

1814
National
Education

SUGGESTIONS

RELATIVE TO A SYSTEM

OF

J. M. Ray

NATIONAL EDUCATION,

ADDRESSED

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

THE LORD LIEUTENANT

OF

I R E L A N D,

&c. &c. &c.

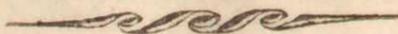


Latissimé patere videntur ea, quæ de Officiis tradita et præcepta sunt.

Cic. de Off. Lib. 1. c. 2.

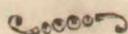
Ut enim gubernatori cursus secundus, medico salus, imperatori victoria, sic
HUIC MODERATORI reipublicæ beata civium vita proposita est, ut opibus fir-
ma, copiis locuples, gloriæ ampla, et virtute honesta sit: hujus enim operis
maximi inter homines, atque optimi, ILLUM esse effectorem volo.

E. Fragm. Cic. viii. Epist. ad Atticum.



DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY J. J. NOLAN, CHURCH-LANE.



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SUGGESTIONS

RELATIVE TO A SYSTEM

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NATIONAL EDUCATION,

ADDRESSED

TO HIS EXCELLENCY

THE LORD LIEUTENANT

OF

IRELAND.



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1814

Houses of the Oireachtas

SUGGESTIONS, &c.



MAY IT PLEASE YOUR EXCELLENCY,

THE high station occupied by your Excellency, seems to require an apology for an address, thus public. The apology, it is trusted, will be found in the nature of the subject, by which these few pages are intended to be occupied. It must of necessity be public; for, it is one of such vital and extensive importance, that, without its culture and application, nations may indeed be as they have been, wealthy, and powerful, and of high repute, but they can never be deemed fully civilized. Without education, the human character must, in communities, as in individuals, remain at a very low and unprizeable degree of excellence. The remedy for such a condition is a system of National Education, to be pervasively applied, and

firmly established. Its present recommendation to the notice of Government seems to be made at a season sufficiently propitious, when the public attention has been directed, in so remarkable a manner, to the active consideration of many and various preliminary details. We may even, perhaps, now felicitate ourselves with having at length gained (after the ebbings and flowings of many a revolution in the progress of the human mind) a firmness of footing in this respect, from which nothing short of some earthly catastrophe can dislodge us.

In regard, more particularly, to this Country, there appears to exist, in no ordinary degree, that stirring and efficacious spirit, which, rightly feeling the dignity of the human character, has determined upon rescuing it from the prostration of our animal condition, and upon placing it in closer approximation with the more divine part of our nature. The least enthusiastic observer (if he be an observer at all) must have noticed in the moral history of the last twenty years, the presence and the influence of some great power, which is at once stimulating and guiding our passage from one stage of society to another. Numerous and important as have been the military and political events of

that period, constituting so large a portion of our lives, they are as nothing, either in their action or consequences, when compared with the mighty revolution of mind carrying on through the processes of promulgated knowledge. But, in fact, these events themselves were but some of the means of that great change, which the human race was destined to undergo, whenever the powers given by the **ART OF PRINTING** should have reached a certain point of maturity. That point it has been our fortune to see them reach in our own days; and we may still view them in march, with an incalculable force of progression. To be stationary is now, under every view of comparison, to retrocede; and to maintain our rank in the race, we must strive by day, and ponder by night.* Fortunately, the great truths, by which the world should be governed, if duly sought, are of no very difficult discovery. Let mankind but be taught a knowledge of their duties, and the business of society cannot be very waywardly driven astray. To communicate that know-

* This is a truth of so serious a nature, and so pregnant with consequences, that it cannot be too constantly before the contemplation of every man in the empire. Our superiority, where we have been superior, has been plainly moral, rather than resulting from mere physical circumstances. This, however, is not the place for dwelling upon the prodigious crisis in which Great Britain is placed, with respect to the rest of the human race.

ledge constitutes in part, the very first and greatest of duties from those placed in the condition to bestow it. It is a part of the happiness of the times, for which we have been reserved, that the truth of this principle seems generally conceded by those, most able to give it efficacy. Among ourselves, my Lord, zeal and intelligence, already great, are continually receiving accession and strength: nor of the means necessary to work the ends of education, need we now despair; since we have first seen London, and more recently Edinburgh, coming forward to our assistance and encouragement.

Rich in all the possessions and attributes of social life, and powerful in their exercise, London has, in an especial manner, arrogated to herself a sort of sovereignty over all the works of beneficence and instruction; and if ever an universal monarchy should be formed, it will, doubtless, be by the willing submission of mankind to the supremacy of a metropolis, whence so great a proportion of the globe's population has received, and is receiving, the benefits which good deeds confer, the blessings which commerce diffuses, and the general knowledge which the word of truth perpetuates. In the important department, however, of national education, Edinburgh may, as the head and representative of

Scotland, stand forward with a more peculiar grace; since it is in Scotland alone, that the noble experiment of instructing a whole people has been fully tried, and its favorable results satisfactorily established. Scotland therefore possesses the right, not only in common with other communities, to indulge in the use of advice; but she comes armed with the evidence and authority of fact, when she urges the adoption of her example. It must be gratifying to your Excellency to reflect, that if this example should be adopted in Ireland, it will be done so under circumstances more favorable than those enjoyed by Scotland, when she received "The universal establishment of Parochial Schools." Amidst all our wayward perversities, ferocities, and violences, there is, assuredly nothing in this country, which resembles, much less equals, the hideous condition of society in Scotland, at the period preceding that establishment. So dreadful, indeed, seems to have been the state and misrule of the country, that Fletcher of Saltoun (with the usual hard-heartedness of a republican, who, fixing his views upon mankind in the mass and aggregate, cares nothing for the individual) could discover no better expedient for the settlement of the land, than the reduction of the lower orders to a condition of

personal slavery.* A remedy so violent (if its very mention can be for a moment endured) is certainly not here called for, even if we were not possessed of the better resources of instruction and kind services. One advantage, Scotland, however, must be allowed to have had at that time over us at the present period: since the lamentable alienation of the landholders and peasantry from each other here—almost certainly the greatest and most crying evil of our condition—had no place where the close and affectionate connexion of clanship existed. It is needless, and it would be painful, to recal to your Excellency's recollection the events of Irish history, by which this affectionate bond between the upper and lower orders has been long since broken. May it be the merit and the praise of the present time, by other means, indeed, and new processes of adaptation, to again link together those important classes of the community, the interests of which, when duly weighed, are indissolubly the same.

