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REMARKS ON NATIONAL
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REMARKS

ON

NATIONAL EDUCATION:

BEING

AN INQUIRY INTO THE RIGHT AND DUTY OF
GOVERNMENT TO EDUCATE THE PEOPLE.

BY

GEORGE COMBE.

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“Sectarianism is not morality. To be zealous for a sect, and to be conscientious in morals, are widely different. To inculcate the peculiarities of a sect, and to teach the fundamental principles of religion and morality, are widely different. Indeed, schools might be named, in which there is the most rigorous inculcation of an exclusive sectarianism, where there is a deplorable absence of the fruits of both religion and morality.”—*The Rev. Egerton Ryerson, in his Report on a System of Public Elementary Instruction for Upper Canada.*

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## REMARKS ON NATIONAL EDUCATION.

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THE public appear to be now nearly unanimous on the point, that the people *should be educated*; but considerable differences of opinion exist as to *who* should be charged with the duty of educating them,—the state or individuals? also whether combined religious and secular instruction, or secular instruction alone, should be given by the schoolmaster, leaving religious instruction to be supplied by the parent and priest. To communicate my views distinctly on these points, I find it advisable to begin with the very elements of the subject.

In the arguments generally maintained on these questions, certain views of the nature of man; of the origin and objects of society; of the powers and duties of government; and of the connection between practical morality, secular prosperity, and religious belief, are assumed by the various writers as settled doctrines, concerning which their own opinions are unquestionably sound; when, in point of fact, no adequate consideration has been bestowed on these topics, either by them or by those to whom they address themselves, and no common views in regard to them are definitely assented to by either. When the postulates of a discussion are thus involved in obscurity, and apprehended differently by different individuals, harmony in the conclusions is impossible. However widely, therefore, the reader may differ from some of the opinions now to be stated, few persons, I hope, will doubt the advantage of elucidating these fundamental points of the question.

This world, then, appears to me to be a vast theatre constituted for exertion; in which enjoyment is the natural consequence of industry, morality, and intelligence; and suffering that of ignorance, vice, and sloth. The constitution of the world, physical and moral, that of the human mind and body, as well as the relations between them, are fixed and determinate; and man becomes prosperous and happy in proportion to the degree in which his social institutions and per-

sonal conduct harmonize with these unchangeable elements of nature. Each individual of the race is born ignorant of every thing; but capacities are bestowed on him to learn all that is essential to his welfare. The mighty machinery of nature, physical and moral, is constantly revolving within him (in his own mind and body), and around him; and he cannot by possibility avoid experiencing its influence. To be prosperous, he must adjust his conduct and position to its action, and he cannot do so unless he know it; learn, therefore, he must, or suffer. Education means teaching the individual what it concerns him to know relative to his own constitution and that of the moral and physical world in which he is destined to live and act; and it includes *training* him to habits of action suitable to that destination.

The importance of teaching knowledge is evident; but the necessity for *training* is less undertood. It arises from the dependence of the mind, in this world, on physical organization for its powers of acting. The brain is the material instrument by means of which the mind acts, and it consists of a variety of parts, each connected with a special mental power. It is subject to the same organic laws as the other parts of the body. If we should confine a man for the first twenty years of his life to a dungeon, without exercise and employment, we should find, on bringing him into the active world of light and life, that he could not see distinctly, could not judge correctly of the distance of objects by their sounds, could not walk steadily, and scarcely could make any exertion with his arms and hands. The cause of his defects would be found in the circumstance, that his organic structure had been left feeble and undeveloped through want of exercise; and that his various senses and muscles (which, although distinct in themselves, are all framed to co-operate and assist in prosecuting general aims) had never been accustomed to act in combination. Such a being, therefore, when first introduced into active life, would be helpless, bewildered, and unhappy.

The uneducated and untrained peasant is in a similar condition in regard to his mental organs. Not only is he ignorant, but his mental organs are dull, feeble, and incapable of continued exertion; and he, therefore, cannot think continuously, or act perseveringly. We may give him instruction, but it does not penetrate into his inactive brain, and it is not reproductive of thought and action. I have occasionally hired into my service individuals who have not learned to read and write, and the effects were most conspicuous. The ears heard, and the eyes saw, and the understanding appeared to

comprehend; but I soon discovered that the comprehension was imperfect and inexact, that the *retention* was momentary, and the power of reproduction, combination, and modification, almost *nil*. I lately conversed with an engineer and machine-maker who employs 120 workmen, and he told me that he had repeatedly taken into his workshop uneducated and untrained labourers with a view to teaching them some simple processes in his trade, but had found that the lesson of yesterday was not retained in the mind till to-day; that no spontaneous suggestion presented itself, even when circumstances rendered it evident to a trained understanding; and that their labour, in consequence, was without value in any department of skilled art. Their muscles had been trained to act, almost without the direction of their brains; and beyond labour which muscles could execute independently of intelligence, they were powerless.

