

pass the preliminary examination in English and arithmetic. Many of these were proficient in Latin and Greek, and mathematics, but they had no accurate knowledge of their mother-tongue, and had not even mastered the art of spelling. In the lower-class schools the irregularity and shortness of attendance hinder the results which would otherwise be obtained from such admirable teaching. The children of the labouring classes see very little of school after the age of ten. Their habits are so migratory, that only 34 per cent. are found in the same school for more than two years; and of 2,262,000 children between the ages of three and fifteen who are not at school, 1,800,000 are absent without necessity or any justification. Some learn nothing, and more forget entirely all they have learned. The early impressions fade away, leaving little traces upon their minds for want of renewal. Coming to the remedy for this state of things, the right hon. gentleman said that the first impulse was to turn to the seat of authority. In France children remained at school until thirteen or fourteen; yet 850,000 grew up without education. From the Baltic to the Adriatic the schooling received was six or eight years; and yet the lower classes were not very differently circumstanced from our own. England was the only civilized country without a national system of education; but we had no conscription, passports, or Ministers of Police. Parents here were assisted by the State, the Church, and individuals. On the Continent the State only had schools; here individuals and the Church. In Germany education became a necessity consequent upon the Reformation, and Luther's argument was that the State should train moral as well as fighting soldiers. Russian schools were national establishments, provided out of local rates, and parents of absentees between six and fourteen were fined and imprisoned. After reviewing the state of feeling on this question in the country, he observed, that the best education was that which trained the faculties in the way they were to be used; and special care should be taken to direct the perceptive and reasoning faculties of the young towards objects which might have increased interest for the young. Political economy, though it sounded difficult, was really an interesting subject for lessons; and what was learned about the conditions of remunerative labour, and prices, and the value of commodities, would be remembered and reflected upon. The right hon. gentlemen then proceeded—The chief cause of the absence of children from schools is the early commencement of labour, but if the education of children cannot be continued longer, it may be commenced earlier, by the improvement of infant schools; and though I feel there is in theory a forcible objection to those schools, on account of the removal of the infant from the mother's care, yet in practice mothers who are busy with household cares are utterly unable to give their infants the training they require, or to prepare them for the regular school; and I am sure that infant schools are a necessity of our present position. We require not only primary schools for all, where the elements of useful knowledge may be acquired, but also a good system of what may be termed secondary education; and it is to this secondary and adult education that attention should now chiefly be directed. A successful night-school is not easy to conduct, but there are now 54,000 persons attending evening schools in connection with the National Society alone. This I believe to be the field in which the largest harvest can be gathered, and happily the laborers are not few. Occasional lectures have their use, but what is necessary is systematic and continuous teaching. The Hants and Wilts societies have set a good example, and have shown how an interest in self improvement may be diffused in country towns. Mechanics' Institutes, as first organized, did not become places of education. Casual lectures and desultory reading are excellent recreation, and their discussions agreeably stimulate the mind; but the addition of evening classes is requisite for any sound and useful education. This county furnishes the best instances of the required organization, and the proceedings of the East Lancashire Union of Mechanics' Institutions, under the able and zealous presidency of Sir J. Kay Shuttleworth, should be studied by all who are interested in this branch of the subject. The examinations of the Society of Arts have been attended this year by upwards of 1,000 candidates, and a fact was brought out in them well worth notice. The candidates who had been a short time in school were more successful than those whose period of schooling had been longer. One portion of those who obtained first class certificates were found to have attended primary schools for periods averaging three years and a half, and the remaining portion for seven years and a half. Those who had the least schooling beat the others in the ratio of more than 2 to 1; and this may be taken as an indication that their proficiency was attributable to their secondary and not to their primary education. Sixty schools of art are imparting a knowledge of form and colour, and are giving a new interest and a fresh power to those who are engaged in ornamental industry and are raising the standard of national taste. The middle class schools have sprung into a new arena. They have done wisely to turn to the ancient universities, which are proving, though ancient, they are not antiquated, and though refined, not too fastidious