*This proposal was perfectly consistent with his admiration of the ancient Republics; where a community of Gentlemen (to use Mr. Milford's expression respecting the Spartans) was maintained by the labour of ten times their own number of Slaves. A modern West-Indian colony exactly represents the famed Republics of Athens and Lacedæmon, with the advantage in favour of the former, that the treatment of the Slaves is there much more mild.

In terms somewhat quaint and susceptible of divers interpretation, the Royal Irish Academy has offered a premium for the best Essay upon the subject, "Of what are the advantages of a country's coming late into a state of civilization?" For my own purpose I shall suppose the matter thus put, to bear a meaning, that, it is possible, one state long, possessing some of the attributes and characteristics of civilization, may yet be suddenly surpassed both in these and in other such attributes and characteristics, by another, to which their knowledge and advantages have been much more recently made known.* These sudden bounds in national improvement, can only proceed from communication with another and more advanced people; nor can it reflect any shame upon a community to be thus

* The two greatest Empires, for the combined circumstances of extent and population, now in being, may furnish examples, illustrative of the meaning, above put. China, as far as we know, is little, if at all, beyond what she was, when first disclosed to the knowledge of Europe.—Within a century and a half, Russia has emerged from a very deep barbarism, to a high conception of the advantages of civilization. Of this she has drawn a strong and distinct outline, which in many instances has been well filled up. Her rate of progression is still rapid and powerful. For her first attempts at improvement, she is too commonly supposed to be solely indebted to Peter the Great. There is some injustice in this; for truly great as was that extraordinary personage, he unquestionably only followed the example (upon a larger scale, and with greater effect it is true) set by his predecessors of the House of Romanoff.

benefited by foreign or external aid; since the history itself of almost every country, begins with the coming of strangers. Whether the interpretation of the subject, above stated for discussion, be the true one or not, it has by many persons been inferred, that in the question thus proposed, the learned society intended to convey no very indirect allusion to the condition of Ireland itself, through the last forty or fifty years. Upon the domestic events and changes of that period, a luminous and instructive work might doubtless be framed by a writer, who should at once be in full possession of all the details of information; and free, as far as could be fairly expected, from party prepossessions or narrowness of national prejudices. After all, it must be allowed, that an exact definition of what is meant by a state of civilization may not be easily agreed upon.

If with reference to the people's internal condition, such as is made up, first of trade and intercourse, or of splendid mansions, equipages, and the circumstances of outward show, connected with the upper classes of society, (as has been rather too much the case in mankind's history;) if with reference, to these and similar matters, it should be inquired, whether Ireland be a civilized country?

I can discern no reason whatever, why the answer should not be in the affirmative. If, however, the inquiry should be understood to mean the higher subjects of Religion, (including morals,) of knowledge, and of manners, as operating upon the great mass of the population, it may be observed, that Ireland, like most other countries, can scarcely be said to be in a state of complete civilization. It is much for us, my Lord, under all the circumstances of but too much of this Island's history, to be able to claim a large absolution from the many imputations, which carelessness, or idle pride, or, above all, a nearly total ignorance of the people's real character, have from time to time thrown upon them.

With regard to this very subject of EDUCATION, with which (perhaps without sufficient warrant) I have pressed upon your Excellency's attention, as forming the basis for so much and so valuable a part of national character; neither the piety of individuals, nor the munificence of Government, seems to have been wanting towards the foundation and endowment of Establishments, intended for its promotion. We may perhaps lament the want of extensive views respecting their formation in our forefathers; but we cannot

justly accuse them of negligence. Their good intentions were their own: their short-sightedness was the evil of the times. If, in fact, we review the number of Royal, Charter, and Diocesan Schools, besides those endowed by individuals, we may be almost tempted to doubt, whether any Country, with the exception of Scotland through the last century, has been better furnished with the apparatus of instruction. It is true, as has been just hinted, that from the opinions of the times, in which most of these institutions took place, they have been set upon a foundation much too narrow for the purposes of general and beneficial application. It is likewise unfortunately true, that from the want of a vigilant and continual inspection by a competent authority, the vast funds set apart for their maintenance have in many instances been neglected, or insufficiently directed, and in some totally misapplied. To remedy evils of so crying a nature, the Legislature has, by a recent statute, the 53d Geo. III, c. 107, (founded upon a series of very eloquent and luminous reports) appointed a Board, under the name of "THE COMMISSIONERS OF EDUCATION," and armed them with very pervasive powers "for the regulation of the several endowed schools of public and private foundation in Ireland;" and when we reflect upon the high rank

of most, and the sacred functions of some of the personages so appointed, we cannot doubt, but that the most beneficial effects must result from their exertions.