Such is the intellectual condition of uneducated man. But the intellect constitutes only a small, although an important portion of the mind: Man is endowed, besides, with moral sentiments and animal propensities, depending, like his intellect, on cerebral organs for their powers of manifestation. Each organ is more or less capable of action in proportion to its size, temperament, and the *training* which it has received. In a rude and uncultivated condition of the intellect, the moral sentiments are left without stimulus and direction. These sentiments produce the emotions of benevolence and veneration, and the love of justice. Prosperous external circumstances, generally speaking, are favourable to their development. A man steeped in poverty and oppressed by want, finds his selfish faculties excited, and lacks not only moral stimulus, but physical means for practising the benevolent virtues. One buried in ignorance cannot exercise a well directed and enlightened veneration; and one in whom all the higher and disinterested powers of the mind are dormant, cannot be expected to comprehend the dictates of truth, or to practise the principles of justice.

But the third class of faculties, the animal propensities, are not equally quiescent in the uneducated individual; because, on their prompt action, the preservation of life and the supply of our bodily wants have been made by nature immediately to depend. The external objects which act as their stimulants, everywhere abound. The struggle for food, raiment, and shelter, in which the uneducated man is, in the general case, constantly engaged, calls forth his Combative-ness and Destructiveness, his cunning and his obstinacy,

into abiding activity ; it *trains them* to vigour, and renders them prompt to action.

Such, then, is uneducated man, in his general condition. I speak, of course, of average individuals, for there are persons born in all ranks of life whose inherent superiority of mind enables them triumphantly to surmount every adventitious obstacle to their development and elevation. These, however, are few in number ; and as nature has rendered them, in a great measure, independent of social aid, they do not form the objects of our present consideration.

Let us next consider *society*, and its origin and objects. I regard society as the direct offspring of the inherent faculties of man. Some species of animals are gregarious, that is to say, have received from the God of Nature certain feelings which render the presence of their kind agreeable to them ; and to this category belongs man. Many of our faculties have intelligent beings for their direct objects ; and all of them are adapted to a condition of social life. Not only so, but also the grand outlines of the social state of man are determined by the fiat of the Creator. Individuals differ *naturally* in bodily strength and in mental energy ; and in these differences a foundation is laid for diversities of social rank and condition—for the existence of the rich and the poor, of the governing and the governed. In order correctly to understand human nature, therefore, we must regard man as an *individual* being, seeking his happiness in the gratification of his faculties ; but high in the list of these we must place his social powers, which are as certainly inherent parts of his mental constitution as the most important of his selfish feelings.

*Government* springs from the social faculties. Living in the social state, necessarily implies that there are interests and duties common to all the members of the tribe. Gregarious animals place sentinels to warn the herd or flock of dangers, and choose leaders to guide them. Among men, the ruling power, in its proper form, consists merely of certain members of the associated mass selected by the rest to attend to the common interests of the whole, and to enforce the reciprocal duties incumbent on the individual and the community. General consent of the members selects the Rulers, and lends them the power of the social body to execute their functions. History tells us, indeed, that, in many states, strong and energetic individuals have constituted themselves masters and transmitted their power to their descendants, irrespective of the will of the community ; whence notions have grown up of the right to govern being inherent in certain families,



independently of the will of the people: but these were usurpations disavowed by reason, and such claims are not now made by the rulers of any constitutional state, and certainly not by the Government of England.

