

familiar and colloquial expression, the "middle classes" of society; and it was to meet the want which was then more and more felt, and felt more especially in the great commercial towns of this country, that almost simultaneously were established, as I believe, the Collegiate Institution of Liverpool, the school at Rossall, the Colleges of Marlborough and Cheltenham, and, I believe, several establishments of a similar description.

#### HAPPY FUSION OF CLASSES OF SOCIETY IN ENGLAND.

Now, I have used the term "middle classes," because it is one which has a certain colloquial and well understood significance, although it is one which I believe it would be found exceedingly difficult to define. In point of fact—and it is one of the great happinesses of our social condition in this country—it is almost impossible to draw a line of distinction between the various classes and grades of classes into which, from the highest to the lowest, society is distributed. There is not in this country, as in many others, a broad, clear, and sharp line of distinction between different ranks and different conditions which it is impossible to pass over from the one side or the other, and which keeps up a permanent barrier between the different classes of society. In this country there is no such line. The distinctions of rank and social position are, no doubt, understood and respected; but, on the one hand, the descendant in the second generation of the highest peer in the realm has no distinguishing mark to separate him from the community at large. He is rather absorbed, I would say, in the general class of society, and his position from that time must be dependent, like the position of all others, upon his own industry, his own talents, and his own abilities. (Applause.) On the other hand, we see daily the ranks of the peerage and of the highest classes recruited from the middle and lower class of the community, giving fresh life, fresh blood, and fresh energy to the ranks into which they enter, and giving more encouragement and more stimulus to those from which they proceed. But supposing we were to draw a line, which I think after all would be a very inexact one, I ask you to look what a vast amount, what an immense social range, what infinite gradations are left between these two extremes, all of which gradations and ranks constitute that which we mean by the middle-classes of society in this country. Such is the happy fusion by which one rank and one gradation melts into and is absorbed by another, forming the harmonious chain by which the whole of society is bound together in this happy country. (Loud cheers.)

#### THE GREAT MIDDLE CLASSES OF ENGLAND—ILLUSTRIOUS EXAMPLES.

Looking to the extent of the middle classes as I have defined them—that active, energetic body, the leaven of the whole social community—which has furnished no inconsiderable number of our statesmen, which has furnished by far the largest proportion of the liberal professions, the bar, the bench, and the episcopal bench, also, which has distinguished itself in the army, which, in point of fact, has supplied every liberal profession with some of its brightest ornaments. I have often heard the late Sir Robert Peel make it a subject of boast that he belonged to and had sprung from the middle classes of society (hear, hear); and we all know that, by his own energy and industry, the father of Sir Robert Peel raised himself from a position certainly not entitling him to be placed above the middle classes. I remember that, twenty years ago, another right hon. gentleman, and an ornament of this country at the present time—I mean the Chancellor of the Exchequer—made it his boast that he, too, was sprung from the middle class of society, and he pointed with pride to the honourable example and the honourable position which had been attained by his respected father, who was well known in Liverpool as a merchant, and respected by all who knew him. (Loud cheers.) From the middle class have sprung such lawyers as Eldon, and Stowell, and Lyndhurst, and St. Leonards. (Cheers.) From the middle class have sprung such soldiers as Clyde. (Renewed cheers.) From the middle class have sprung men of science too numerous to be mentioned, and among whom it would be invidious to draw a distinction by naming any one.

#### SYSTEM OF MIDDLE CLASS EDUCATION IN ENGLAND—EXAMPLE.

Looking to the infinite gradations which are comprised in this middle class, to the various prospects of life, to the various abilities and circumstances of those comprised within that great range, the idea of establishing an education for the middle classes in a single school will at once be seen to be absurd and preposterous. How, then, was it possible in one institution to give at once an education suited to the position, to the fortunes, and to the prospects of classes of society ranging over so vast an extent and including among them so many differences? The only mode which could possibly meet the difficulty was that which has been adopted in this Collegiate Institution—namely, in opening within the same building not one but three separate educational establishments. The three schools, therefore, into which it is at the option of any parent to enter his son, are the higher, the middle, and the lower school.