It is, indeed, become of the most serious importance, that some of those classes of Schools, adapted to the education of the middle orders, should be rendered actively and effectually operative. It will scarcely be a digression from the main object of this address to your Lordship, for a moment to pause and reflect upon the present situation of this order of society among us. With the growth and spread of wealth, whether commercial or agricultural, in the country, has grown and is growing that powerful description of persons, who, as Merchants and Tradesmen in towns, Squires and Yeomen in the country, not only in a great measure contribute to form the voice of public opinion, but are chiefly employed in the details of county and parochial government. Now, when we recollect, that, in the history of society, the higher classes did not gain the superior intelligence belonging to them, because they were thus the upper order; but that they became the upper order, because they possessed that intellectual superiority; it seems but a reasonable piece of caution to take care, in our way to the

general instruction of the people, that the relative superiority in this respect, of the classes above them, be preserved. To provide, therefore, available and efficient opportunities for giving sound opinions and useful habits (together with the more decorative parts of knowledge) to this important portion of his Majesty's subjects, is a measure most forcibly called for, both by policy and by duty. A suggestion of this sort may possibly by some be deemed to convey the offensive insinuation, that the body of the Gentry are not yet so qualified by education for their stations, as they ought to be. Such, however, is by no means my understanding of the subject; but as this class of society, most fortunately, it must be confessed, for the best interests of Ireland, is rapidly extending itself, due provision should be surely made in time to accommodate its growth. From the reports, upon which is founded the Statute, already mentioned, it is plain, that either from negligence, or the most criminal dilapidation of the funds for the maintenance of the endowed Schools, they have produced no effects correspondent with the wishes and intentions of the founders. With this knowledge of the past, and these considerations for the future before them, the Commissioners, it must be presumed, will not fail to exert the powers entrusted to them, for giving an active

Unless we try this people by their own circumstances, we are doing worse than nothing. In the more common courses of experimental philosophy, a mistaken process ends with just so much loss and disappointment to the projector himself. Upon the grand subject and occasion before us, a mistake may tediously prolong the unhappiness of our domestic disorders : it may even occasion, amidst the combustible nature of the materials upon which we have to work, an explosion, by which a great Empire may be shaken. But remote, I trust, or rather removed for ever, is so terrible a catastrophe.

One great and comprehensive reason for such a hope, is, that earnest desire for instruction, by which, it has already been observed, the peasantry are every where actuated. In speaking thus favourably of the Irish people, I should be at once mortified and grieved, if my praises of them should be confounded with the nauseous and mischief-making eulogies, which a band of designing demagogues are ever in the habit of heaping upon them. The sycophant of a Court, who flatters to deceive, is the very same man (in a different garb and attitude, indeed,) as HE, who, amidst the shouts of the populace, is shaping them to his purposes, as

he stoops to their commendation. In fact, one of the best effects to be anticipated from impressing upon the people a strong sense of their duties, is their deliverance from the pernicious thralldom, in which they have been too long kept by the contrivances of agitators and conspirators, for all sorts of ends and objects. May it be from your Excellency's hands, that Ireland is at length to sue out her delivery from the wardship and custody of Ignorance, in which she has been so long restrained. Let her people but walk abroad in the light of instruction, and not only will the disposition to mutiny and outrage be taken away; but, by no very obscure association of operative causes, the occasions of provocation and revenge will likewise disappear. The predisposition to learn, founded upon a very strong and true sense of interest, is a pledge of success to the attempt made to gratify it. Many very unqualified persons (unqualified as travellers) have visited Ireland from across the Channel; and of these, some have proved their want of qualification, by making public the circumstances of their visit. But no man, I believe, at all competent to measure or weigh the materials of national character, has passed through the country, and examined its peculiarities, without being struck by this prominent trait of Irish dispo-

and comprehensive, and immediate operation to the various establishments placed within their inspection and management.

It will be fully in the spirit of these observations, here to suggest the establishment (whether by the way of original institution, or of regulation under an existing endowment) of a large School or Schools within the metropolis. The diminution of expense would render the blessings of education accessible to a very large description of persons, to whose children such advantages are indispensable towards their future success in their walks of life. But the still higher purpose will also be probably answered, of bringing together great numbers of students from every part of the island—and of thus breaking down the meannesses and exclusive feelings of provincialism, so as to melt them into the general character of citizen and subject. Public education of great bodies, possesses, perhaps, no advantage of more importance to the community, than this effect of making acquainted, and, consequently, of conciliating its members towards each other, in the plastic season of youth. If this consideration be of value in other countries, your Lordship will at once discern, with how much more force it must be applicable here, where our divisions can neither be concealed nor denied.

In proceeding to the examination, as a preliminary measure, of the disposition of the mass of the people to receive instruction, we are immediately struck with the extraordinary and gratifying fact, that they are actually inspired with a sort of passion for the acquiring of knowledge. The circumstances of this country are unquestionably peculiar; but amidst a pretty general appearance of tumult, commission of outrage, and, in some instances, a strong indisposition to British connexion, the people yet exhibit a general feeling and desire of improvement, which calls loudly for cultivation and extension. I anxiously feel how tender is the ground upon which I am treading; but the cause of truth, and of its diffusion, can never be promoted by concealment. At the hazard of some appearance or imputation of presumption, I venture to affirm, from information, which, as it was very diligently sought, I am satisfied may be safely relied upon, that, "after making the due allowances for the REAL STAGE OF SOCIETY which this people have reached," there exists no community, with the mass of which either Statesman or Moralist would more wish to deal. But not only must their feelings and principles be understood, but their actual condition, under all the relationships in which, as a peasantry, they are placed, must be known.

more hostility, than in reality exist. It is for the present generation to reflect, in order finally to put down this unhappy disposition, that it is utterly irresponsible for the actions and opinions of those, which have preceded them. The crimes and errors of our forefathers were their own; and if the spirit engendered by these causes arrayed them in exterminatory battle against each other; let us, instead of cherishing the bitter recollection, and thus feeding our own evil temper, try and dismiss the subject for ever from our minds. Sufficient for that day was the evil thereof. There seems neither virtue nor common sense in raking up, in the light of the present day, the atrocities of a Sir Phelim O'Neale, the massacres of Cromwell, or the exploits under the walls of Londonderry. The human race has at all times miseries and wickednesses enough of its own to deal with; nor need it swell the wretched amount, by travelling back into still more wicked and miserable times, to search for, and to bring to account, the abominations of its forefathers. "Any man, or body of men," to use the language of Lord Chatham, when denouncing the insolent invectives of the patriots of his day against the Scotch—"any man, who thus endeavours to set one part of his Majesty's subjects against another, is guilty of the worst sort of sedition." That this

mischievous folly should be brought to an end, must be the wish of every honest and reflecting British subject: and it is consolatory to observe, that what thus lies in our wishes, is daily becoming, in an increased degree, matter of reasonable hope.