In determining what are the rights of individuals, and what the powers of Government, our best guide is still the nature of man. Man subsists necessarily as an *individual*: He has received from his Maker certain powers of action and enjoyment, and been placed in a world adapted to his constitution. He has a right, therefore, derived directly from God (who called him into existence, and provided the world for his reception), to the full enjoyment of all his powers and capacities, but under two restrictions; *1st*, that he shall not transgress the laws which Divine wisdom has established in his own and in external nature for their regulation; and, *2dly*, that he shall not convert his individual enjoyments into sources of annoyance to his fellow-men, who, from the necessity of his and their being, must live with him in society. God, in his government of the world, enforces the first restriction by punishing the individual with loss of health for abuse of his corporeal functions, and by misfortune and misery for neglect or abuse of his mental powers. The *duty* and the *right* of Government is to enforce the second restriction, viz., to see that the individual, in pursuing his own happiness, does not invade that of his neighbours.

These premises enable us to draw certain conclusions regarding the right of our Rulers to interfere in the education of the people. In the first place, it follows from them, that if any man chooses to renounce all connection with and dependence on society,—to go forth from the haunts of men, and neither live among them, accept their aid, nor tender them his contributions, physical or mental,—he has an undoubted right, so far as society is concerned, to indulge *all* his faculties in his own way, because he commits no offence against society, and causes it no injury. He commits, indeed, a great offence against his own nature, which the Creator expressly designed for social life; but Nature herself, without the interference of man as an avenger, has provided ample punishment for that offence, by the deterioration of his social nature, and the deprivation of all social enjoyments, consequent on solitude. Betake himself to what solitude he will, he cannot escape out of the presence of God, or withdraw himself from the influence of *His* laws, which are woven into the texture of his body and mind, and inscribed on every breath of air, and every foot of ground. By their means, the Creator will inflict on him the precise kind and degree of

punishment which his conduct merits, and which will best serve to recall him to a due estimate of the privileges which he contemns.

But when an individual prefers to avail himself of the advantages of living in society, of the physical protection which other men's skill and courage afford, of the social pleasures which their intelligence and attainments present, and above all, when he claims their sympathy, support, and relief in sickness and in old age—which every man living in society virtually does—he becomes bound to perform his duty to it in return; and society acquires a *right* to enforce the performance of that duty, as the fundamental condition on which it allows him to reap the benefit of its arrangements and institutions.

What, then, are the duties which the individual owes to society? His first duty, in compensation for the advantages it confers on him, is obviously to acquire bodily habits calculated, according to the laws of organization, which neither he nor society can alter, to preserve himself in health, that he may be fitted for his allotted sphere of action, and may avoid diffusing disease by infection around him. It is on this principle that society has the right to enforce the ordinary regulations of police in towns. It ordains every citizen to put forth from his dwelling all refuse and noxious substances, and employs men to collect and carry them away. This is not done in the country, because there, individuals who neglect this duty, injure only themselves and their domestic dependents. The same principle will authorise the enforcement of still higher hygienic regulations in towns; and, in point of fact, the statute 9th and 10th Victoria, c. 96, recently passed, authorises the magistrates of towns, on receiving a certificate signed by two duly qualified medical practitioners, "of the filthy and unwholesome condition of any dwelling-house or other building," to *compel* the person complained of to abate the nuisance within two days. But I may go further in the same direction. The individual who claims the benefits afforded by an advanced and intelligent state of society, is bound to qualify himself, according to the endowments bestowed on him by Providence, for acting well his part in that society. In a society which is moral, he has no right to continue publicly immoral; because this is not only offensive, but directly injurious to his fellow-men: he is not entitled to remain ignorant and untrained; because in that condition he is incapable of performing his due part in the grand social evolutions, the beneficial results of which he claims a right to share. Before he can consistently deny the right of society to train and edu-

cate his children, he must shew his own title to make the following announcement, viz., "I decline to undergo the fatigue and discipline necessary to render my brain active, in order to fit myself for skilful labour, and for applying my labour to the best advantage; I decline to learn to read and write; I decline to be instructed in, or to conform my conduct to, those conditions in the physical and moral world, which, by the ordination of God, are productive of prosperity and happiness; and I decline to regulate my conduct by what you call the laws of morality and reason; all this I decline, because I am a free and independent man, and because it would be irksome to me to submit to such training, instruction, and restraint;—nevertheless, I claim the right to throw myself with all my incapacity undiminished, all my ignorance unilluminated, and all my passions unregulated and untamed, upon the bosom of society: I insist that its members who *have* cultivated *their* faculties and reaped the natural rewards of that cultivation, in the possession of morality, intelligence, and wealth, shall bear the burden of my incapacity, of my recklessness, and of my follies; that they shall minister to me when sick, and feed me when my unskilled labour, in competition with their skilled labour, does not suffice to supply me with the necessaries of life; and that they shall provide for my wife and children when, through ignorance and vice, I sink into a premature grave."