These are not, as the terms would perhaps suggest, grades of the same school, from one of which a boy might be passed in accordance with the progress made in his education, but they are entirely separate and distinct schools, though under the same management. The lower school applies itself to what is called an ordinary English education, with some knowledge of French, but to the exclusion altogether of any classical studies whatever. The middle school, of course, requires a larger range, and affords a higher cultivation. It includes a knowledge of German, mathematics, and Latin; but it does not go to the higher kind of classics, and does not, I believe, include a knowledge of Greek. The upper school, from which a certain portion, at all events, go to the Universities, includes also among its studies those classical studies to which I have referred, as well as various branches of learning which are deemed essential to a modern, although not thought essential to an ancient education. Now, I have said that these are separate schools, but to this there is one exception—an exception which I think has worked very beneficially. In each half-year, it is competent to the managers of the school to elect for merit some one boy from the lower school to the middle, and from the middle to the higher, that raising not involving (as it would be unjust that it should) an additional pecuniary payment to the parent, but obtaining for the boy, at the lower rate of payment, a higher class of education, that higher class of education having been earned by his own merits, talent, and industry. (Loud applause.) And I am happy to say that among those to whom it will be my pleasing duty to offer prizes for success upon the present occasion, are two who have both commenced in the lower school, have worked their way successfully to the middle, and from the middle to the upper school, and in the upper school have not only placed themselves in the first class of University examinations, but have both been at the very head of those local University examinations, not for the centre of Liverpool alone, but for the whole of the United Kingdom. (Cheers.) One of our earliest prizemen has, within the last year or two, stood first in the highly scientific institution of Woolwich, and has obtained a commission in the Engineers by competitive examination. It is also a most gratifying fact, that within this year two of the former prize boys of the institution have been successful candidates for the Indian Civil Service Examination,—no slight test of their general knowledge and ability. In the last two years there have been from this College no less than five Wranglers at the University of Cambridge. (Cheers.) I ought to mention one subject, which is of the highest importance—I mean that in all cases, and in all the schools—the highest, and lowest, and the middle—they make an essential part of the education here given a sound religious instruction according to the doctrines and principles of the Church of England. It has been decided, and I think with a judicious and wise toleration, that those boys whose parents object to their being instructed in the catechism and formularies of the Church of England should be exempt from so much of attendance upon and teaching of the services of the Church. And the best proof that can be given that this is a sound and reasonable principle is, that a few years ago—and I have no reason to suppose the proportions are materially changed—the number of Nonconformists in the higher school amounted to 10 per cent., in the middle school to 20 per cent., and in the lower school to no less than 30 per cent. of the whole population, thus showing that while we adhere strictly to the doctrine and discipline of the Church of England, there is no intolerable obstacle to our affording with perfect satisfaction to a large body of Dissenting Protestants a sound religious education. (Cheers.)

#### SYSTEM OF UNIVERSITY LOCAL COMPETITIVE EXAMINATIONS—ITS WORKING.

Within the last few years the range of education given at the Universities has been considerably extended. New schools of natural and physical science have been introduced and made the subject of direct competition, and conditions for obtaining degrees. The Universities themselves, therefore, have considerably enlarged their range of teaching as qualifications for obtaining the University degree; and it is a great satisfaction to me to think that the measure adopted by the Universities of thus communicating with the whole mass of the community has been satisfactorily carried out by the happy adoption of a principle which introduces to the teaching and to the examination of the members of the University those whose circumstances or position do not enable them to become members of the University itself. I have always felt, with all the fondness for the Universities which I sincerely entertain, we that have been too much aloof from the great mass of the population, and that the great body of the country did not take that interest in them which their real importance and value eminently deserve. But I think by the quasi incorporation of a large number of schools in the teachings and examinations of the University a most important connecting link has been introduced between them and the population at large, most beneficially for the Universities themselves, and most beneficially, also, for those colleges and establishments