It is difficult to state or define where, in one evil pursuit, other incidental or unexpected evils should not occur. In the balancing system of compensation, by which good and evil are set off against each other in this life's economy, we may, however, readily turn to the contemplation of the opposite and more gratifying truth, that it is not easy to say, when we are once engaged in the promotion of some good object, that other beneficial effects may not spring out of the attempt. Out of the associated societies to improve by instruction or otherwise, the mass of the people, have already sprung the beneficial effects of first bringing together persons of different persuasions, and of then smoothing down their mutual asperities and prejudices. Engaged in the great work of charity, their minds and affections are elevated above the shades of distinction, by which, when dwelt upon, and hostilely displayed, so many communities, as well as our own, have been rent in twain. If, in imitation of the process instituted, so great a benefit has been

sition. It may still be said, the most vigilant traveller may, or rather must, overlook much, deserving of examination ; and the most cautious may be deceived by misrepresentations, either purposely given, or carelessly supplied.

We may then appeal to the Report already adverted to, ordered by authority, and drawn up with great ability, under all the advantages of information, which the countenance of the State could afford. From this, after the subtraction of the Royal, Charter, Diocesan, and other endowed Schools, it appears, that there are at present in Ireland near four thousand Schools. It is true, and the truth must be allowed, that of these, some are trifling in point of numbers, many more defective in the proper means of instruction ; and, by far too great a proportion of them, still more defective as to the qualifications of the instructors themselves. But their very existence in such numbers, and the eagerness with which they are frequented, prove the fact of the disposition to learn. He must, indeed, possess more of stoicism, than the present times are likely to supply, who can unmoved, or without the tenderest sympathy, contemplate the frequent instances of severe sacrifices made by both parents and children, in order to attain the inappreciable ad-

vantages of education. This sort of disposition suggests inferences, and in fact compels them, so favourable to the people, whom it actuates, that if both duty and policy were put aside, affection alone might urge us to their service and gratification.

How far this, or any other motive, has thus operated in practical details, it is essential to the purpose of this address, that some inquiry should be made. Here again we are presented with the gratifying spectacle of large and numerous societies of persons, consisting of both sexes and of all ranks, associated, in order to teach and to improve, or, in other words, to raise in the scale of humanity the great body of their fellow-subjects. It is pre-eminently the praise of this generation, that it is proceeding with zeal and activity in the performance of the task, which, under its recent illumination, it has imposed upon itself, of thus dealing in the works of beneficence. With respect to former generations, allusion has already been made, it may be thought, too broadly made, to the unhappy dissensions, by which this country has been so long torn; as it is, even now, too much divided. But painful as is the fact, it is too notorious for concealment; attempts at which, perversely enough, have the effect of implying greater dangers, and still

already achieved; of how much more extensive and permanent good may we not reasonably entertain the hope?

It may be here proper to advert to the disavowal of any intentions, however latent or remote, of proselytism. Your Excellency is already convinced, that any attempt of this kind must bring to the ground the whole scheme of reformation in the morals and manners of the people. The intention must not only be disavowed, but the strictest good faith, after making it, must be observed. It is neither from carelessness, nor a wish to temporise, that I venture to urge this line of conduct, as of inexorable observance. My own conviction, founded upon inquiry and discussion, according to the measure of my talents and opportunities, has satisfied me, that I am correct in remaining within the pale of the Established Church. In doing this, I use the same free will, which, I wish and trust, every other of my fellow-creatures may be permitted to use, in making his choice. What, in fact, it may be asked, have either individuals, or communities, as represented by their governments, to do with the faith of a man, who, in every respect, with which they can possibly be concerned, is a loyal subject, peaceable neighbour, and a serviceable mem-

ber of the State? The answer, it is not too confident to anticipate, must be, that a person so comporting himself has fully discharged his duties, and ought to be subjected to no inquisition respecting the motives, by which a conduct so desirable is produced.

To produce such conduct generally, is the problem which is now before the tribunal of mankind. Its solution has been presumed by many, (and by none more than the writer, who thus offers to your Excellency's consideration these few pages,) to mainly depend upon a well ordered system of Education; and to this point, as to a common centre, we thus find ourselves conducted, by whatever path we enter into so vast and complicated a subject, as the means of securing the well being of the human race. In Ireland, the steps hitherto taken for educating the poor, or labouring classes of society, have been successful rather in proportion to the zeal and intelligence displayed, than to the force and extent of the resources possessed. The institution of the "**EDINBURGH SOCIETY FOR PROMOTING THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN IRELAND,**" was preceded by a mission for the purpose of inquiry and correspondence. The first report given by that Society, under the presidency of the

Earl of Selkirk, (a name which is the pledge of every thing pure in motive, and able in execution,) has noticed among us the Sunday School Society; 2dly, the Hibernian Society; and 3dly, the Society for the Education of the Poor in Ireland. To these may be added, the Cheap Book Society, as intended to act in close connexion with them; while the Bible Society, and the Association for discountenancing Vice, and promoting the Christian Religion, may, by no very forced construction of their intentions, be inferred to be engaged in the same great work of Instruction. The success of the Hibernian and Sunday School Societies, when their scanty means are taken into consideration, must be regarded at once with surprise and satisfaction, when it is known that their establishments already can boast of above forty thousand Scholars. It is curious, and it is melancholy to contrast the nearly total inefficiency of the vast endowments made so long ago, with the great results produced by the feeble means, judiciously applied, of these Societies, where every thing is done gratuitously. The Sunday School Society, more particularly, which imparts instruction to almost half of the aggregate number above mentioned, is of no longer establishment than the year 1809. The causes of this prodigious difference of effect are obvious.