This embodies, not a rhetorical, but a *literal* statement of the demand which the untrained and uneducated labourer, who denies the right of society to insist that himself and his children be trained and educated, makes on his fellow-men; and I leave those to defend it who abet him in that denial. The man who claims the benefit of a poor-law, actually demands from society all that I have now mentioned; and, unquestionably, we are entitled to say to him,—“Before you can legitimately claim ignorance as the sacred birthright of yourself and your offspring, you must shew your emancipation from the laws of God, which connect want with incapacity, misfortune with ignorance, misery with immorality, and disease and premature death with habits of filth, sloth, and intemperance.” If the man admits that he continues a subject of the Divine government (and unless he be mad he will not dispute this point), he cannot, with any show of reason, contest the right of society to train and instruct him and his children to that degree which shall render him and them moral and intelligent agents, fit to play their parts in the society of which they claim to be members.

The question here presents itself. *What kind and degree of*

knowledge has society a right to insist on its members acquiring! The principles already stated will enable us to answer this question. The individual has a right to the most perfect freedom of thought and action in regard to every thing which does not directly or indirectly affect the welfare of other men. To come at once to the grand point of controversy on the subject of national education—society has a right to insist that he shall be instructed and trained in whatever is necessary to fit him for the discharge of his duties as a member of the community in which he lives; but, in all beyond this, the individual has a right to unbounded liberty of self-determination as to what he shall learn and what he shall not learn. He has no right to continue filthy in his habits; because this may induce disease and infect his neighbours. He has no right to continue grossly ignorant; because in this state of mind he is unfit to regulate his passions, to act with a rational regard to his own and the public welfare in the circumstances in which he is placed, and also to apply his natural powers in that kind of labour by which alone he can subsist in a society composed of intelligent and skilful men, on whom he has no right to throw the burden of his incapacity. But he has a perfect title to decline to study poetry, or rhetoric, or painting, or sculpture, if these be distasteful to him; because his remaining ignorant of these accomplishments can carry no direct harm to his fellow-citizens. In the former category—that of things which he is bound to learn, because his ignorance of them is injurious to society—I place a knowledge of moral duties; and, in the latter, I rank those religious doctrines the foundations of which rest *exclusively* on supernatural communications.

I recognise explicitly the importance of *religion* to the welfare of society and to that of the individual. Active religious feelings dispose a man to venerate and submit himself to those moral and physical laws instituted by the Creator, on which his own happiness and that of society depend. They prompt him also to adoration and gratitude, emotions highly influential in the right ordering of human conduct. But under the head of what is generally called religion, are included doctrines and precepts which God has already forced on our acceptance by the clear order of nature in this world, and other doctrines of which the human understanding, unenlightened by revelation, is incapable of gaining a competent knowledge. In regard to the former, nature and Scripture coincide, and speak one and the same language; whereas nature is silent, or so obscure as not to be practical, in regard to the latter. It appears to me, that Government, as a secular in-

stitution, has a right to insist that its subjects shall be instructed in every species of knowledge, and trained to every mode of action, which directly affects the welfare of society, and which is prescribed as a duty, equally by Scripture and by the natural laws of the body, of the mind, and of the external creation.

The laws of health, industry, and morality, are thus enacted by the Creator, and are universally prevalent. In Christian Europe, in Mahomedan Asia, and in Pagan Africa, the individual who neglects cleanliness, who lives in bad air, and indulges in vicious habits, ruins his health, whereby he may become a focus of infection, and incapacitate himself for the discharge of his social duties ; he who is ignorant and reckless of the moral law becomes a scourge and affliction to his fellow-men ; and he whose intelligence is so limited that he is incapable of acting successfully a part in the social evolutions amidst which he lives, is in constant danger of becoming a burden on their industry, and of throwing on them the evil consequences which God has attached to his ignorance and incapacity.

