discharged. On the contrary, we see that for several centuries those universities have performed duties most important indeed and most useful, but comparatively limited. In the main, their utility has been chiefly confined to the rich. They have educated the clergy, and in so doing have performed a great service to the country. They have educated the greater number—almost the whole, indeed—of the sons of our high nobility. They have educated the principal part of the sages of the law; but that is not the whole of their duty; we have in England vast classes of men who are not comprised in the category to which I have referred—vast classes of whom the great assembly now before me is a specimen—and I must confess that I have never come in South Lancashire, whether into this town of Liverpool, or into the great and intelligent community of Manchester, without feeling deeply what a blank there was—what a void existed requiring to be filled up—and how the connexion between the Universities and this great community of South Lancashire had so dwindled away that it would make but little difference in the Universities if South Lancashire were swallowed up, or in South Lancashire if Oxford and Cambridge were in ruins. This shows that we have fallen far short of that which our forefathers designed. Am I to be told that because Liverpool is a great commercial community, therefore the higher culture of the human mind is to be banished from its boundary? There cannot be a grosser error. Commerce and learning have been united in many communities, and Florence was among the first of commercial cities at the very time when it gave birth to a greater amount of intellectual force, and did more for the civilization of mankind than any other community at any period of Christian history. Do not, therefore, let us submit to the degrading belief that if commerce is to flourish and grow in Liverpool, Liverpool must of necessity lie behind in reference to those pursuits which do so much to refine and elevate the human mind, and which form the principal subjects of our consideration to-day. And permit me to say, that if I have spoken strongly on the

subject of competitive examinations, and being sanguine in my expectations of beneficial results from them, I am free to admit that I have perhaps something in the nature of local sentiment, withal respect, because I feel assured that in any system of competition that may be established—and provided that it be a fair and open system—South Lancashire and Liverpool will hold their own. My Lord, in urging on this meeting that they should hail the occasion which has called us together to-day and should consider the present proceedings as only the very beginning of what is henceforth to be accomplished; I do so because I feel that those proceedings promise the renewal and the re-establishment of that relation between the old Universities of the country, and the great commercial and manufacturing communities of the country, which is not, indeed, altogether in abeyance, but which has been feeble, which has been languishing, and which requires to be reinvigorated and restored. The Universities cannot afford to dispense with the aid and moral influence which they would derive from striking their roots deeper among you. They are at present engaged almost entirely, although not exclusively, in providing education for the rich—for a class which will, if the Universities do not provide for them, contrive, in virtue of their riches, to provide it for themselves. We desire to see them providing education for those who are not able to provide it, at least in its highest form, from their own resources. I am sanguine enough to believe that these local examinations will not end with local examinations, but that those who are brought into contact with the culture of the University, through the medium of local examinations, will in great and increasing numbers desire to partake of the benefits of residence in the Universities themselves. On the other hand, I entertain a sanguine hope that the Universities, finding the disposition existing, will not be wanting either in skill or promptitude in adapting their arrangements to the existing wants of the community; that they will so frame them as to enable the youth of Liverpool, and of other places similarly circumstanced, to resort to them for the benefit of the training which they give, without making a sacrifice of those years which it is impossible for them to devote to the pursuit of learning without a departure from the absolute and necessary purposes of a commercial community. All this we have before us in hope, and in prospect it forms a pleasing picture; and depend upon it that if we only in detail—each in his own private circle, in his family and society—endeavour to give it effect, there is nothing contained in it which reasonable men may not hope to see speedily achieved for the benefit of the country. The work, allow me to say, is one which, if successfully carried on, will not be the least important of the performances of the remarkable age in which we live, and will contribute, in modes and degrees—far more than any among us can distinctly reckon—both to increase female happiness and virtue, likewise to the maintenance of England, and the discharge of the duties of England, as one of the very foremost among those nations which lead the cause of civilization in the world."

5. MR. SOTHERON ESCOURT, M.P.

(President of the Poor Law Board.)

THE EVIL CONSEQUENCES OF ABSENCES FROM SCHOOL—EVENING SCHOOLS.

Mr. ESCOURT, in his presidential address before the Hants and Wilts Education Society, made the following observations:—"By the cause of education generally, in common parlance, we mean teaching children from the first day they enter an infant school until the age at which they go to work—that has during the last fifty years been popularly called the cause of education by the people; and there is no doubt whatever about the interest which the people of England take in that part of the question. But, if we come to consider the cause of education in reference to that period of life when the intellect has become more matured—when it has obtained the power of appreciating and understanding the ideas suggested to it—then we must all admit that in this country the cause of education has been much neglected. What has been the course which we have been pursuing? We have had large sums of money distributed by private enterprise, and by the State at large, for the promotion of education. Many gentlemen have devoted their time, their energies, and their substance, to the establishment of schools all over the country. We find that the question has been made the subject of party discussion and party competition—a thing which can never be avoided in this country, and which, upon the whole, is, perhaps, rather a good than an evil. I say, although we have the State and individuals competing with each other, and striving to do all they can for the establishment of schools, and although we are expending an amount of nearly £1,000,000 out of the public funds of the country for the same purpose, yet we cannot blink the result that,—as respects the great masses of the country exactly at that moment when ideas begin to take the place of mere sound, when memory, which is one of the earliest faculties of the mind, begins to carry away something like the substance instead of sound,—we find the