They lie in the single, but decisive circumstance, that into the system of the latter, no schemes of proselytism are permitted to enter. It may not, perhaps, be here irrelevant to suggest, very diffidently and tenderly, that a small portion of the fourscore thousand pounds of the revenue, arising from the endowments of former times, might be advantageously diverted to the service of associations so full of activity and zeal.

If the hands of the Sunday School and other co-operating Societies were thus strengthened, their actual progress, even under their present disadvantages, warrants the hope, that their rate of successful exertion would be greatly accelerated. It may also be for the consideration of the Edinburgh Society, whether the assistance it may be able to afford could assume a better shape, than that of pecuniary contribution to the Societies already in being, and prepared with their machinery. In the establishment of Sunday Schools, more particularly, the friends of good order and virtue, as the consequences of instruction, seem peculiarly interested. They are calculated in an eminent degree for teaching those, of whom the time and necessities allow them to attend on no other day. But, with respect to still higher considerations, a long and extensive experience of successive observers has established

the fact, that nearly the whole system of orderly habits and good behaviour is closely connected with the due observance of the Sabbath. It is not only in Hogarth's graphic history of the Idle Apprentice, that the consummation of wickedness, calling for the last and fatal animadversion of the law, was gradually reached in the career, from the commencing point of Sabbath-breaking. The records of the Old Bailey are full of such instances, disclosed by the confessions of the unhappy penitents, It is, then, of the last importance, that the coming of Sunday should be associated with the practice of cleanliness, order, self-constraint, and prayer. It is a very narrow and ill understood view of the subject, to confine the salutary effects deriveable and derived from these places of instruction, to the mere learning to read, to write, and to cypher. Arithmetic is undoubtedly a great discipliner of the human mind, by its processes of account and calculation; and the utility of the two former it is needless to state. But these, after all, are means: the ulterior advantages are looked for in the proper conduct of the persons, so taught; in industry, in sobriety, in forbearance towards equals, and in decent subordination to superiors; in reflection and foresight; in short, in the formation and practice of **GOOD HABITS**. The mere ability to read and

write already exists to a degree and extent quite unthought of across the Channel, and perhaps not equalled in England itself. The position may sound like a startling one; but of its truth, myself an Englishman, I have little doubt.

But these qualifications, it may be repeated, are only the means of knowledge; and knowledge has, in nearly concurrent operation with mankind's existence, unfortunately lain in evil, as well as in good. This bad department, it must be confessed, has been somewhat too sedulously cultivated in this country, through the wretched supply of books with which it is furnished. If, upon an occasion so vitally important to the whole being of man, there was room for any thing like levity, we might smile at finding in the list of School Books, the History of Moll Flanders; of Irish Rogues and Rapparees; of the most celebrated Pirates; of the Devil and Dr. Faustus, &c. &c. Some late researches, conducted by exchanging new books for old ones, have brought to light a considerable number of Paine's works, which, it is plain, could only have been circulated among the lower orders by the diabolical industry of the discontented.* Frag-

* The history of some part at least of this circulation is said to be as follows. The subscription in aid of the Poles, at the

ments of novels, leaves of volumes upon the most abstruse subjects, any thing, in short, in the shape of a book, and merely because it is in that shape, is seized with avidity, and made to serve the purpose of a manual of instruction.

Can your Excellency fail to be moved with the most touching commiseration for these poor people, who, in thus reaching at the food of life and virtue, find too late, even perhaps for the sad but sanative purposes of remorse and penitence, that they have been gathering the most deleterious of poisons? The intellectual famine is great: the cry for the cultivation of the affections, upon which so large a part of morals is founded, is still greater. The period for relief, let us hope, is arrived; and may the relief be showered upon them with full hands. Our Societies associated for the purposes, task their exertions to the fullest extent of their powers. They trespass upon their means: they urge on their career, even when attenuated nearly to exhaustion. From the last report of the Sunday School Society, every man must be gratified at the appearance of the last atrocious division of their country, was not returned in a money shape to the subscribers, upon the too rapid subjugation of Poland. It was expended, it is affirmed, in the printing and circulating of blasphemous and traitorous pamphlets, in both of which departments Paine was then the favorite Patriarch.

positive good done. The aid afforded by them, during the course of the last year, in the distribution of Bibles, Testaments, Spelling-books of two classes, Hints for conducting Sunday Schools, and Alphabets to numerous Sunday Schools, has been of large extent and important service. But upon the survey, in a comparative point of view, of the vast vineyard, in which, the members are engaged as labourers, it is impossible not to sigh forth a wish that more efficacious and plenary means of assistance should be brought forward. Some of this assistance has been derived from the Hibernian Bible Society, which, exclusive of its own distributions, has assisted those of the Sunday School Society, by the accommodation of Bibles, &c. &c. at their Repository in Dublin, for reduced prices.