The religious sentiments are inherent in, and important elements of, the human mind : they act with great energy, and lead to stupendous consequences of good or evil, according as they are well or ill directed. It appears to me that they may with great advantage be directed towards the support and enforcement of God's laws written in the book of creation, as well as of those written in the Bible. This opinion is entitled to the greater weight, when it is considered that no law is laid down to man in the Bible for his guidance in temporal affairs, which is not also inscribed in the book of nature ; and that, in point of fact, it is the support which the scriptural precept receives from the agency of nature that renders it practical. The Scripture, for example, commands temperance in all things ; and it can be demonstrated that, according to the laws of organization, intemperance in food injures the health ; intemperance in drinking incapacitates the mind ; intemperance in ambition blinds the understanding and leads to ruin ; intemperance in study exhausts the brain and deranges the mental functions ; and so forth. In my work on "The Constitution of Man," I have given illustrations of this doctrine ; and in my Lectures on "Moral Philosophy," I have endeavoured to shew that the Ten Commandments are as clearly inscribed in the natural constitution of man, as they were on the tables of stone delivered to Moses ; and these are only examples which

might be multiplied to the full extent of scripture-teaching relative to temporal affairs.

The principle now stated, that scripture-precepts regarding temporal duties cannot become practical unless supported by the order of nature, deserves consideration. It goes deep into the merits of secular and religious education. Suppose, for example, that the order of nature had connected health, mental energy, and temporal prosperity, with *intemperance*, and that the scriptural injunction, "Be temperate in all things," had rested solely on the authority of Scripture, and its only sanction had been the announcement of eternal punishment as the *future* consequence of disregarding it,—what chance would the cause of temperance have had for success in this world? Obviously, very little. This conclusion is supported by the fact, that the plainest precepts of the Bible continue to this day to be utterly disregarded in practice by individuals and nations who believe unhesitatingly in their Divine authority, but whose understandings have not yet discovered that they are supported also by the order of nature. The precept, for example, "Love thy neighbour as thyself,"—"all men are thy neighbours,"—directly involves the principles of free-trade; but its practical application in this form was resisted, and continues to be resisted, by individuals and nations who admit its Divine authority, but do not yet perceive how this application of it can be rendered compatible with their temporal welfare. The "League" succeeded in having it carried into practical effect, only by convincing the English people that the order of nature was such that they might safely obey the precept, not only without temporal injury to themselves, but with positive advantage. Then, and not till then, they yielded obedience to what the Scripture had commanded them to do for eighteen hundred years, but commanded them in vain.

As a contrast, I may notice the Scriptural precepts, "I say unto you, that ye resist not evil; but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also; and if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloak also" (Matthew, v. 39, 40.) The constitution of the human mind does not sanction these precepts when understood in their literal sense. Nature has bestowed on us a love of life, and a sentiment of self-respect, which render injuries and insults disagreeable; she has added sentiments of Benevolence, Veneration, and Conscientiousness, which proclaim that the infliction of injury and insult is wrong; but as she foresaw that some men might disregard these moral restraining powers and become aggressive, she

added combative and destructive propensities to the mind, one of the legitimate uses of which is to repel, by force, unjust attacks on our persons and our rights. The law of nature, therefore, is, that injury and insult *must be restrained*,—by moral influence if possible, but if not, by physical force ; and accordingly the words of Scripture have been practically thus interpreted, and those sects who have endeavoured to act on their literal meaning have not succeeded in commending their principles of non-resistance to general acceptance.

If the constitution and arrangements of nature in which our secular duties are inscribed, and by means of which they are enforced, were presented to the understandings of the young as Divine institutions, and if their sentiments of Wonder, Veneration, and Conscientiousness, were trained to admire, reverence, and obey them, these duties would, in their minds, become *principles of religion*, as well as of morality and prudence. Their practical efficacy would be increased by the combined forces of the understanding, of the moral sentiments, of the religious sentiments, and of the selfish principles of our nature, all co-operating ; for, when all these were satisfied in regard to their Divine authority and practical utility, they would naturally unite towards their enforcement. No doctrines or precepts, relative to secular duties, that rest upon and are addressed to the religious sentiments exclusively, or even chiefly, can operate with an equally powerful and beneficial effect. If they do not satisfy the understanding, or the moral feelings, or the selfish elements of the mind, they lose in practical efficacy in proportion to the faculties which they leave uninterested. The Christian religion abounds in precepts which rest on all these foundations, and hence its practical power. The superstitions of the ancient world, and of modern heathenism (however deeply they may excite and interest the religious sentiments of their votaries), fail to satisfy the understanding and the moral sentiments, and to promote the temporal happiness of those who believe them ; and hence their practical inefficacy for good. They are disowned by nature, and cannot yield the fruits of purity, prosperity, and peace.

