

worth from contamination and debasement, amid the dust and turmoil of this working-day world. But while tempted to envy England her ancient and wealthy foundations of learning, with teachers and students alike provided with all that wealth can supply to facilitate the highest intellectual acquisitions, we are recalled by the remarks of Mr. Gladstone to a consideration of advantages peculiar to our own position, as the pioneers of learning in a new country. We have indeed no glorious memories of an ancient past, such as linger around the halls where a Chaucer, a Spenser, a Sydney, and a Milton, a Bacon, a Locke, and a Newton, gathered the first gleanings of so rich a harvest. But also we inherit with them no obsolete shackles and time-honored abuses, to trammel us in our course. The borders of our educational system require only to be guarded from insidious encroachments, and protected from the well-meant but mischievous zeal of those who would engraft upon the free growth of the nineteenth century, obsolete tests, and archaic or sectarian off-shoots of long buried generations. Our best inheritance from the past is its experience. We have prejudices and sectarian barriers enough of our own, without seeking to lay upon ourselves a yoke which our fathers found it hard enough to bear.

Nor is it in that direction only that we are untrammelled with the prejudices, no less than with the endowments, of a venerable past. It is impossible to study the recent report of the commission appointed to enquire into the condition of the great public schools of England, without perceiving that along with noble legacies they also inherit not a few of the cobwebs and the rust of antiquity. The generous spirit of loving veneration enkindled in their classic shades, finds expression in many a tender reminiscence; as when the poet Gray, looking forth on Eton's antique towers, exclaims :—

"Ah, happy hills; ah, pleasing shade!

Ah, fields belov'd in vain!

Where once my careless childhood strayed,

A stranger yet to pain."

Or where Wordsworth apostrophises :—

"The sacred nurseries of blooming youth,

In whose collegiate shelter England's flowers

Expand, enjoying through their vernal hours,

The air of liberty, the light of truth;

And reverts to the time when he paced the long avenue, or roamed by his own beloved Cam :—

"An eager Novice robed in fluttering gown."

But when we turn from those fond reminiscences—which awaken a kindred response in all who have been privileged to enjoy in youth the fostering care of such an *Alma Mater*, and substitute for them the prosaic utterances of Dons of Eton and Oxford addressed to the commission of enquiry into the present condition of the great public schools of England, we strangely reverse the picture. Obsolete