By the same Bible Society, the decisive step has been taken of editing the Scriptures in the Irish language, which is still spoken, it is asserted upon very competent authority, by at least two millions of the people, who are unable to hold a continuous discourse in English. After the example of the difficulties raised in the way of the translation into Gælic, of the sacred volume, for the use of the Highlands, your Lordship may not

be altogether surprised to hear, that this measure was not carried, until after some opposition. The objections made to it rested upon the assumptions, that the native language would thus be maintained, if not perpetuated, in duration; and that the disaffection of the people using it, would, as a consequence, be kept up. To persons (and there are many such, even of resident Irishmen) who are conversant with the population only in great towns, and along the great roads, the prevalence of the Irish tongue is unknown in a very surprising degree. It is, however, quite plain, that the Society at least was aware of its existence, if not of its extent, from the very circumstance of the opposition made to the translation by some of its members. These gentlemen seem to have been wrong in two very important respects. It does not appear, from the examples already known, of people similarly situated, that the ability to read and write their native language has this tendency to perpetuate its exclusive use. It is, in fact, no paradox to affirm, that some knowledge of letters in our own tongue, is the best, perhaps it is the sole, mode, which can be devised, for making us acquainted with other languages. In Wales the cultivation of the Welch has been most sedulously attended to, for the last forty years; and within that time, (doubtless in

concurrence with other causes, common likewise to the Irish,) the English has made great progress, particularly among the younger people. To this fact I can bring my own testimony; as I also can to the pleasing picture described by a Clergyman, resident, and, of course, using the language constantly:

“ Instead of vain amusements, dancing, card playing, interludes, *quarrelling, and barbarous and most cruel fighting*, we have now prayer meetings: our congregations are crowded, and public catechising is become pleasant, familiar and profitable. One great means of this blessed change has been the **WELCH SCHOOLS.**” The same gentleman had before observed, that, “ having acquired new ideas by reading a language, they understand; excitement is naturally produced to seek for knowledge: and as our ancient language is very deficient in the means of instruction, there being few useful books printed in it, a desire to learn English, yea, and other languages also, is excited, for the sake of increasing their stock of ideas, and adding to their fund of knowledge. I can vouch for the truth of it, that there are *twenty to one*, who can now read English, to what they could, when the Welch was entirely neglected.” This testimony is assuredly as remarkable, as it is decisive. Yet it may be service-

able to add one more passage: “ *Previous instruction in their native tongue helps them to learn English much sooner, instead of proving in any degree an inconveniency. I took this method of instructing my own children.*” In fact, any person at all accustomed to the processes of education, requires neither argument nor evidence to prove so obvious a point.

With respect to any necessary connexion between the people’s disaffection, and the use of their original language, it may be denied from the simple fact, that the prime movers of all sedition and treason can both speak and write very good English, which they do in an abundance, that can only be equalled by its malignity. It would be easy to shew, from unquestionable facts, that an ignorance of the Irish language is one of the greatest safeguards of the lower orders against the detestable poison daily dealt out in publications, which, I believe, have not even the excuse of sincerity on the part of some of their writers. I do very strongly suspect, that there are men, who affect to be seditious, in order to gratify their cupidity.

“ Sed NUNC non erit his locus.”

With the causes of the disaffection of the lower orders, imputable, after all, I fear, with too much truth, to them, I have no right to meddle in these few pages. Your Lordship is, without question, fully acquainted with their existence, character, and modes of operation. In recurrence again to the kindred people of Wales, shyness and prejudices against the practice of a more recent speech, (somewhat contemptuously regarded,) are general enough; but they so little induce any thing like disloyalty, that a learned friend has noticed, in a masterly view of part of the principality, in contrast of the two dispositions, that the only Saxon, they cordially love, is the king. Wales, it may be added, and should be deeply remembered, has *enjoyed a friendly connexion between the upper and lower orders*, as well as possessed the Bible, since the days of Elizabeth, in its own language: nor did that great sovereign (unwise only, perhaps, in her dislike of this mixture of tongues,) there commit the fatal error of endeavouring to force them from its use, as was done in Ireland. With some disingenuousness, indeed, she discountenanced, but she did not forbid, the translation, which the zeal and piety of Bishop Morgan prompted him to lay before his countrymen.

But, with another point of view, I will hazard the observation, that in regard to taste and good feeling, the policy of thus extinguishing an ancient language, savours strongly of that obduracy and coldness of calculation, which have been reprobated in the vivid and ever living pages of Burke, who, as he was the greatest man of his age, has left no second. If the extinction of the language of Ireland and of Wales is indeed to be brought about, I shall mourn over its departure. The imagination is afflicted at thus losing the long link, which connects us with other men of other times; and a portion of the heritage belonging to the world's great family seems to be cut off by the loss. It may be better said, as Mr. Grattan has said it, in his letter to the authors of the Reports upon Education in Ireland, "I should be glad," he observes, "if the people all understood English: I should be sorry that they should all forget Irish."

The knowledge of the two tongues is, in fact, very common, even in parts where superficial observers can detect only English. Of this the progress of commerce and circulation must ensure the spread; and it is a pretty, as well as a curious fact, that the general diffusion of a paper

currency* has already eminently contributed to this effect; as well as further increased the anxiety, so prevalent, of becoming acquainted with letters. The cause is obviously in the necessity of the people's protecting themselves against the artifices practised in the passing of bills and notes.

If the details of the effects produced by this emission of the publications in Irish were given;

* The existence of this fact was made known to me, by oral communication from more than one Province in the Island. It has since been abundantly confirmed by the testimony given from both the North and the South, in the accounts of the parishes of Dungiven and Adamstown, as published in the first volume of the STATISTICAL SURVEY OF IRELAND, by WILLIAM SHAW MASON, Esq. "Among the most curious instances," says the Rev. A. Ross, Rector of Dungiven, in Derry, "of important effects from accidental and undesigned causes, we may notice the influence of a paper currency in promoting education among the lower classes. The disadvantages, &c. &c. (attending business) have excited in the wildest districts an ardent zeal for educating the children, &c. &c." The Rev. Edward Barton, of the Union of Adamstown, in the County Wexford, observes of the People: "Desirous of knowledge and led within these few years to appreciate the value of it, were it from nothing else but the universal prevalence of a paper currency, they, &c. &c." The strength of these instances will not, I presume, be denied; I quote them with the more pleasure, as being taken from a document, which, very valuable as far as it goes, becomes of inappreciable value, when regarded as the pledge of a work, national in every point of view. No Irish gentleman, in course, will permit his library to be without it; and it will exhibit Ireland to England.

those who feel interested in all processes bearing upon the condition of the people, would doubtless receive no ordinary gratification. But any narrative of the sort must here, for the present, be regarded as premature.

BY THE SOCIETY FOR DISCOURTENANCING VICE, (a title and office somewhat, and perhaps not altogether unjustly, unpopular, for intermeddling with the necessities of humble life,) AND FOR THE BETTER PURPOSE OF PROMOTING THE CHRISTIAN RELIGION, a large distribution of books has also been effected, at reduced prices, and in very few instances, it is understood, by gratuitous delivery. Experience, as well as consideration, has suggested this precaution. As one of the main objects intended, is the improvement of the moral principle among the people, it is surely wise to save even the lowest from the degradation, which a sense of dependance produces or prolongs; and the indisposition to receive even instruction under the offensive name of charity is thus encouraged.

THE SOCIETY FOR THE PROMOTION OF THE EDUCATION OF THE POOR IN IRELAND, is, *ex vi termini*, entitled to the regard of all,

interested in this great work. It has been noticed in the Report of the Edinburgh Society, and, as it deserves the notice, it is to be hoped, that it will receive the support of that body. With views as benevolent, as its measures are judicious; it has proposed to itself, 1st, The establishment of a **MODEL SCHOOL** in Dublin, to which any persons, wishing to inspect or profit by it, are admitted. 2dly, The **PREPARATION OF SCHOOL MASTERS** in the improved methods of instruction, who may afterwards superintend the country Schools. 3dly, The **CONSTRUCTION OF A SPELLING BOOK**, upon the principle of making the single volume serve for an entire School.* 4thly,

* The advantage of this improvement in point of economy, is extremely great. The Spelling Book published by the Society is sold for 5s. 0d. and the Reading Book for 8s. 4d. The former consists of 60, the latter of 100 tablets; they are to be had (with other articles used in Schools) at the Repository, School street. Thus a School containing several hundred of Scholars, is supplied with sufficient books for teaching them Spelling and Reading, at the trivial expense of 13s. 4d. which need not be incurred again for some years, if reasonable care be taken of the books by the Teachers. It must be gratifying to the Members of the Society to perceive, by reference to the Accounts presented with this Report, that whilst Schools are relieved from heavy expense, and are furnished at so cheap a rate with such lessons as they could not formerly procure at any price, the funds of the Institution will be increased by the sale of these publications.

An order has been lately received from Birmingham, for three copies of the Reading Book, for the use of schools in

The SELECTION OF A READING BOOK, both for Schools, and young people in general: and 5thly, THE SETTING UP OF LENDING LIBRARIES, in convenient situations, for the use and service of the lower classes. The last report of the Society very properly quotes, respecting the benefit of these last, an observation from the letter of the Superintendent of the Belfast School, to its Secretary. "If a book be lent," says the writer, "the probability is, that the book will be read within the time; but if given entirely, the reading of it may be deferred until a more convenient opportunity, which opportunity may not soon arrive, as we are all ready enough to postpone doing, what we know we can do at any time." When purposes so directly and so practically useful are thus either proposed or attempted, it is grievous to hear the complaints of the Society respecting the scantiness of their means. Every one, it observes, in the bitterness of its grief, every one most readily admits the utility, and even the necessity, of such an institution; but the applause is barren; the contributions are small; and nothing but the sacrifices made by the leading Members themselves, in the neighbourhood of that town. This was felt to be the more flattering, as books on the same principle have been published in England.

selves, could have effected even what they have done. Your Excellency must, it is presumed, regard with peculiar complacency a Society, which is meant to operate as the main lever in raising the character and condition of the people: and should the bounty of Government be deemed advisable to promote the cause of Education, doubtless this Association will not be overlooked in its distribution.

The recent institution of a **CHEAP BOOK SOCIETY** appears to complete the circle of supply, whence information can be derived. From this the other Societies may draw assistance, if they should deem it fitting so to do; and with respect to its own exertions, the agency of Hawkers, &c. dexterously used, is already known to be of considerable efficacy. In reference to the purposes of this Society, it is with a spirit, very far from unfriendly, that a hint is here thrown out, that the most laudable intentions can be of no valid utility, unless the means of execution be judiciously selected. It will be in vain to print, and even to force the circulation of cheap books, unless, both in matter and manner, they be made attractive. To attempt doing every thing is surely one of the most certain means of doing nothing.

A very important matter for consideration now presents itself. It is obvious, that the machinery of the Societies, here enumerated, cannot be immediately set in action; yet life is ebbing fast away from us; and, in the incessant march of time, a generation, destined more peculiarly, than perhaps any preceding one to act a very critical part, is pressing forwards to take its station upon the theatre of life. Not a moment must be lost. It has been seen, that of the thousands of Schools, which swarm over the country, the great, very great majority fall under that class, which, called Hedge-Schools, serve, in but too many instances, to shew the desire of instruction, rather than its gratification. We must lament, that they are no better; but such as they are, there they are, and there, for some time to come, they must be. Some of the Masters may be incompetent from ignorance: some, it must be confessed, are disqualified by immorality. These last, however, even in their own humble circles, are commonly put under the ban of public opinion, and suffer accordingly. The former, though defective in the power of imparting knowledge, may yet enforce habits of order and cleanliness. Let the people be cleanly and orderly, and some of the chief, not merely, means, but purposes, of life, will have already been achieved. It is

known, however, that even with these exceptions of incompetency and disqualification, there yet remains a great and predominant proportion of persons, zealous to do their duty, and willing to be shewn the way to do it. It is a very happy circumstance, as well as an honourable feature in these poor people's character, that they are apprized of their deficiencies, and are thankful for their cure.

The leading purpose of this address to your Excellency is developed in this short statement respecting the condition of these Poor Schools. They are in existence and in action; two very important considerations. The initiative expense, if I may so express myself, is of the most trifling nature; since the people themselves are found not only willing, but zealous to co-operate in every possible way. A School-house of mud walls, seven or eight feet wide, and raised just so high as to secure the thatch from the depredations of cattle, is all that is required for our rustic academy. Its length is easily made to grow with the accession of pupils; and the labour of both pupil and parent is gratuitously bestowed upon its erection. A single pound, two pounds at most, thus give a School-house; little more than half the sum supplies the spelling and reading books, edited by the Society for the promo-

tion of the education of the Poor. Can the aid intended by Scotland be more powerfully or beneficially, with respect to rapid effect, bestowed? Can the bounty of Government, whether from a sense of duty, or of the plainest interest, be more wisely applied? Above all, can the modest contributions of thirty or fifty shillings from landholders be more directly made to put out of jeopardy their properties and lives?

I hope and trust, that in making first, and then in pressing these remarks, I am guilty of none of that rusticity, which zeal, without knowledge, is but too apt to breed. If I am, however, even found an offender in this way, I trust the offence will find its allowance and excuse in my motives. My heart is indeed full, even to overflowing, when I look at the field for making moral conquests around me. If the courtesy of time has applauded the sentiments of King Pyrrhus, when, in quitting Sicily, he exclaimed, "What a glorious Palæstra for the Romans and Carthaginians," surely, my Lord, a British Subject and a Christian may, with better and more justifiable anticipations, throw his regard over the *arena* here afforded us, for so much higher purposes. Let us be good Christians, whether we be styled Catholics or Protestants.

It would have been easy for me to have submitted much of detail to your Excellency ; but I have studiously kept myself in generals, not only, because it was expedient to be thus brief for some other debated reasons, but because I consider myself as only ringing the bell to others, and particularly to a friend, who, with great and peculiar opportunities of gathering knowledge upon the subject, has a zeal and industry, guided by intelligence, which may not very easily be equalled, and cannot at all be surpassed.

More particularly, also, it is to be recollected, that the same suggestions, which recommends these Schools as the subjects of instant attention, also points out them as merely supplying a temporary, expedient, until they can, either out of their own germs, be matured into more profitable establishments, or entirely superseded by the general application of the New System. Whether in that New System, the practice of Dr, Bell, or of Lancaster, shall be adopted, it is not the business of this trifling work to inquire ; yet in the meantime, I entertain no doubt, but that within contracted cabins, and with occasional pupils, the mode recommended by Dr. Bell would be very advantageously preferred. I say this merely from the cir-

cumstances of the case, as they appear to me ; without the smallest feeling or disposition to meddle in a controversy, which seems to have been very unnecessarily engendered, and to have been since conducted with no very Christian temper ; and in one certainly sufficiently discreditable to both parties. The New System, when furnished with Masters, and provided with School-houses, or rather made to provide the one, and furnish the other, will then call for the support of the Nation as the System will itself be national. The shape, in which that support should be imparted, may be then considered ; and the consideration, it may even now be observed, will involve points of no common nicety. For the present, under the title of those pages, with which I have presumed to address your Excellency, I may, I trust, be permitted to express my unfeigned and eager conviction, that it must be mainly by the processes of instruction—through which the great social duties should be taught—that we may hope to see the reign of laws, in all its points of relationship, not merely, though too necessarily enforced by the arm of justice, but cheerfully acknowledged and aided by the great mass of the people. It is, in fact, the want of this disposition among the people here, that constitutes the great line of difference between

them and their fellow-subjects in Great Britain. There the catalogue of crimes may be as great, the number of criminals greater ; but there is no violence to obstruct the course of justice, or systematical practices to secure impunity to offenders.

The stage of society here, in which the lower orders are found, is, in fact, different from that which Great Britain has long since reached. The faults of the Irish people are the faults of human nature in its elements, not the depravation of an ulterior corruption. The alloy in them is of their native earth ; not fraudulent and superinduced : they have not fallen from good ; they have never known it. For the depuration of their character, scarcely has the friendly hand of assistance been held out to them, until our own time ; and even now, while the lovers of peace and encouragers of piety are so zealously at work, they still find themselves impeded in many points, by the remains of a feudal temper and ascendancy. The evils thus generated are to be carefully distinguished from those produced by religious animosities. They are of a different class, and, in my own opinion, of a much more manageable character. He, who indeed hopes, like myself, to see the establishment of a National System of Education, of

ficaciously conducted by a Schoolmaster, either Protestant or Catholic, as the case may be, under the superintendence of the Protestant and Catholic Clergy together, cannot be supposed to think very despairingly on the subject of our religious differences.

The statement of the foundation, upon which my hopes are built, would be almost necessarily to travel out of morals into politics; of which, however, though it be here proper to abstain from them, it is difficult to avoid the handling, and nearly impossible the mention. By the union of both moral and political arrangements, the day may be soon made to arrive, when not only the great body of the people shall be taught to know and feel the first of all social duties, "which have been delivered down to us and recommended,"* is obedience to the Laws; but when their employers also may learn, that it is a duty, perhaps only next in order, and especially imposed upon those, to whom has been committed the responsibility of property, so to conduct themselves, that they drive not the violent into mutiny, and the peaceable into exile.

* See the first motto.

If, from the general view of this Island's circumstances, I have been led to form these favourable anticipations, I must confess them to be in no small degree strengthened by the consideration of the period, when Ireland has the good fortune to be administered by a Chief magistrate, to whom all parties, agreeing in few other points, have, almost unanimously, joined in ascribing the merited praises, due to a Governor at once vigilant and conciliatory.— With all sentiments of deference and respect,

I remain,

my Lord,

Your Excellency's very obedient,

and very humble servant,

THE AUTHOR.