So far, therefore, from the Divine laws in regard to secular rights and duties having their only foundation in Scripture, the proposition should be modified to the effect, that they have a foundation also in nature, and that it is their conformity to, and enforcement by, the order of nature, which renders them practical ; and this seems to authorise the conclusion that the State has a right to teach to all its subjects

the order of nature by which the practical doctrines of religion are supported and enforced.

Let us now consider the question. Has the State a right to educate all the faculties of man? We have already answered that it has a right to train and educate every faculty to the extent to which its action is necessary to enable the individual to discharge his social duties, and no further. It is entitled to train Veneration, for example, to respect and yield obedience to every scriptural precept and every natural law which directly affect the welfare of the social body;—but has it a right *to force* men to embrace and venerate any doctrine which has its issues only in a future state of existence? Society, such as we see it, does not exist beyond the grave. Therefore, only individuals in their individual capacities are concerned in matters of eternity; and on this subject, their birthright is entire freedom of judgment and opinion.

The depth and magnitude of that interest is sufficient to secure an extent of teaching of this class of religious doctrines up to the full demands of the faculties: but no amount, however unlimited, of such teaching, necessarily implies or secures instruction in temporal duties. Assuming that, during the last century, the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland have taught their people religious truth sufficient to secure their eternal welfare, it is certain that they have not instructed and trained them, to an equal extent, in that knowledge of this world and its laws, which produces prosperity and happiness. It is this latter species of knowledge which it is the right and the duty of the State to provide for the people; because it applies directly to interests falling under the management of the State, and the absence of it, as we now see and feel in regard to Ireland, cannot be compensated by purely religious teaching. Ireland demonstrates to us that the want of instruction in the order of nature aggravates all natural calamities, and impairs all natural blessings, to the great damage, not only of the individuals whose training has been neglected, but of every member of the community who has sympathies to feel for human suffering, or a purse to provide for their removal.

It is often argued, however, that the voluntary efforts of the individual members of society afford a better means for the supply of education for the whole people, than any compulsory arrangements of the State, and hence it is denied that the State has a right to educate its people.

There is a practical fallacy, however, in the manner in which this question is generally submitted to our considera-



tion. In every free country the State is merely the representative of the general power (physical, moral, and intellectual) of the country. It is not a distinct and independent being, that can exist and act in spite of the will of its members. Any system of military defence, of police, of law, and also of *education*, which the State can establish and maintain in this country, must be approved of by the intelligence of the empire. Nobody contends that the Government has a right, despite of the will of the people, to seize on public education. All that is maintained is, that the Government may do the work better than individuals; and our security against the abuse by Government of its delegated powers lies in the control over the conduct of Parliament and the executive, which the individual members of the community are capable of exercising, through the elections and the press. We do not leave the defence of the country and the police of our great towns to the voluntary administration of individuals; because the majority of society is agreed that these objects can be better accomplished by committing them to the State. And the case will be the same in regard to education. Its direction cannot be assumed by the Government until the majority of the public shall have become satisfied that it is best fitted to conduct the operations. The capricious or negligent administration of the means of public defence, or of police, would endanger the welfare, not only of those who erected themselves into the voluntary managers of them, but of those who differed from their views, and considered their course of action unwise and detrimental; and it is on this principle alone that Parliament gives to the executive the right to take these affairs into its own hands. In like manner, whenever the majority of society shall become satisfied that individual teachers, sects, and incorporations, have so neglected or mismanaged public education, as to endanger the welfare of the State, they will (without limiting the right of individual action in so far as this is compatible with public safety) provide public institutions for the better accomplishment of this important end.

Has such a case actually occurred? In answering this question, it is necessary only to look at the mental condition of the inhabitants of these islands to discover that education has hitherto been grievously neglected and mismanaged. The extent of ignorance, vice, helpless incapacity, crime, and suffering, which abound, and which are more or less referrible to the low physical, moral, intellectual, and religious training and instruction of the people, is a point of too painful certainty to be disputed. This fact itself is sufficient to war-

rant men of reflection in requesting and empowering the State to try whether it cannot manage education better. But other and solid reasons may be discovered for the failure of the voluntary efforts which have hitherto been made for the education of the people—reasons which may tend to justify us in committing it in future to the Government.

