

REPORT.

THE public advantages derivable from the education of the lower classes of society, or the practicability of teaching the elements of christianity upon a principle of neutrality as to creeds, (leaving to the ministers of the different persuasions the task of building upon the foundation thus laid,) few will now be bold enough to dispute. There was a time, indeed, when the negative of these propositions was maintained; when it was asserted, that to diffuse knowledge among the poor, would be to scatter the seeds of political evil,—to impart instruction, without reference to any ecclesiastical system, would be to sap the foundation of all religion—to make way for the prevalence of infidelity.

Happily, however, these days are gone; thanks to the spirit of inquiry which has of late years so generally prevailed, these denunciations were but short-lived; the phantoms raised by bigotry and prejudice, have fled before the light of reason; the darkness, which for a time overspread the horizon, is now softened into the more chastened ray of liberality and philanthropy; and the experience of years, instead of verifying the predictions of these (it is believed) well meaning, though misguided, men, has served but to show that all the sad vicissitudes of human affairs offer no more humbling spectacle than the "fears of the brave and the follies of the wise."

When, again, the manifold evils that spring from ignorance are considered—the misery and vice that follow in its train—the contagion of bad habits which it spreads—nay, all the crimes that swell the catalogue of guilt, which, in countless instances, it has been known to beget,—of what incalculable benefit to a community must be reckoned the institution that sets itself down (like a drop of healing oil in an ulcer) in the worst part of cities to diffuse the word of God, and the rudiments of knowledge, among the lowest of mankind; which, at a price within the reach of all but the poorest, and to them also with a very moderate assistance from their happier brethren, extends the blessings of education to the indigent of society; which seeks to make knowledge as common as the light of the sun, by facilitating in a