

EDUCATION.

For the Colonial Churchman.

BENEFITS OF THE DIFFUSION OF EDUCATION.

The London Times of the 15th June last contains an interesting debate in the house of Commons on the following motion of Mr. Wyse—

"That an humble address be presented to her Majesty, that she will be graciously pleased to appoint a Board of Commissioners of Education in England, with the view especially of providing for the wise, equitable, and efficient application of sums granted, or to be granted, for the advancement of Education by Parliament, and for the immediate establishment of schools for the education of teachers, in accord with the intention already expressed by the Legislature."

The following extracts from some of the more important remarks of the speakers, appearing to me likely to prove useful among us, I ask for them, Messrs. Editors, a portion of your columns.

January, 1839.

The debate was opened by Mr. Wyse, who remarked—

He was not about to trouble the house with any dissertation on the value of education; it was universally admitted; but there were some facts as to the extent and effects of education which he would shortly state. The hon. member then read a variety of statistical details connected with the commission of crime and the want of education, which, however, from the rapidity of his utterance, and the tone in which he spoke, we could not catch. The hon. member then took a view of the state of education in the countries of the continent, maintaining that improvement in this respect was proceeding much more rapidly in them than in Great Britain. He proceeded to argue that the present system of education, as regarded the mass of the people, was defective from the absence of responsibility on the part of the teachers, from a want of the element of permanence, it being dependent for continuance mainly on private bounty. These faults he thought were only to be remedied, and the system improved and extended, by placing it under the control of public officers. In fact, there was not a single country in Europe but this without its board of public education. But, in case the house should reject the example of such countries as Switzerland and Sweden, would it not defer to that of republican America, the states of which had adopted to a considerable extent such a system of general education as he was advocating. The state of New York had appointed superintendents of the common schools throughout the country. There was a public board of education in Massachusetts. In Virginia they had commissioners of education; and in South Carolina there was a similar body. Nor was this all. In a report of great importance presented at a time when Kentucky was looking out for the best method of establishing a system of education, and after the commissioners who made it had travelled through all the states and examined into the systems prevalent in each, what was their final conclusion? That it was impossible to hope for progress, to any great extent, in the work of education without the aid of Government or Legislative interference. Now England had admitted the principle of such interference with the education of the people. This it was most important to bear in mind; the house had admitted that the schools could not get on without public aid and superintendence, and that teachers could not be taught without that aid and superintendence; but what had been done? Only some small sums of money had been voted, the due application of which they had taken the worst possible means of insuring. He proposed, that a central board of public education should be established, to be composed of fair representatives of the different parties and feelings prevalent in the country; and that with that there should be combined a system of local bodies or boards, to give efficiency to the general scheme, and to control abuses as they arose. He wished that Government should take the subject in hand, and ap-

point a board on the principles which he suggested: that they should set to the work heartily, and not tremble in hesitation and the wish to know what this party or the other would think of their proceedings. In fact, the country could not stand where it was. Recent facts showed this. Within the last week or two, hard by the very threshold of the tribunals of justice, almost under the shadow of Parliament, acts had been done which would throw shame upon the remotest corner of the empire. The Central Society of Education had sent down persons to the neighbourhood of Canterbury immediately on hearing of the late riot there, and they knew that it was not want which had given rise to that unfortunate occurrence; no, the men were in the receipt of 2s. a day. It was not want, therefore, but in the whole of their houses there was not a book found. (Hear, hear.) Hence it was that they were ready to receive any, the grossest misinterpretation of the Holy Scriptures. (Hear, hear.) Was it to be wondered that in such a state a spark should ignite their passions? (Hear, hear.) However what he said might be despised, he hoped it would not be believed that there were not numbers of men, in every part of the country, who had deep in their hearts the conviction that there was no hope for this country until it should be emancipated from its ignorance. (Hear, hear.) Other nations would not stop for us; we must advance up to them; and if we did not push forward in the race of civilization, we might depend upon it we should be flung back, even by those over whom we had been most in the habit of asserting our superiority.