The kind of instruction which it is the direct interest of society to communicate, is that which relates to God's laws and mode of administration of man's temporal condition. The statesman placed in an elevated position, and entrusted with the welfare of all classes, sects, and individuals, has natural advantages for discovering what these laws are, for appreciating their social importance, and for applying them, which no private individual, sect, or class, can enjoy. He is in a position to discern, with a keener eye and a surer sagacity, what instruction is equally beneficial to all, than the man in the crowd surrounded by objects which contract his vision, and invaded by interests which bias his judgment. I say that, *ceteris paribus*, the statesman is better able than the individual citizen to direct beneficially this complicated and difficult branch of the public interest. Besides, his ear is open at all times to the admonition of individual wisdom, and his conduct is subject to the unlimited control of the parliamentary constituencies.

I am prepared for the charge being made, that this is a proposal to constitute infidelity the basis of national education; because the order of nature, even when coincident with and sanctioned by Christianity, is regarded by some minds as infidel. But I deny that teaching the precepts in which the order of creation and Scripture coincide is infidelity. Those who contend that it is so, forget that in this view God himself would be the author of a great system of infidelity; for the whole Jewish dispensation was one which had its sanctions exclusively in its temporal consequences. No futurity was revealed to the Jews: The supernatural portion of the Jewish Dispensation related chiefly to the nation in its national capacity, and in the opinion of some Christian sects it is continued to the present day. These sects regard the existence of the Jews as a distinct people, unamalgamated with the races among whom they are dispersed, as a standing miracle. But we do not perceive the personal conduct of the individual Jewish men and women whom we know, to be now regulated by supernatural acts of divine administration; and is there reason to believe that even before the dispersion, a miracle was resorted to, in order to reward or punish each private Jew who obeyed or transgressed the commandments?

If a future state was not clearly revealed to the Jews, and if their personal conduct was not formerly, and is not now, regularly rewarded or punished by supernatural acts in this life, it seems to follow that, in their individual capacities (when not reached by the statute law), they were, and are, left under the ordinary administration of the laws of nature; and if so, on what principle can education in these laws be called "godless?" Besides, no one proposes to exclude the teaching of the Scripture doctrines relative to eternity. All that is recommended is to provide for the teaching of these to the children of each sect according to the views and wishes of their parents, at separate hours, and by separate teachers from those engaged by the State. Let us view the consequences of acting on *different* principles.

Most churches and religious associations avowedly constitute belief in certain religious doctrines, the chief importance of which is their efficacy as means for securing happiness in a future life, as the indispensable condition on which they will teach that knowledge which relates to this world alone. But as many individuals differ regarding these points, the condition of believing them excludes thousands from the schools, while the State cannot afford to allow any of its children to be barred out from secular instruction. This is one reason why the State should be entrusted with the charge of secular education for the benefit of all.

Again, certain sects regard belief in the dogmas accredited by them as the only stable foundation, not only for religious, but for secular education; and, on this account, insist on rendering the teaching of their own dogmas paramount to all other instruction; and not only so, but, proceeding on the same ground, they claim also the exclusive control of schools. If their doctrines actually formed the only sound basis of secular education, their pretensions would be irresistible. But there is an important error in this assumption, because, as already maintained, there is no practical precept in the Old or New Testament relating to human conduct in this life, which is not contained also in the book of nature, and enforced by the natural order of Providence; and I repeat, that it is their conformity to, and enforcement by, nature, which really give to scriptural precepts their practical efficacy. Very few sects recognise this important truth, and we look in vain, in most of their schools, for an avowed, clear, and systematic teaching of the order of nature on which temporal prosperity depends, as part of Divine revelation for the guidance of human conduct. So much the contrary, that before some sects will receive a child into one of their schools, his

parents must consent to their teaching him,—that human nature is disordered by the fall,—that all mankind are liable to eternal perdition in consequence of Adam's first transgression,—that the Godhead consists of three persons,—that Jesus Christ is one of them,—and that he atoned for our sins by suffering in his own person the punishment which was due to them. If the truth and efficacy of all the precepts delivered by Jesus Christ, relating to those portions of human conduct in which society is directly interested, depended exclusively on our believing these views of his character and work, these sects would have reason on their side; but, on the other hand, if the practical efficacy of these precepts depends on their conformity to the constitution and order of nature, and not on our belief or disbelief in certain interpretations of Scripture, the case is altered, and it becomes pure tyranny in sectarian men to deny instruction in the temporal order of Providence, to children whose parents do not embrace their doctrinal views in relation to eternity.

