

competition. The poor would then attend to the education of their children—not to please the squire or the clergyman, but for their own benefit. Public companies also, and persons in the different walks of business, might, by offering employment to be competed for in this way, do much to promote the general education of the country, without the expenditure of a single shilling of the public money.

Mr. BLACK objected to any sectarian system of education, and, believing that the present system stood in the way of a system of education for Scotland, which would not be sectarian, moved the reduction of the vote by £14,721, the amount of increase in the vote for schools in that part of the united kingdom.

Mr. COWPER hardly thought that the motion of the hon. member for Edinburgh was made in concert with other Scotch members, for the effect of it would be to deprive Scotland of advantages which that country would otherwise acquire. It had been said that State action was opposed to voluntary action; but the fact was, that in this country the union of the central and local principle afforded the best guarantee for success. The great object of education should be to make it as practicable as possible, and the importance had always been recognized of giving to a child the education which would fit him to fulfil the duties of the station in life to which he might be called. (Hear, hear.)

Mr. BLACK then withdrew his amendment.

Mr. SLANEY suggested that at the school examinations the cleverest and most intelligent pupils ought not alone to be rewarded. Prizes should also be given with a view to draw out the quieter and less obtrusive virtues, on which the future happiness of the children so much depended.

The vote was agreed to.

## II. Papers on Practical Education.

### 1. EARLY WITHDRAWAL OF CHILDREN FROM SCHOOL.

Early withdrawal of children from school is an evil to be deplored not so much on account of leaving with microscopic stores of instruction, as from the sad fact that their attendance is not long enough for the School to leave any deep or permanent impression either on their intellectual or moral character, or future pursuits. This early removal from School is said to be on the increase. From all parts of the country we are informed that the average duration of school life is growing shorter. Schools—it is said—are improved, but it is also said that in proportion to their improvement is the earlier withdrawal of the scholars. On all hands it is agreed—whatever the opinions as to its causes—that something is needed to arrest the evil.

Now, it is our conviction that in many schools scattered over the country, not only is there much done to arrest the evil, but that it is arrested, and the teachers and trustees can speak not of a diminishing average in the duration of school life, but of an increasing one. A single instance must suffice. It was but the other day that I heard of two schools similarly situated as to locality and class of children, in which the teacher of one—a man thoroughly acquainted with the true secret of successful school-keeping—had increased his average by six months over that of the other.

Now, whatever may be the secret in such cases, it is worthy of remark that all the schemes that have had their origin from without, have been based on a supposition that the action must be in one and the same direction—that of the upper classes of the school.

Now, it seems to me at all this is mischievous. That to make his upper classes the sole or principal direction or his labours, not only does not stop the early withdrawal from school, but tends to increase it. That in fact we must seek here for the cause of much of the evil of which we complain.

There are two facts, having to a considerable extent the relation of cause and effect, which seem to be overlooked in regard to this matter.

The first is that there exist strong opinions and prejudices amongst the people on what is the province of the school. So strong, that if their children's progress in certain subjects is not rapid and good, they attach no value whatever to anything else that the school does for them.

The second is that many, not to say the majority, leave school before they come under the action of these well meant schemes.

But as early removal results from other causes, as well as from this of ignoring the opinions of the poor, it will serve to set my point in a clearer light if we take a glance at a few of them.

The early withdrawal of children from school is owing, in some instances, to the employers of juvenile labour, in others to the parents, and in many instances to the wishes of the children themselves. With the first of these we have at present nothing to do; with the others we have.

Parents who take their children from school at an early age may

be distributed into four classes:—the indifferent, the necessitous, the selfish, and the dissatisfied.

The indifferent—not, I believe, a large class, but an ever-decreasing one—are those who make use of the school simply as a convenience, being satisfied that when there their children are out of harm's way; or they are such as are satisfied if their children obtain the power to read a little and to write a little, they themselves have done well enough without more, and they do not see but that their children may be satisfied with what has suited them.

The necessitous are those whose weekly means are so small, and their claims so many, that the pittance obtained for the labour of the child is a real necessity to keeping body and soul together.

The selfish are those who take advantage of the demand for juvenile labour to promote their own sordid interests, sacrificing their children at the shrine of Mammon.

Now I am willing to admit that there is not much within the power of the schoolmaster to retain the children of these classes, yet it appears to me that there is more power with him than with others.

There is another—and, as it appears to me, a very large class—the dissatisfied with what the school in many cases does for the child. These are they who attach much value to reading, writing, and arithmetic; who test a school by the progress made in these; whose dissatisfaction is owing to the slow progress and imperfect attainments of their children in these essential subjects; who think that the return from school attendance does not yield a proper percentage on their outlay; who reason that if a child after four or five years' attendance at school can only read blunderingly, write a miserable illegible scrawl, and not be able to work out correctly little matters in arithmetic that occasionally turn up at home; that no commensurate good can accrue from keeping them after their labour is available—none at any rate that can be put in the scale against the positive advantages to the child's habits and character from early inuring it to the requirements of labour.

But besides these causes of early withdrawal, there are others connected with the children themselves, two only of which we need notice. First there are children to whom the school work is the veriest drudgery; and then there are those to whom it holds out no inducements to stay.

The first of these formed formerly a large wing of the truant army—an army which under better school keeping is fast diminishing; though the causes of their truancy in too many instances remain. Handed over to the care of an inferior agency, school employment with them has never been redeemed from a sense of irksomeness, their progress has been slow and imperfect, school consequently has had no attractions, and they finally escape from its walls by teasing their parents to let them go to work.

The second class is quite the opposite of this, and not of course nearly so numerous. It consists of children who have learnt readily whatever the school has had to offer in the shape of reading, writing and arithmetic, but who have nothing provided for them in which they feel an interest, when they have reached the upper classes. Imagining that the school has done for them all it can, and their active spirits claiming further employment, they become successful applicants for removal from school to trade. That such is in some instances the cause of early removal, I know to be the fact, and that the feeling is extensively prevalent in a certain class of schools I have good reason to believe. One instance connected with a friend of my own will serve to illustrate my point. This friend succeeded to a school where the master professed to teach (in his first class, of course) all the *ologies* and *ographies*. His list of subjects, quite appalling in its extent—circulated quarterly in his district—comprised botany, zoology, geology, chemistry, theology, social science, French, and the piano-forte. Now, my friend was one of those teachers—held, it may be, in little esteem—who believe that the man who professes to know and to teach everything, really knows and can teach nothing; he consequently banished these things from the school curriculum, and substituted mechanical drawing in connection with the use of the compass and scale, mensuration in connection with the foot-rule, the tape, and the chain, and book-keeping on a practical and common-sense system. A few weeks subsequently to his appointment he came upon a group of his bigger boys, without being observed, and found them talking on the recent changes, and overheard them say that it was now worth their while to remain in school, for they had now something worth learning.

From what has been said it will have been seen that in my opinion the early withdrawal of children from school arises in many cases from the want of a proper action in the lower part of the school, and in others from the want of more suitable subjects in the upper. First and chiefly, the lower part of the school must receive a great deal more attention than it does. Here must be expended the greatest energy, the greatest skill, and the greatest amount of time, by the master. He must seek to retain children longer by making their progress in reading, writing, and arithmetic, rapid, intelligent, and thorough. This is one secret of the success of those schools,