to lend a guiding hand to the business classes. I trust they will spare more time for instruction in the English language. It is curious how slow all our schools have been in attending to that which ought to be the characteristic of all educated men—correct grammar and orthography, and a clear and simple style. Why should not such authors as Milton, Shakespeare, and Jeremy Taylor be studied with as much care as the great writers of ancient times? When I was a boy I passed through Eton without my attention being called in the slightest degree to a line in any English book; but now I am happy to see that Professorships of English are being established in many educational institutions, and I know that at King's College in London, the Professor of English Literature has been struck by the remarkable powers of writing that have been developed among his pupils by the study of composition and style. My time will not suffice to touch upon the higher education, and indeed I doubt whether that branch of the subject could be usefully dealt with by this Association. I have endeavoured to take a rapid survey of the more critical points of our educational positions, and to point to our progress in reclaiming our land from that tide of ignorance and demoralization which still overflows the lower levels. I see much to encourage us in the pursuit of our object. We are led by many of the greatest minds, by many of the purest hearts. Duty can point to no higher path, to no nobler task. We teach the knowledge how to live and how to die. Our object is to enlarge the mind, to mature the judgment, to promote reasoning and forethought, to enforce self-control, to discipline the will, and to raise men from crawling upon the earth to the joyous perception of the atmosphere of moral and material beauty around them. We wish to bring all to the enjoyment of the vast inheritance of thought and feeling which has been handed down in books for all mankind, and to counteract the allurements of sensual and degrading pleasures by the superior attractions of imagination and knowledge. The impediment of which we hear most is the religious difficulty, which certainly does interfere with such a State system as would involve the establishment out of local rates of comprehensive schools for all. This difficulty has not yet been solved. I believe that the knot cannot be untied, but that it must be cut—cut by the sword of secularism. But religious teaching is no difficulty in the existing system. Various denominations meet in a voluntary or an endowed school, on terms which would not be submitted to in a ratepayers' school. Religious teaching forms the strength of the present plan. It supplies the mainspring, and it defines the circumference. It extends the organization and force of the church and the congregation to education, and adds a congregational to its individual and national aspect. In a national point of view improved education is absolutely necessary. There is no security for our country, for its institutions, its prosperity, its greatness, or its safety, except in the good sense of the people. This quality of good sense is happily not wanting, but, like other gifts from on high, it requires to be cultivated. And, as we are the freest people under the sun—the freest in thought, word and deed—and as we have the reputation of being a practical and a persevering people, we are bound, I conceive, not to rest satisfied until we are also the best educated nation of Europe.”

#### 4. RIGHT HON. W. E. GLADSTONE, M.P.

##### COMPETITION AND PRIZES IN SCHOOLS.—THE TRUE AIM AND INFLUENCE OF UNIVERSITIES.

At the Liverpool meeting (in St. George's Hall, Oct. 17th,) for awarding prizes to the successful candidates in the recent Middle-Class Oxford Examination, Mr. GLADSTONE spoke as follows:—“I trust that we feel that the gift which has been offered to us in this matter is a real gift—that these examinations are to be a real and substantial good. There are some, perhaps, who are sceptical upon that subject. There are some who will tell us—and tell us truly—that a perfectly disinterested love of learning, a love of learning which needs no spur or incentive from without, but which is led forward by the intrinsic charms and graces of the subject, that is the love of learning which is most truly valuable. This may be so in the abstract; and there have been cases in which poverty itself has proved no insurmountable obstacle to that thirst for instruction which, in earlier times of less material development, led men from the very ends of the earth to the sources where knowledge was to be acquired. But we are to consider the wants and the exigencies, the dangers and temptations, of the particular age in which we live; and I appeal to you whether it is not true, that, in a time of great commercial enterprise and of rapid commercial development, there is such an increase of the danger that all the higher aspirations of our nature will be overborne that it becomes us, as wise men—as practical men—to seek the aid of every instrumentality which may assist us in keeping alive that culture of the human mind and of the human intellect which has done so much for this country and for Christendom; which so greatly contributes to the adornment and enjoyment of life, and without which no great society can discharge its highest