Mr. Hume then desired attention to two documents which bore strongly on the subject before it. The first of these was a report made by the grand jury at the last Durham assizes, in which they expressed their deep regret at the lamentable want of instruction amongst those who are convicted of offences, and also at the general want of instruction amongst the working people. The second document to which he referred was not from a grand jury, but from a society of working men in the metropolis, who in their humble station, and from out of their scanty earnings, were endeavouring to impart to others the advantages of education. Now he would ask, when these poor men made such efforts with their small means, was it not incumbent upon the Government and the Legislature to apply some of the funds of the country to promote what ought to be considered a national concern? The body of men to whom he referred asked in one of their statements whether it was not injustice to keep men in ignorance and then punish them for that ignorance?

Mr. Stacey said that he knew of no system of education which could have any salutary effect on the heart and mind unless it was founded on religion. (Hear, hear.)

After lamenting the want of education in England he proceeded—That this did not arise from the fault of the parents, for the great body of the working classes throughout the country were generally anxious to have their children educated, and willingly contributed for that purpose from their earnings, and with a little assistance from Government, and the adoption of a proper system, the sums they contributed in that way would be found sufficient. He did assure them that the more he looked at this important subject, the more he was convinced that they would deeply rue it if the attention of the Legislature was not speedily directed to devise some means for increasing the amount of education throughout the country. He would say that they had neglected their duty for many years, and they were now bound without delay to do something for those by whose labour they were supported, and he would ask if they could do less than educate their children?

Lord John Russell, (Home Secretary) admitted that it was the duty of the state to afford the people the means of making a choice; that they should be made aware of what their religious and moral duties were, and if they then deviated from those obligations, the state would not have the responsibility of never having afforded them the slightest means of education. He was aware of what had been done by the National Society year after year, the British and Foreign School Society (although its means were ex-

remely limited), and by other voluntary societies and by individuals.

There was one great point, which was deserving of attention—it was that of contributing to the education of teachers, and affording a better set of teachers than now existed in this country. (Hear, hear.) That, he thought, was an exceedingly useful scheme; but he thought also that another scheme must surely be adopted with it whenever it might be adopted. The plan he meant was, that there should be given to those teachers, after they had left the schools of discipline, a certain amount of salary in addition to what might be given by the schools in which they would be engaged; because, in fact, the education which was given to the teachers was so good that they found the usual salary of a schoolmaster was very much smaller than the remuneration which they could obtain by engaging themselves in other professions or occupations. Thus had been found to be the case in the British and Foreign School Society, those teachers to whom the greatest attention was paid, and who were made the fittest to conduct the education of the young, were often the first to find some other situation, feeling that it was not worth their while to pursue a profession of which he must say, although at present it was very inadequately rewarded, he considered it to be one of the noblest and most honourable which any man could undertake. (Hear, hear.) He thought they could do nothing better—if by law it was possible to do so—than to raise the profession of schoolmaster by taking care to provide a more adequate income, and by making it, in some way or other, a passage and a path to future rewards, so that men might not be left for some 40l. or 50l. a-year to spend the best of their days in the drudgery and toil of the schoolroom, without any prospect of advancing their interests, or even securing a comfortable provision for old age.

Dr. Lushington remarked—he would not say as to the effects of it in their own sufferings, but in feelings of the deepest regret, that so many persons should be left exposed to every species of temptation, and deprived of that education which, under the providence of God, was the surest safe-guard against temptation to evil.

Members were all in favour of steps for diffusing Education, but disagreeing as to the mode. On a division there were—

For the motion, . . . 70

Against 74

From the Will's Herald.

The Queen's letter in behalf of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, has been accompanied, in this diocese, with the following letter from the estimable Prelate who presides over the see:—

"Palace, Sarum,

"Revered Brother, "Aug. 31.

"In obedience to the commands of her Majesty, signified to me by his Grace the Lord Archbishop of Canterbury, I require you to read from the desk in your church or chapel, the Queen's letter (a copy of which I have caused to be transmitted to you), on such Sunday before the 1st day of February next, as you may judge most convenient, immediately after the morning and evening prayers.

"You are also desired to cause the Queen's letter to be read in like manner in every place of worship belonging to the Established Church in your parish (if there be any besides the parish church), and to communicate this letter to the minister or ministers thereof.

"In transmitting to you the Queen's letter, I cannot confine myself to the formal expression of my hope that you will endeavour to give full effect to her Majesty's pious intentions by earnest exhortation from the pulpit; but I embrace this opportunity of requesting you to consider in what mode an effectual permanent increase may be made to the funds of the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel in