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Middle Class Education.

ENDOWMENT OR FREE TRADE,

BY THE

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MIDDLE CLASS EDUCATION.

THE report of the Commissioners on Middle Class Education is able, voluminous, and exhaustive. It is written with much ability, and with a liberality of sentiment which gives it a distinct superiority over all the other reports on Educational subjects that have appeared. But it is my conviction that its recommendations are founded on an erroneous assumption, and the greater the merit of the work and the authority of its authors, the more necessary is it to raise this question before any irrevocable step has been taken. The question of Educational Endowments is one of the utmost importance, and on its decision, rightly or wrongly, depends in a great degree the future of this country.

It would perhaps be no unfair criticism on this Report to say that it deals too little with education and too much with schools, that it seems to have narrowed the problem before the Commissioners to something like an essay on the best way of utilising endowed schools, and that even in treating this portion of the subject it has not been wholly successful:—

‘It is obvious (they say, p. 571) that any large improvements in education ought to begin with making the best use of the endowments for that purpose.’

They are of opinion, p. 304:—

‘That it is of public importance to put private schools on the best possible footing, and aid them to do their work well. “The private schools (they say, p. 306) owe their origin to the operation of the commercial principle of supply and demand applied to education. It is not difficult to see that this principle must necessarily fail in two cases; it fails when the purchasers demand the wrong thing, and it fails also when they are incompetent judges of the right thing. The utmost that it could do in the matter of education would be to supply not what is best but what the parents believe to be best. If the standard of the parents be low, if it be expedient for the interests of the country that the parents should be educated to put a higher value than they do on the cultivation of the understanding, on the refinement of the thoughts and manners, on what is solid and permanent rather than on what is showy and transitory, the commercial principle is not likely to supply schools which will have such an effect.” “But further (they say, p. 308) the commercial principle rests on the rule *caveat emptor*, and presupposes that the purchaser is a good judge of what he buys. They are good judges of certain things, and they press these particular things till the whole teaching is dislocated, but of the best means of training the mind and of strengthening the faculties they are no judges at all. It is the universal complaint both among parents and schoolmasters that it is not possible to distinguish between the true teacher and the impostor. In all commercial transactions adulteration is always possible, and if it cannot be detected, it is not only possible, but almost irresistible. This is precisely what has happened in

regard to education (p. 309). We think we are warranted in drawing the conclusion that while private schools will *probably long have a very important part* to play in our system, and should be encouraged by all proper public recognition, yet it would not be right to leave to them unaided to supply the deficiency which our endowments have left unfilled.'

These citations, which might be indefinitely multiplied, prove clearly that the view of the Commissioners is that private schools resting on what with scarcely disguised contempt is called the commercial principle, may indeed be tolerated for some time longer, but that their duty is limited to filling up the blank left by the liberality of founders and benefactors in endowed education, and therefore that while private schools should be improved as far as possible, it is on endowed schools that we must rely for the education of the middle class; and so almost the whole Report is occupied with that single subject. Endowed schools are to be divided into three grades, according as the boys are to leave them at fourteen, sixteen, or eighteen years of age. They are to be formed into a regular hierarchy, under governors, provincial authorities, and central authorities. Their organization is to be laid down for them by a superior jurisdiction, and the whole corps are to be disciplined and brigaded on a complete system of educational tactics. I am not now inquiring into the propriety of these arrangements. What I wish to point out is that in all their investigation from first to last the Commissioners assume as perfectly self-evident that the ordinary principles of political economy are quite inapplicable to the education of the middle and upper classes; that the people of this country are not to be trusted with the instruction of their own children; that it is the duty of the State to determine for them what that instruction ought to be, and then to bribe them by pecuniary inducements to submit to the instruction so provided. They assume also that it is possible to secure under endowments all the zeal and devotion which are generally supposed to be obtained by competition alone, and that a board of governors presiding over and administering an endowment will be just as industrious and efficient as if their private and personal interest was involved in its success or failure. I have no right to wonder that the Commission should arrive at these conclusions, simply because they are contrary to my own convictions; but I have I think a right to express some little surprise that such assumptions should be made and treated as self-evident axioms requiring no proof, and clear as soon as they are stated to every intelligent and well-informed person. The authority of the great founder of Political Economy, so emphatically committed to the other side, might, I should have thought, have caused some diffidence or misgiving. It is not a light thing to override without attempting to refute the opinion of Adam Smith on any economical subject, nor the cogent and vigorous arguments by which that opinion is supported.

A little consideration will show how this assumption of the utter inapplicability of the doctrines of free trade to the education of youth came to establish itself so firmly in the minds of the Commissioners that they never advanced farther than the question whether private schools might be tolerated as an assistance to endowments until the gaps in that system had been filled up. Much, no doubt, is due to the almost exclusive attention paid to the education of the poor for the last twenty years. There were those, the advocates of the voluntary system, who held that this also, if not exactly within the domain of free trade, was at any rate entirely out of the scope of State interference; but a little consideration satisfied most candid inquirers that, if the children of the poor were to be educated at all, it must be by other agency than the parents of those children. So clear has this become that the principal leaders of the voluntaries have, much to their credit, formally renounced their old opinions. Since the acceptance of the Revised Code, primary education is firmly established on the basis of local contribution, and State aid measured by the results of examination. The question of higher education is now attaining greater prominence; and it is, perhaps, not unnatural that people should approach it with ideas drawn from the only portion of the subject on which, after long controversy, men's ideas have settled down into a definite and probably a permanent agreement, or at any rate acquiescence. There is no doubt, also, that since the dying out of the free trade controversy the attention of men has been much less than of old turned to the abstract principles of economical science, and that a generation has grown up little versed in those doctrines which formed the staple of the acrimonious controversies of twenty-five years ago.

The tendency of the age is strongly in favour of Government interference in many things which our predecessors would have regarded as legitimate objects of private enterprise alone. We have become familiarised with the idea that it is the duty of the State to teach drawing; though why drawing rather than music or the other branches of a polite education should be taught by the State it is hard to say. Our young men incline often towards Comtism, and despise the slow process which left in so many matters the improvement of the nation to be worked out as best it might by the nation itself. Our Radicals in former times used at least to be true to one set of principles. Trained in the school of Bentham, they were at least loyal to the doctrines of Economical Truth. They worshipped their goddess according to the straitest sect of her religion. Warburton, Hume, Grote, were typical radicals, but perfectly sound thinkers on all that was embraced in the writings of Smith and Ricardo. But now, if you want an economical heresy, you must seek it from the lips of their successors. We trace these anti-economical influences in the "Report on Public Schools." There, if anywhere,

we might have expected that justice would be done to the merits of free and open competition. The public schools have doubtless taken their origin from educational endowments; but it is not on that side that they are known by, or important to, the country. The endowments of public schools would have slept in peace, obscurity, and uselessness, like so many others, had it not been for the enterprise of their Head-masters, which has made those endowments the nucleus of a large, and in many respects a successful system of private instruction. It is not in the seventy collegers, but in the eight hundred oppidans of Eton, that the public is interested. The public schools are in truth adventure schools, and such vitality as they possess is in truth derived not from, but in spite of, their endowments by the free action of the much-despised commercial principle, represented by the Head-master, as opposed to the antiquated traditions represented by authorities who preside over the endowment. If the boys on the foundation have received really useful instruction, it has been through the agency of the unendowed part of the school, which has swept the lazy and stagnating elements of endowment along with it. It is not, then, to be wondered at that the Commissioners for Middle Class Education have followed the impulse of the time and the example of their predecessors, and, while trusting everything to the energies of endowment, treated the position that the education of the children of parents who can afford to pay for their schooling is a matter which cannot be safely left to the ordinary laws of supply and demand as perfectly self-evident.

Let us consider first the respective merits of endowed and unendowed education in the abstract; next the success of the two systems, as shown by experience; and thirdly, the prospects of success that are opened to us by the plan for the reconstruction of endowed schools contained in the Report before us. As I am swimming somewhat against the tide of modern authority, it may be well to fortify myself with the opinion of the greatest writers of the last century on the subject of endowments:—

‘Endowments,’ says Turgot in his memorable article in the ‘*Encyclopédie*’ on *Fondations*, ‘whatever be their utility, carry in themselves an irremediable vice which they derive from their very nature—the impossibility of maintaining the execution of their purpose. Founders deceive themselves very grossly if they imagine that their zeal will communicate itself from age to age to the persons charged with the perpetuation of its effects. Though it may have been animated by it some time, there is no incorporation which does not at last lose the spirit of its first origin. . . . There is every ground to presume that an endowment, however useful it may appear, will become one day useless at least, perhaps injurious, and will be so for a long time.’

Adam Smith, in the Fifth Book of the ‘*Wealth of Nations*,’ proposes these remarkable questions:—

‘Have these public endowments contributed in general to promote the end of their institution? Have they contributed to encourage the diligence and to

improve the abilities of the teachers? Have they directed the course of education towards objects more useful both to the individual and to the public than those to which it would naturally have gone of its own accord?

'In every profession the exertion of the greater part of those who exercise it is always in proportion to the necessity they are under of making that exertion. This necessity is greatest with those to whom the emoluments of their profession are the only source from whence they expect their fortune, or even their ordinary revenue or subsistence. In order to acquire this fortune, or even to get this subsistence, they must in the course of a year execute a certain quantity of work of a known value, and where the competition is free, the rivalry of competitors who are all endeavouring to jostle one another out of employment, obliges every man to execute his work with a certain degree of exactness. The endowments of schools and colleges have necessarily diminished more or less the necessity of application in the teachers. Their subsistence, so far as it is derived from their salaries, is evidently derived from a fund altogether independent of their success and reputation in their particular profession. In some Universities the salary makes but a part, and frequently but a small part, of the emolument of the teacher, of which the greater part arises from the honours or fees of his pupils. The necessity for application, though always more or less diminished, is not in this case entirely taken away. In other Universities the teacher is prohibited from receiving any honorary or fee from his pupils, and his salary constitutes the whole of the revenue which he derives from his office. His interest is in this case set as directly in opposition to his duty as it is possible to set it. It is the interest of every man to live as much at his ease as he can, and if his emoluments are to be precisely the same whether he does or does not perform some very laborious duty, it is certainly his interest, at least as interest is vulgarly understood, either to neglect it altogether, or if he is subject to some authority which will not suffer him to do this, to perform it in as careless and slovenly a manner as that authority will permit. If he is naturally active and a lover of labour, it is his interest to employ that activity in any way from which he can derive some advantage rather than in the performance of his duty from which he can derive none.

'Whatever forces a number of students to any College or University independent of the merit or reputation of the teachers, tends more or less to diminish the necessity of that merit or reputation.'

It will be observed that the above extracts are not merely the opinions of the highest authority on the subject, they are full of good sense and homely practical wisdom, and being founded on the general feelings and motives of human nature from which Adam Smith has deduced so many practical conclusions, are true without any limitations of time or place, and can never by any change of circumstances become obsolete or inapplicable.

Such authorities as those just cited seem really to dispose of the idea on which the Commissioners have founded their Report, that endowments offer the best machinery for effecting popular education. The vices are not superficial nor accidental, not redundancies that can be pruned away, nor superfluities that can be retrenched, but are of the very essence of the institution. The problem is nothing less than to perform by means of persons raised above that necessity which is the real stimulus to labour, a laborious and distasteful drudgery as well or better than it would be executed by persons whose

existence depends on its execution. It involves an absurdity and impossibility on the face of it. It is to make the weaker equal to the stronger, and to expect to effect a task which requires the whole power of the steam-engine while cutting off the steam at one third of the stroke. This inherent mischief may be in some degree palliated, but cannot wholly be removed.

Those, therefore, who seek to work out education on the basis of endowments, deliberately reject a superior machine in order to avail themselves of an inferior one. Teaching is a trade, and not a very highly intellectual trade. There is no occupation more likely to degenerate into lifeless routine and meaningless repetition. To be perpetually saying the same things to different people, to explain the same difficulties, to use the same illustrations, requires some extraordinary stimulus from without to prevent it from degenerating into something as useless to the learner as it is intolerable to the teacher. Who can doubt that for efficiency of instruction a person working for his subsistence, conscious that his all depends upon it, exposed to an active and unceasing competition, will prove a very superior educating power to one discharging a duty for which he receives a fixed remuneration, under no very stringent superintendence, which will not increase if he does well, nor diminish if he fail to interest the attention and reach the intelligence of his audience? Endowed schools are, in truth, the eldest sons of education. There are very few men who would not rather have the enjoyment of ease and leisure, though with the perfect consciousness that the abilities they possess will rust, and the reputation they might have made will be gained by others less fortunate in worldly possessions, than descend into the arena and compete successfully with all comers. And so all sects, all districts, all communities desire endowments, not because they believe that they will have a better education, but because they are glad that the moneys of the founder will be employed in discharging for them those obligations to their children which they would otherwise have to discharge themselves. They accept worse teaching because it is gratuitous, they have to choose between knowledge for their children and saving for themselves, and they prefer themselves to their children. It would thus seem on merely abstract grounds that endowed schools as such are rather the propagators of ignorance than of knowledge, and that their competition with private schools is not which shall provide the best instruction, but which shall give it at the cheapest rate, a contest in which the unendowed school must always be defeated. For we must not forget that though the direct effect of an endowed school may be limited to giving inferior and negligent instruction, it has a collateral effect much more important. It occupies the ground, it is always there. Relying on resources furnished by the dead, who cannot take back what they have given, it can survive any amount of failure or negligence. It can

always undersell its competitor; and what is still worse, it can by the prospect of a disastrous and unfair competition, prevent the existence of any competition at all. "I think you are Sir John Falstaff, and in that thought yield me," expresses the feeling of many an unendowed schoolmaster when shrinking from competition with his fat and overgrown antagonist. It is usual to praise endowed schools for maintaining the standard of education. What they actually do we see, and for that they get full credit. What they prevent others from doing we do not see, and consequently do not reflect upon; but the agency of endowment is just as real in preventing better teaching as in teaching badly itself. There are no doubt advantages in the appointment of teachers to fixed and lucrative positions. The relieving parents from the necessity of paying for the instruction of their children makes education cheaper, and thus more accessible than if it were left to the operation of free competition; though against this must be set the natural tendency of a man who gains nothing by extra exertion to limit his field to the narrowest compass, a tendency which sometimes, as appears from this very Report, takes the form of closing the school altogether. The good social standing and local dignity which are associated with the position of the master of an endowed school, may also secure a better qualified person than can be tempted by the precarious income and hard labour of the private schoolmaster; but against this must be set the consideration that the better master is obtained by making his place easy, that is by diminishing the motives for the exercise of his talents. It is not, as Aristotle remarks, the strongest and the fairest that gain the Olympic crown, but those who struggle for it, and success in instruction waits more on energy and industry than on high cultivation and talent.

Another striking evil of endowments in the abstract is the difficulty, if not impossibility, of placing them under really good government. The governors, appoint them how you will, are spending other people's money and managing other people's affairs without any reward except the occasional exercise of a little patronage. It is idle to expect that such a government, irresponsible, inert, if not corrupt, can really be anything more than a convenient screen, behind which either the master or some trustee more active than the rest, may exercise undisputed sway. The enthusiasm that made the foundation does not descend on those who administer it, there is an inevitable disposition to manage it in the interest of the teachers rather than of the taught, of those permanently connected with the institution rather than of the children for whose benefit it was originally designed. In proprietary schools the complaint is that the directors interfere too much in the discipline and instruction, but that is by no means the besetting sin of the administrators of endowments. They compose themselves into a sound slumber from which no shake less severe than a chancery suit can wake them.

It is usual to trace many of these evils to the admitted defects in the law of charities, the ignorance of the Courts on technical matters of education, and the dilatory and ineffectual nature of the remedies which they apply. But the Courts and the law could not be blamed for these things, if endowments did not carry in their own bosom a principle of caducity and decay. Place a community under conditions favourable to its health, and it will need little medical aid, place it in a tropical climate, in a region subject to miasma, and its very existence will depend on the skill of its physicians. But the cause of the decay is not in the physician but in the miasma, and we ought not to complain so much in the case of endowed schools of the Court, as of the vice inherent in the very nature of endowments, which makes the intervention of that Court necessary. As the cultivation of the art of organising really sound and useful institutions advances, it becomes more and more manifest that if an institution is designed as endowments are, for durability, it must carry within itself, together with those seeds of corruption and decay which are incident to all human organisations, a principle of correction and regeneration which may be called into existence and efficacy by the process of decay itself, and may put into action causes capable of arresting the disorder which has called the counteracting element into existence. Thus Nature undertakes and perfects the cure of superficial wounds, and thus a private schoolmaster is warned of his faults of management and instruction by the withdrawal of his pupils and the reduction of his income. An adventure school represents the ordinary sensibility of the skin and nerves given doubtless for our preservation; an endowment resembles what a man would be who had no sense of pain, and who might suffer the most grievous injuries without being aware of them, unless roused to a sense of his danger by some external admonition.

We may also remark that where endowments exist a great element of progress is wanting. The tendency of teachers, as of other men, is to go on in the same routine unless some cause arises sufficiently strong to drive them out of it. It is, in the opinion of the Commissioners, in private schools rather than in public that we are to look for improvements and the discovery of new methods. That is, in private schools there is progress, there is the power of adaptation to new circumstances. In endowed schools the most we can look for is a stationary condition, and a stationary condition is almost sure to degenerate into regress, till the thing becomes intolerable, and the air is cleared for a time by a scandal, a quarrel, a lawsuit, or a Private Act of Parliament, but cleared only to be again overloaded.

In these respects the incurable and inherent defects of endowments are so palpable that we cannot doubt they would long ago have satisfied the public mind that endowments are inherently inefficient instruments for the purpose of education, had it not been for the considerations which we have extracted from the Commis-

sioners' Report in an earlier part of this paper. Few people will, we believe, when fairly challenged on the merits of the abstract proposition, contend that for the attainment of any commodity for which those who desire it are willing and able to pay its full value, an endowment in the shape of bounty or other encouragement to the producer is either useful or desirable. Such interference under the circumstances supposed obviously tends to deter competition, and by creating on behalf of the producer a sort of qualified monopoly, to deteriorate the article produced. Few people will seriously argue that a teacher whose pupils are induced to come to him by pecuniary advantages held out to their parents, and whose income is independent of his success, will be as energetic or as successful as one possessing neither of these advantages. No one believes that if an endowment were given for supplying the City of London with meat or bread, its effect would be to make the meat or bread of London better. The argument is rather that which we have cited above, that the commercial principle is unsuited to education, that the instruction of youth is an exception to the general principle of human transactions, which regards free competition and unbiassed choice as better means of obtaining a given result or produce, than previous regulations supported by fixed and inalienable property, which nothing can divert from its purpose, and which, whether it contribute to the benefit of the public or no, is sure in some way or other to contribute to the advantage of the persons to whom it is intrusted. The objection to private schools, and the superiority claimed for endowments, resolve themselves into the simple assertion that parents are unfit and unable to judge what is good for their children in the way of education, that the commercial principle breaks down when the purchasers demand the wrong thing, or are incompetent judges of the right thing, and that this power denied to parents of discerning what is good and evil in the subjects selected for instruction is possessed in full and ample measure by the governors of endowments, or in the last resort by the State. It is conceded in several places in this Report, that whether desirable or not, the ultimate decision of what their children shall be taught must rest with the parents. No one has yet been found bold enough to advocate the taking the children of the middle classes out of the hands of their natural protectors, and handing them over either to corporations or to the State. We come, therefore, to the much despised commercial principle at last. The parent is judge of the question, and the whole and sole use of endowments is to influence, in other words, to bribe that judgment. Being themselves the depositaries of absolute wisdom and full knowledge on the subject, the governors of endowed schools are to undertake the task of prevailing on parents to give their children an education which the parents believe to be useless instead of an education they believe to be useful. It is not so much that the subjects will be better taught, as that they will be better selected.

Upon this single issue the utility of endowments as an educational appliance must stand or fall. The operation of commercial supply and demand, pure and simple, says Mr. Green, as quoted by the Commissioners, means, on the whole, that as the father is, such will the son be. The position is, that while endowments possess in a supreme degree the power of improvement and adaptation, of realising lofty ends by adequate means, the parents of England, the upper and middle classes, are a race utterly unimprovable, in fact European Chinese, and unless we intervene between them and their children, by discouraging schools professing to give the education they want, there is no chance that children will be taught better things a hundred years hence than they are now. Of course what is true of the future must be true of the past, and it follows that the culture which has hitherto been obtained by the middle class, is due to the agency of endowed schools counteracting the lowering and degrading tendencies of private education.

Is it not more reasonable to maintain, that as the power and right to decide what the education of children of the middle class ought to be, undoubtedly resides, and ought to reside, with the parent, it would be better for all parties that he should come to that decision unbiassed by any meaner motives than those of reason, argument, and persuasion. Show the parents what is actually taught in endowed, and if possible in unendowed schools, try and convince them that one line of study is superior to another, seek to generate a healthy public opinion on the point, appeal to the Press, to lectures, to meetings; do everything except seek to corrupt their honest opinion by mercenary motives, the only eloquence that endowments have hitherto employed. We do not believe in what is so flippantly assumed, that in education if there is no appeal to anything but reason, such as the father is, such will the son be. There is doubtless difficulty in enlightening the mind and reforming the convictions of mankind, but our whole history is a protest against the notion that improvement is impossible, and a demonstration that when once made it is not easily lost. Parents have one great superiority over the Government or the administrators of endowments. Their faults are mainly the corrigible faults of ignorance, not of apathy and prejudice. They have and feel the greatest interest in doing that which is for the real benefit of their children. They are the representatives of the present, of the living and acting energy of a nation, which has ever owed its sure and onward progress rather to individual efforts than to public control and direction. They have the wish to arrive at a true conclusion, the data are before them, they must be the judges in the last resort, why should we shrink from making them the judges at once? The truth is, that while we are seeking to prevent parents doing as they like, we are really making a breach between them and the institutions which were designed for their benefit. This is well explained by Mr. Fearon at the close of his 'Report on Secondary Education in Scotland':—

‘Why,’ he asks, ‘are English Grammar Schools so thinly attended? And why proportionably to their wealth is so little done in them? Because they are not stimulated from without. *They are out of sympathy with the public*, and the public distrusts and will not work with them. It is with education in this respect as with trade. There are certain things of which the customer (the farmer or shopkeeper) feels the want which he considers necessary to him, and which he thinks he must have. There are certain other things of which he thinks he has not so much need or for which he has no taste. Can he be induced to buy by offering him the things which he thinks he does not want, and by keeping those which he thinks he does want out of his sight? Is this politic? Will it not drive him away altogether to purchase in another quarter? Might he not by judicious treatment be gradually brought to want and to desire to buy those things for which he has now no taste? Yet the English Grammar Schools do not as a rule do this. They may be right in their theory of what is the best system of education, and what it is best for the shopkeeper’s children to learn. But he does not think they are, and as they have made much of what he considers unsuitable to him, and have ignored that which seems to him necessary, he has come through a long series of years to regard them as hopelessly perverse, to lose all interest in them, and either to forsake them altogether for more complacent adventurers, or at least to consider them as an unsatisfactory makeshift in which he cannot be expected to take much concern. The result of all this is that educational enthusiasm is nipped and blighted. *Whatever vigour remains flows into private schools*, and the waste of force is enormous.’

It thus appears that in the one department in which they are supposed to be supreme, the choice of the subjects of instruction, the endowed schools have on the testimony of a by no means hostile witness signally failed, so signally as to have deprived themselves, by means of their own perverseness, of the opportunity of giving the very instruction in higher subjects which they desire to communicate. How, indeed, should it be otherwise? What special aptitude do the trustees of a grammar school possess for the difficult task of selecting the objects of study? And if it be left to the master, why should we suppose him peculiarly capable of laying down a course of study? It is the nature of teachers to recommend that which they know best themselves. To recommend anything else is to impose on themselves the trouble of going to school again. This interest alone makes them most dangerous and unsatisfactory judges. Besides there is nothing in the occupation of a teacher which tends to give that large acquaintance with men and things which enables a man to discover what are the wants of society in respect of instruction, and how those wants may be supplied. Nor has the State any peculiar means of forming a right conclusion on this subject. It has power, but the possession of power does not necessarily imply that peculiar knowledge which in this instance is required in order to come to a sound conclusion. It is just like the old illustration of the feeding of London. The wisest man could not do it by preconceived measures—but leave it alone and it works itself automatically by the mere action and reaction of supply and demand.

It seems then on abstract grounds derived from the very nature and essence of endowments, that it must be their necessary tendency to be injurious to education, by putting to sleep the diligence of teachers—by bribing parents to accept inferior teaching at a cheaper

rate—by discouraging healthy private enterprise—and by fostering an undue adherence to obsolete subjects and methods of instruction. Does practice confirm the anticipations of theory, or is there in endowed schools some element of success which counterbalances these evils? The one thing that can always be said for an endowment is that in its inception it is sure to be popular. There is money to spend—there are buildings to erect—there is patronage—there is power—above all, there is novelty. But what is the result? The period of excitement is succeeded by the period of languor, and the process of degeneration begins slowly and insidiously, but surely, to relax the sinews of exertion and enterprise.

In the Universities very little is learnt from the professors, who have fixed salaries; somewhat more from tutors, who have some interest pecuniary and personal in the success of their colleges; but the main weight of teaching, especially for the highest honours, rests on private tutors or coaches who have no endowment—no university status—whose names can hardly be found in the calendar, but who because they really work for their subsistence, and under the stimulus of need and competition easily distance their salaried and dignified competitors. They, with everything against them, are the real moving spirits of our Universities. They form the mind of youth—they regulate indirectly the tendencies of thought, and without notoriety, without recognition, without any public responsibility, do the work, while the rich endowments are divided among those who do not do it. A richly endowed college, receiving in addition large sums for tuition, ought, one would have thought, to have been able to provide for its students' teaching sufficient to enable them to take the highest honours to which their natural abilities entitle them to aspire without other assistance; but endowed teaching is quite unable to bear this strain, and the student must pay twice over, once to the teacher chosen for him, from whom he does not learn; again from the teacher from whom he does learn, chosen by himself.

If we turn to the endowed schools, we have testimony equally clear and explicit. The Commissioners on Popular Education report that 'the evidence as to the present of the endowments coming within their province and their influence on education is, almost without exception, unfavourable, and decidedly pointing to the necessity of remedial measures;' and the Commissioners on Middle-class Education report that there are few endowments applicable to secondary education which are put to the best use, and very many which are working to little or bad use. In 133 and the following pages will be found a detailed account of the state of education in endowed schools in the different districts into which England was divided by the Commissioners for the purposes of the commission, and the result is in every way most unsatisfactory. We will give some instances. Mr. Fitch says:—

'On the whole the classical learning prescribed by statute in the large majority of the endowed schools may be safely pronounced a delusive and unfruit-

ful thing. It is not carried to any substantial issue in the case of five per cent. of the scholars. It is so taught in the majority of cases that it literally comes to nothing. Finally, it furnishes the pretext for the neglect of all other useful learning, and is the indirect means of keeping down education in every small town that is so unfortunate as to possess an endowment. Three-fourths of the scholars whom I have examined in endowed schools, if tested by the usual standards appropriate to boys of the same age under the Revised Code, would fail to pass the examination either in arithmetic or any other elementary subject.'

Mr. Bryce says that in endowed schools writing is good, *spelling only tolerable*, and *geography unsatisfactory*, and little beyond the superficial facts of English history known, and that in a confused way. Mr. Green says that there are only ninety-seven boys in all the schools which he examined, who with any amount of time allowed and with unlimited use of the dictionary, would make out for themselves with decent correctness an ordinary passage of Cicero or Virgil. And he says that Latin in a grammar school is the measure of attainment in all other subjects. Speaking of grammar schools in Surrey, Mr. Giffard says, for the most part a descent has been made from the highest to the meanest kind of teaching. At Bletchingly and East Grinstead, for example, the free boys are of the humblest class, and are lucky if they learn to read and write. The schools at Hastings, Horsham, and Rye, would be distanced in competition with the best National schools.

It appears then that though there may be many good endowed schools, they are so not in consequence of, but in spite of, these endowments. An endowment takes no note of competition. It relies not on the interest of those who are to work, but on formal rules and statutes; and expects men without the stimulus of hope and fear, without competition, to do their duty when it is directly opposed to their interest. Not being founded on the principles of human nature it fails, and in my view, must fail. But it is impossible to remove endowed schools altogether from the influence of parental opinion and competition; and just in proportion as these influences are brought to bear upon the school it shakes off its sloth and lethargy and becomes useful and efficient. It is not difficult to trace in a school where both these influences are at work the perpetual conflict that goes on between them. The one pushing onward, the other holding back; the one looking to the founder and the past, the other to the parent and the present; and to note how the school rises and falls just as the advantage or the endowment principle prevails. A bad endowed school is not merely a failure: it is a mischief. It does not teach itself; it occupies the ground which more efficient institutions would be ready to take up. As long as the country is covered with endowed schools, we can form no idea of the vigour and efficiency of the rival principle of free and open competition, which we are thus overlaying and suppressing.

To relieve parents of the duty of educating their children at their own expense is by no means an unmixed good; since it tends to prevent the wholesome check which parental opinion is calculated, if undis-

turbed—or, to speak plainly, unbribed—to exercise over the choice of the subjects of education. This evil is not corrected by making exhibitions or scholarships the prizes of competitive examination, while the perpetual holding out of pecuniary rewards for very moderate proficiency in very elementary studies has an obvious tendency to introduce and foster a sordid and illiberal spirit, to propagate the idea that knowledge and cultivation are to be desired not for their own sake, but for the sake of a certain sum of money, and to teach young men to think meanly of an education which they have not been paid handsomely for receiving. In our anxiety to promote study we are in danger of degrading it; of turning what ought to be an end into a means; of deposing knowledge from its high estate and putting money in its place. And if we look from theory to facts, we see that the very Commissioners who propose to found the education of the future on the principle of endowment, give the most miserable account of its past and present performances. The plan of applying the money of the dead to discharge the duties of the living has in it something extremely seductive and attractive. But it turns out that it is much easier to relieve parents from the performance of their duties than efficiently to perform them ourselves; and that all the good that endowments can do is but a poor compensation for the inevitable evils they bring with them. Endowments are like protective laws or patents for inventions. Their success is all in the future. After a long and patient trial they have not been found to succeed: but this, it is said, is because they are not well regulated; not from any inherent vice in the principle. They appeal directly to the shortsighted selfishness and cupidity of parents, producers, inventors, and patentees, and the vice of the principle is overlooked or ignored for the sake of the immediate advantage they seem to hold out.

The Commissioners are evidently impressed with the belief that by careful provisions and an enormous mass of organisation they can retain the good and eradicate the evil of endowments. They think that they can construct out of materials which have hitherto uniformly broken down under the strain and pressure which they were intended to bear, a durable and permanent edifice. They have not in any way sought to disguise the miserable results that have hitherto attended the principle of endowment; but they believe those results to be remedial—not to flow from the principle, but only from its perversion. Thus these recommendations possess a double interest, both as being an attempt by very able persons to remedy a great practical mischief and to convert it into a great good, and as an attempt to solve the problem of endowment by showing that the faults which so many great writers, from Turgot and Adam Smith to the present day, have believed to be inherent in the principle are really only accidents and accessories which a little care and supervision may remove. This double interest, practical and speculative, which attaches to the recommendations of the Commission, renders it necessary to consider them in some detail.

The recommendations of the Commissioners are divided into three parts :—

1. Measures recommended for the improvement of endowed schools.
2. Machinery suggested for carrying recommendations into effect.
3. Mode of providing schools *in places where there are no endowments, or where they are insufficient.*
 - (1.) By private and proprietary schools.
 - (2.) By public schools.

It thus appears that they apprehend the problem of middle-class education to be absolutely identical with the problem of reforming endowed schools. They say, p. 571 :—

‘ It is obvious that any large improvement in education ought to begin with making the best use of endowments for that purpose. Until they (the endowments) are put to the best use, it would be a waste to give public money, or to encourage the expenditure of private money, on what they were intended to do.’

This is quite true on the assumption which is made throughout that endowments are the best means of promoting education; that the defects which have hitherto marred their usefulness are preventible; and that private education, or the commercial principle, ought only to be called in when from the want of private beneficence or from the culpable negligence of the State other funds are not forthcoming. We have considered these propositions in the abstract; it remains to be seen whether they will approve themselves better to the mind when placed before us in the guise of a specific plan worked out in all its details with great care and ability. The subject is of sufficient importance to warrant us in presenting a tolerably full abstract of the recommendations of the Commissioners :—

1. That the Head-master of every endowed school shall appoint his assistants, subject to their possession of proper certificates, and dismiss them at discretion.

2. Shall be supreme over discipline; may suspend, but not expel.
3. Shall regulate books, methods, and organisation.

1. Governors shall have power to build, to change the site, to pay school-fees, to guarantee master's salary, to alter exhibitions, to found new ones, and to spend money for the good of the school.

2. To determine subjects of instruction.
3. To receive fees and pay salaries.
4. To build hotels and license boarding-houses.
5. To appoint and dismiss the head-master, to fix the number of masters, to expel, and to fix the length of the holidays.

Some provincial authority shall—

1. Fix the grade of the school.
2. Shall propose schemes for the alteration of the trusts.
3. Shall abolish religious restrictions.
4. Shall decide which shall be day and which boarding schools.

5. Shall consolidate or suppress small endowments.
6. Shall bring useless endowments before the Charity Commission.

Some central authority shall submit schemes to Parliament—

2. Shall appoint an officer to manage inspection and examination. Schools to be inspected once every three years. One-third of the boys in each school to be examined annually.

3. Shall provide for the audit of accounts.
4. Shall provide for the inspection of endowed elementary schools.
5. Shall inquire as to the expediency of converting endowments not designed for education to educational purposes.

Another central authority, in which the Universities are to be represented, shall—

1. Appoint courts of examiners.
2. Draw up rules for examinations.
3. Regulate the examination of, and granting certificates to schoolmasters.

Private Schools—

1. Charging reasonable fees.
2. Submitting to inspection and examination—

may be registered, by which they will obtain

1. The publication of the names of their successful students in the county list after the annual examination.
2. The privilege of sending in candidates for exhibitions.

New Public Schools to be founded on Rates—

Such is the proposed future of middle-class education.

Now all that is sought to be done by this scheme could be done, if the parents chose it, without any machinery at all. The persons for whose children we are seeking to provide education are by the supposition raised above poverty, are able to pay for what they want, and quite intelligent enough if they only turn their minds to the subject to ascertain whether that want is fairly supplied. If there were no endowments at all in the country the children of the middle classes would not be suffered to rest in ignorance. There would be schools wherever there is a demand for education, just as there are ironmongers' shops wherever there is a demand for hardware. The consumer has only to ask and have, to order and to be obeyed. This machinery is to be called into existence in order to supply education which is believed to be superior to that which parents would require if left to themselves.

It is assumed that the only way of raising the parental standard of education is through the endowed schools, but there is no reason to believe that if fair play were given to the energies of private teachers, stimulated by competition, the position of education would remain stationary. 'It is plain,' say these very Commissioners (p. 652), 'that many of these (private) schools are doing very good work. They have one great advantage over the endowed schools in their

greater elasticity. They can more readily adapt themselves to the needs of the day. They are not hampered by rules. The master of a private school may change his whole system at his choice, and in a single day. He can supply the precise teaching for which the parents ask. Hence these schools will always find a place, and it is well that they should; and if it be possible to use them for national purposes without preventing the growth of what is equally necessary, it will be right to do so. Hence, I should rather have said, they are peculiarly useful in an age which some consider as one of vast progress, and all must admit to be one of violent and rapid transition; they possess an element of popularity that more deeply-rooted and established institutions cannot pretend to; and though from their very nature they are incapable of being organised and incorporated into a cast-iron system, they are on that very account, only the more fit for supporting the chief burden of educating the middle classes.

This conviction is certainly not weakened when we come to consider in detail the various complicated and unknown agencies through which the organisation of English middle-class education is to be effected. There are two kinds of central authority: the one to regulate the external, the other the internal affairs of endowed schools; there is a provincial authority; there is a Minister of Education, there is Parliament, there are the Universities, there is a paid inspector over every district, all working in different orbits with divers functions — sometimes independently, sometimes in subordination to one another—in order to produce the education of middle-class boys under eighteen years. Some of these agencies are to be nominated by the Crown, some are to be popularly elected, hardly any are to be paid, and all are expected to work just as well as if they were. So nice, so difficult, so novel, are the functions attributed to these different agencies, that there exists no office and no body in this country fit to be entrusted with them, and we are obliged to construct them for ourselves. Our ancestors founded schools and left them to work out their own destiny, which was, as the interest of the teachers and managers was directly opposed to their duty, generally a very disastrous one. The Commissioners seem to believe that they have hit upon a plan by which the good of endowment may be preserved and its evil destroyed. How poor is the chance of success in this struggle with the inevitable and irresistible tendencies of things, we may judge from the enormous machinery provided for the purpose. It was said, with some justice, that the fact that it required nine hours of Sir John Scott's eloquence to state the case against Thelwall, was itself a sufficient ground of acquittal; and if the dilapidated edifice of endowment requires all the shoring, and girding, and propping, and buttressing, which the Commissioners have devised for it, there is great doubt whether the experiment is worth making, whether the fabric is worth its supports. Parliament is to approve of all schemes for the reform of Charities; but the manner in which that duty has been hitherto performed gives us but scanty ground of

hope for the future. Nor do we recognise, in the provincial authority, for instance, which is in the first instance to be nominated by the Crown and afterwards popularly elected, any peculiar fitness for deciding questions so nice and difficult, as what grade a school shall belong to, what it shall teach, or whether it shall be a day or a boarding school.

If we can bring ourselves to trust the wants and wishes of mankind, and the willingness of others to supply them, all these things will soon settle themselves. The assumption seems to be that the languid and perfunctory attention which people give to public duties for which they are not paid, and in the success or failure of which they have little or no individual interest, can be safely trusted to replace the strong and drastic stimulus of competition, to which we are content, without fear or reluctance, to entrust the supply of all the other wants of life.

The provincial authority, like the private schoolmaster, has to make its estimate of the demand for a particular kind of education, and to proportion the supply to it; only the provincial authority puts nothing in peril, while the schoolmaster puts often his all on the stake: failure to the one is a matter of regret, to the other of ruin: the former is dealing with other people's affairs, the latter with his own. Again, the local governors have no better knowledge than the schoolmaster to guide them in laying down the subjects of education; but if the governors make a mistake, they have the ever ready endowment at their back to create a demand which does not actually exist, and to obtain that support for their views from pecuniary inducements which ought to come from reason and conviction. The governing bodies suggested by the Commissioners are far more numerous and complicated than those which at present exist in the manner in which they are constructed, and the functions that are accorded to them; there is no efficient security against that negligence, inertness, and supineness which have hitherto been the shame and the bane of education in endowed schools, or against too probable discord and want of cooperation between separate bodies; dangers introduced by this scheme in addition to those already existing. But the Commissioners say (p. 576):—

“The first requisite is to adapt the schools to the work now required of them, by prescribing such a course of study as is demanded by the needs of the country. Many causes contribute to make the schools almost always less useful than they might be, often quite useless, sometimes mischievous. Among these causes we must reckon one of the main to be that they do not teach what is wanted. They need to have their work precisely defined, and then to be kept to that work. That work is defined by their course of study.”

The apathy of the governing bodies is the cause of not teaching what is wanted, and yet it is to the governing bodies that they propose to entrust the choice of studies. They are, indeed, to be appointed, as I understand a rather obscure passage in the Report, for five years, by election of the resident householders; but as they are not to spend the money of the householders, we fail to see that

this election offers any greater guarantee for their efficiency than the present system of co-optation. Yet upon this frail assumption the superiority of a democratically elected body over the Boards of Trustees, now appointed by self-election, rests the whole hope of amendment in most of the important matters of education. If we are inclined to believe that the commercial principle, if it is only allowed free play, will be found to be more than a match for the principle of authority in any shape, how much the more will this be so when this authority, which it is not thought safe to leave in the hands of parents, is to be virtually exercised by a class less wealthy and less intelligent than the parents themselves? The Report says (p. 579) :

‘The needs of the different parts of England are so different that a uniform re-organisation of all the schools of the country is hardly possible, nor, if possible, does it seem to be expedient. In assigning to the different schools their different tasks, the character of the population, the chief occupation—manufacturing, agricultural, mining, or commercial—the kind of education to which the people have been already accustomed, the teaching that seems most in demand, all these considerations, as it seems to us, should have their proper weight.’

The inference drawn from these remarks is, that the country must be divided into districts, in order to provide by authority suitable education for it; the inference we should be disposed to draw is that a matter so various, so constantly changing, so full of shades and differences should be left to the people themselves, and not made a subject of official pre-arrangement.

The passion for organisation by superior authority is pushed to a great length. The provincial authority is to divide the endowed schools in its district into three grades, according as the teaching stops, at 18, 16, or 14 years. So that the schools of a whole district will make up among them one great school, of which the individual schools are the classes. I will not enter into the wisdom of this arrangement; my business is rather with principles than details, but I mention it to show the extent to which we are to be drilled and regulated, and how completely the Commission is possessed with the idea that out of endowed schools can be formed a perfect educational hierarchy, quite superseding all other educational machinery.

The Report is more successful in dealing with the evils resulting from the easy income and assured position now enjoyed by masters of endowed schools. It is proposed to make the master removable by the governors, to give him only a moderate fixed salary, and to make the rest of his income depend on the number of his pupils. We have only to remark that a master whose office depends on the will of governors elected by the householders of the district, and having, therefore, no firmer tenure of his office than a member of Parliament has of his seat, will be placed in a situation as precarious as that of the private master, without the stimulus to healthy exertion by which in open competition the evils of precariousness are redeemed, and that in order to retain his position he must be at least as much of a demagogue as a pedagogue. His income will also

depend rather on the number than the proficiency of his pupils. In the case of a private teacher, the latter is the cause of the former, but an endowed school has other inducements to hold out to parents besides good teaching, and the stimulus to exertion is thus diminished. The Commissioners express a regret that the profession of schoolmaster is not estimated as highly as it deserves, and is not made sufficiently attractive to men of ability. They hope this will be remedied by the greater value that is likely to be set on education, and by the higher price that will be paid for it. Were teaching really thrown open to public competition, we should cordially join in these anticipations. But the Commission is at pains to cut away the very ground on which it relies.

'All good schools have a tendency,' says the Report (p. 609), 'to become expensive, almost in proportion to their goodness.'

This is undoubtedly true, and we may add that this tendency to become expensive makes them good.

'If the master has power to charge what he pleases, he raises his terms as fast as his school fills, and very probably succeeds in filling it still better in consequence, but he fills it from a different class in society. Those who most need access to good schools perpetually lose a good teacher as soon as he has shown his efficiency.' 'That he should make more money by his talents if he can is obviously, if he is master of a private school, no more than his right. But if he be master of an endowed school he is a public officer, and his right to increase his emoluments is limited by the position which he holds.'

The school is intended for a definite work, and he has no right gradually to transfer it to a different work in pursuance of his private interest. 'Again, the Commission object (p. 611) to anything that tends to induce the master to raise his terms, directly or indirectly, as high as the market will bear.' I do not object to these views from the point of sight of the Commission, they are inevitable; but how hopeless it is to think of raising a profession from which the means of rising in the social scale, and obtaining the market value of a man's exertions is deliberately excluded; and how yet more hopeless it is to expect from men thus fettered and disheartened, exertions comparable to those which flow from a free career.

Passing from masters to pupils, the Report proposes to do away with some of the most prominent abuses. Gratuitous instruction is denounced as suicidal, because it is sure to render the school so bad that it is incapable of giving instruction of any value, and sinks below the level of an ordinary national school. With less conclusive reasons they reject the claim of poverty. For the children of the poor the State already makes provision, and that in a far better way than is likely to be effected by an endowed school. Gratuitous instruction and exhibitions, to enable a boy to proceed to a school of a higher grade, are to be obtained in free and open competition. That which is going on in our Universities is to be going on all over the country, and any boy educated, or whose parents are willing to have him educated, at an endowed school, may, if he has reached a

certain measure of knowledge and intelligence, obtain assistance towards the expense of his education, so as to relieve his parents. This proposal has its merits. It holds out to the parents an inducement to prepare their children well and early for competition, in the shape of a solid pecuniary compensation. A boy of remarkable talents may thus be brought forward, and meritorious persons may find assistance in the education of their families. But here the advantage seems to stop. It is a very grave question whether the plan has not defects that more than counterbalance its merits. It will hardly be disputed that to educate their children is the clear duty of parents; and the parents of whom we are speaking have the power to perform it. Why, as a matter of public policy, should the State, by the control which it exercises over endowments, relieve the parents from that duty, and exercise it for them? We can understand, though we may not acquiesce in, the claim of poverty, or the vested interest set up for a particular neighbourhood; but when these claims are set aside, as by the Report which we are now considering, on what principle is this promiscuous largess justified. It can hardly be maintained that public money ought to be employed in order to assist parents or any other persons in the discharge of a duty voluntarily undertaken, and which they are able and willing to discharge without. Then ought the State to pay for whatever it wishes to have done in the shape of prizes and bounties.

We have outlived the days when bounties were paid on English manufacture, or duties imposed on foreign goods for any purpose but that of revenue. Is it quite clear that bounties on education do not range themselves within the same principle? Again, knowledge is a good for the power it gives, and the intellectual superiority and delight it confers. There is much in the association of ideas. We are asked to do these things with the view of elevating the standard of education to a higher point than it has reached already. Are we quite sure that we raise the standard or elevate the conception of knowledge by teaching people to regard it as just so much money's-worth? Is not life sordid enough already? is not money sufficiently idolised already, without setting it up as the measure by which intellectual attainments of infinitely greater value than money must be estimated? Everything, it is cynically said, has its price: the virtue of women, the honour of men; but there is no advantage, that we can see, in putting a specific value on Greek Delectus or Eutropius. Then these exhibitions are to be connected, as we understand it, with certain schools, so that they act as bounties to those schools, and in so far tend to diminish the motives for, and probably therefore in some degree the exertion of, the teachers, who are sure to retain these pupils at any rate, whether they teach well or ill. Exhibitions are given for particular subjects, and they operate as a bounty for the teaching and learning of those subjects, which will cause them to be taught and learnt whether they be the fittest subjects to be taught and learnt or no. This view of the subject seems to have been present to the mind of Adam Smith when he wrote:

‘Premiums given by the public to artists and manufacturers who excel in their particular occupations are not liable to the same objections as bounties. By encouraging *extraordinary dexterity* and ingenuity they serve to keep up the emulation of the workmen actually employed in those respective occupations, and are not considerable enough to turn towards any one of them a greater share of the capital of the country than what would go to it of its own accord. Their tendency is not to overturn the natural balance of employments, but to render the work which is done as perfect and complete as possible.’

This weighty opinion seems to involve the very principle which the Commission have overlooked. Rewards for extraordinary merit given to the persons who possess that merit, which must be few in number, from the very fact that the merit is extraordinary, may be beneficial; but to be lavish of rewards gained by very small and elementary progress, and to make those rewards take the form of a payment, not to the boys who have earned them, but to the parents, is quite a different thing. It is to interfere with the natural course of things to give a bounty to a particular course of study, to teach parents to consider the State as thus partner in the performance of a duty which is wholly their own, and by being profuse of rewards for small merit, to deprive real and extraordinary talent and industry of proportional recognition. It may be said that exhibitions and scholarships must be of really great educational value, for they are earnestly desired and eagerly caught at by all educational bodies. If this feeling be analysed, we believe it will be found that the origin of this desire is not the idea that these things tend to the improvement of education in the abstract, but that they give an advantage to the institution that possesses them by enabling it to attract talent by other and more palpable means than the superiority of its instruction. There is a strong feeling among the most advanced Liberals in the University of Oxford that it is overlaid by the mass of endowment. The conditions which used to exist are inverted, and instead of talent competing for scholarships, these scholarships may be more truly said to be competing for talent. There is endowment enough, not only for superiority, but for mediocrity, and so the Colleges are actually bidding against each other for the best talent. While the Balliol Scholarship was worth 25*l.* a year it was the most desired prize in Oxford, because it was open to competition, and a successful candidate must have shown extraordinary merit. Now that hundreds of scholarships are open to competition, Balliol must raise the income in order to keep the lead; and this process is at this moment, we believe, about to be repeated, in consequence of the increase in the value of a scholarship at a neighbouring College. What used to be a prize has become a matter of money calculation. Knowledge is an investment which may be made to yield so much per cent., and under the system of endowments, the main object of which is to raise the aims of education, the pursuit of knowledge is becoming every day more sordid and mechanical.

Immense labour has been bestowed by the Commission on this Report. The quantity of materials collected is enormous, and they

have spared no pains in digesting it and rendering it available to the public. The principles on which they rely are liberal and enlightened, and their recommendations tend to remove or to palliate many of the grossest faults of endowed schools. This is no slight praise. The fault of their investigation seems to be that they have shrunk from going fairly into the question of endowments, but have, on the contrary, assumed as self-evident that they are the only means proper for the education of the middle classes. They apologise for tolerating private schools for a time as a supplement to endowments, evidently looking forward to the time when, either by the benevolence of new founders, or by a system of rating, private education shall be entirely supplanted by public. This conclusion is more due to the fact that endowments do already exist to a large extent than to any very deep conviction of the excellence of their principle. The Report is full of statements of the most damaging nature as regards endowments. It is over and over again admitted that if they were to remain as they are they would be an intolerable nuisance; that they neither teach themselves nor suffer others to do so; that they have lost the confidence of the public; and that the principles of assistance to poverty, of benefit to particular localities, and of gratuitous instruction, to which they owe their existence, must be surrendered. The Commissioners believe that the defects which have everywhere and at all times waited on endowments are not inherent in their nature, but accidents and excrescences; and they proceed to remodel them by means of agencies, ponderous, ill-paid, ill-informed, and bearing within them, as far as we can judge, those very elements of neglect and inertness which have hitherto distinguished the government of charities; but though they have placed the master on a better footing, they have by no means removed all objections to his position, and while removing many evils in the appropriation of charitable funds to the advantage of the parents, they have proposed a system which is fraught with many more.

I prefer the simple and natural proceeding of instruction by private enterprise as against the species of decentralised bureaucracy, to which, to the exclusion and ruin of private enterprise, the education of the children of the middle class is to be entrusted. It is, indeed, wonderful, when we consider the competition to which they are exposed, not that private schools should have many faults, but that they should exist at all. Two classes of people in the same country are offering to the public the same article—the one receiving a large bounty on its production, the other nothing. Every pound spent on education from charitable funds is just as much a discouragement as an encouragement, only it is an encouragement to but one school, while it is a discouragement to we know not how many, some of which it injures, others it drives out of existence, not to speak of those which it prevents from coming into existence at all. In private life the rich elder brother lives on his fortune; in education the rich school not only enjoys its own wealth, but takes

by its competition the bread out of the mouth of the poor one. Had the management of endowed schools been less glaringly and notoriously inefficient and negligent, it seems difficult to conceive how private schools could have continued to exist beside them. There is hardly any fault that can be found in the instruction given by private schools which is not to be paralleled by a corresponding defect in endowed. We have two competitors; but while to the private school competition with endowment has been a crushing and unequal struggle, to the endowed schools such rivalry is a most valuable and useful stimulant. Private schools benefit endowments; endowments injure private schools. Private schools would be sure to be kept alive and active by competition with each other, which has a tendency to spring up wherever it is wanted. Endowed schools may monopolise and abuse the education entrusted to them for centuries, with no chance of encountering a competition carried on with equal resources and on equal terms. It is justly said against private schools that they are too sensitive to the opinions and wishes of parents: but it is said with at least equal justice to endowed schools that from a systematic disregard for the wishes of parents from teaching what they do not want, and not teaching what they do want, they have lost the confidence of the classes for whom they were designed, and fallen into a state which would be shameful were it not the natural and inevitable result of the inherent vices of their constitution. If private schools are, as is said, too modern and new-fangled, endowed schools are infinitely too rigid, antique, and old-fashioned. If private schools seldom rise to a point of instruction much superior to the demands and ideas of the parents, endowed schools have very generally fallen below the wishes and intentions of their founders. Between these two states there is this important difference, that the founder can only influence the destinies of his foundation by his will, placed in the hands of indifferent and careless administrators; while in a private school negligence and incapacity are sure to be visited by immediate desertion and destruction. Of the actual state of private schools the Commissioners do not speak, nor can they be expected to speak, with as much confidence and certainty as of endowments. Some are good, many are moderate, many bad. But upon the whole they are not worse, they are we think better, than might be expected from the competition with which they have to struggle. It is very difficult to compare the two. Perhaps the fairest test is the experience of one who has had to examine the results of both systems placed side by side. The following extract is from the evidence of Dr. William Smith, a classical examiner in the London University, of fourteen years' standing:—

‘My own impression I must say is more in favour of the better class of private schools than that which I find many persons entertain. I think that the masters, as a general rule, are very conscientious, and the fact of the existence of the commercial principle makes them more anxious for the progress of their pupils than the masters of grammar schools and proprietary schools. The very

commercial principle is the thing that works beneficially in their case, so that instead of its being an injury it is the thing that makes the school a good one. Taking the University of London I mentioned a public institution, and I had no objection to mention it, because it has distinguished itself so much—I mean Stonyhurst College. It would not be right for me to mention any private schools; but there are some private schools which send their boys up for examination to the University of London in a way most creditable to themselves. With the exception of Stonyhurst, I should say that the boys at the University of London come better trained from private schools than from the proprietary and grammar schools. This is the result of my examination. I know that it is opposed to what one might expect, and it was opposed to my own views until I had obtained the practical knowledge.'

Thus is theory remarkably confirmed by experience. Our public schools with all their faults succeed. They are made up of two parts, endowment and free adventure. Is it the endowment that leads and directs the adventure, or the adventure that carries the endowment along with it? No one can doubt that it is the free principle that is the source of life and energy. The truth seems to be, that allowing for the difficulties thrown in their way by the liberality of founders and benefactors, the state of private education is quite as good as could be expected; while to those who believe in the educational efficacy of endowments, their present position and working is an insoluble puzzle.

In endowments we have a bad principle, the principle of divorcing interest from duty, working at every possible advantage; in private schools we have the sound principle of open competition and the union of duty and interest, working under the greatest possible disadvantage, and the results perhaps are not very unequal. But how different is the future of the two. The endowment is perpetually falling back. Its origin and its structure are equally artificial. It is always requiring interference from without to recruit its flagging energies and set it once more on the path from which it is perpetually turning aside. A private school, on the other hand, carries within itself a real living principle, which acts by an automatic impulse, exactly when and in proportion as interference is needed. The balance-sheet of the half year is to the private schoolmaster worth far more than all the central provincial and local authorities can ever be to the endowed school. They act fitfully and intermittently. The stimulus of personal and pecuniary interest is always present. If a coarse, it is a thoroughly efficient and drastic monitor. If it be admitted that private schools are, and indeed must be, equal to or even above the standard of parental opinion; grant that improvement in the notions of parents with regard to education is possible to almost any extent, and you have granted the possibility of indefinite improvement in private schools. And the progress thus made is certain and durable. Is there any reason to despair of it? We think not. The teacher can and will do much to educate the parent as well as the child, not as in endowed schools has been done, with such evil result, by

trying to force upon him an education which his habits of thought reject, but by gradually engrafting upon what is rightly insisted on as of the first utility, more and more mental culture. By this natural and almost imperceptible method we may expect to see education grow, if not rapidly, at any rate surely and solidly assimilating new and higher elements to itself one by one, and developing itself by that slow growth which is the secret of the durability and true adaptation to their end of human institutions.

The above observations are intended to establish the purely abstract proposition that the education of the children of parents able to pay for it is not an exception to the ordinary rules of political economy. How this principle is to be applied is a practical question admitting of much difference of opinion, into which I do not propose to enter at length. Of course, as the failure of endowments arises from the impossibility of overcoming the tendency to languor and decay in human agency, any appropriation of money to buildings, to libraries or museums, would be free from the objections urged. As it is admitted that the education of the children of poor parents cannot be left to the operation of free trade, it follows that the money might, without economical objection, be spent in the promotion of primary education. So long as endowed schools exist, they ought, as the most effectual check on indolence, and test of diligence, to be inspected and examined by the Privy Council every year, in whatever they profess to teach, and the results of such examination and inspection published. The expense of this might fairly be charged on endowments. As long as it is considered right that masters should be paid by endowments, I would suggest that their remuneration should be regulated by the results of examination as well as by the number of pupils, by quality as well as by quantity; and that endowments might well bear the expense of examining such private schools as were willing to submit to examination. Money paid directly for efficiency in teaching is spent in counteracting, not in increasing the evils of endowment. From the publicity of the exact state of teaching in each school, I look for the most beneficial effects on the minds of the parents whom it will enlighten, and on the schools which it will stimulate. I do not advocate any sudden and violent revolution, but only the recognition of a principle which, if true, as I believe it to be, cannot be disregarded without serious and lasting damage to the cause of Middle Class Education.

Of course, if endowments are discountenanced, much more should we object to any attempt to impose any burden for the purposes of Middle Class Education on the taxation of the country.