They will probably reply that they leave parents who do not approve of these doctrines to open schools for their children on their own principles. This, however, is just one of the evils which the advocates of State education desire to avoid. The powers of nature are paramount active agents, from the influence of which neither prince nor peasant can escape; and hence God's natural laws relative to this world are equally applicable to all sects and to all nations, in all times, and they are expounded as such in the Bible. By adopting them as the basis of general education, the State may succeed in having *all* its people trained *in one set of practical principles*, resting on the common basis of the order of nature, and, therefore, admitting of unanimity and co-operation. While each sect founds its secular instruction on the basis of its own interpretations of Scripture, this advantage cannot be obtained; and, in consequence, not only is society rent by religious dissensions, but its power of co-operation for practical improvement is greatly paralyzed. We see the result of this state of things before us at the present time. While discordant sects dispute whose doctrines shall form the basis of secular education, many of the people are allowed to grow up in heathen ignorance, and too many of those who are educated, are fierce partisans of peculiar dogmas, contemning and reviling all propositions to teach the order of nature, as rank infidelity! Our boasted freedom of religious opinion is, and must necessarily continue to be, a mockery, while each sect is striving for supremacy, and there is no common arena in which all can meet and recognise one

God, and one order of nature. This, therefore, appears to me to be another reason for committing secular education to the charge of the State.

We are told, however, that this proposed separation of secular from doctrinal religious teaching, is "a gigantic system of godless education." With great deference to the excellent individual who uttered these words, the case appears to me in a different light. Apparently, he and his followers who have adopted this opinion, have looked so long and so intently on the Old and New Testaments, that they have lost sight of, or never attentively studied, the record of God's Natural Providence. If, for instance, we comprehend the structure and functions of the nervous system in man, and the vast amount of enjoyment of which it is the appointed vehicle when duly administered, and the extent of suffering which it entails on him when its laws are neglected or transgressed, and perceive that this is the workmanship of God, and that in this structure and its laws He is addressing our Wonder, calling on us to admire,—our Veneration, desiring us to reverence,—our Conscientiousness, commanding us to obey,—and our Intellect, inviting us to study, prove, and practise, what He has revealed; and that He rewards us with health, strength, and enjoyment, for obedience, and punishes us with bodily and mental pain and incapacity, and often with death itself, for infringement of his precepts,—THIS IS RELIGION AS WELL AS SCIENCE. How any man of a serious and an enlightened mind can study and comprehend God's natural laws without having his religious sentiments vividly excited, I cannot comprehend. Is it not an abuse of terms to call that education "godless," which refers *all* that it teaches, directly to the power, wisdom, and goodness of God himself? In no sense of the words is the study of natural knowledge and its practical applications, a "godless education;" because it cultivates, trains, and enlarges, the self-same faculties, by means of which the grander doctrines relative to man's future destinies must be studied and apprehended.

The opinion that religion and morality are revealed only in the Bible, and that science is "godless," has led to great practical evils. Not only has the religious world too much neglected the teaching of science as the basis of conduct, but the men of science have too much overlooked the religious element with which all science is imbued. One hears in many pulpits God's terrestrial creation, including man himself as he naturally exists, decried and degraded; while, in the halls of science, we may study for years without hearing God referred to as the fountain of the truths expounded, or any

practical inferences drawn regarding what they teach concerning His will. Many divines are either too intent upon the truths of Scripture to study and appreciate Nature and her record, or they are jealous of her. There are, indeed, enlightened exceptions to the truth of this remark, but I speak of the general character of pulpit teaching. The man of science, on the other hand, although not ignorant that he is expounding the "doings of the Lord," is yet too little alive to the practical nature of the truths which he unfolds, as guides to human conduct; and he is also afraid of trenching on the domain of the divine, and perhaps of teaching something which the latter might regard as not altogether doctrinally sound. He will thrill our highest faculties by his descriptions of the stupendous magnitude of creation, and demonstrate to us one God, and one law, ruling in every sphere. After having stretched our imaginations to their utmost limits, and deeply excited our wonder and veneration by these solemn gigantic truths, he will direct our attention to the smallest insect, and shew us the same power, wisdom, and skill, employed in combining and regulating the minutest atoms of matter to constitute a living and a sentient being. Our souls expand and glow under such contemplations. But here the man of science too generally leaves us. He either does not perceive, or is afraid to announce, how the truths of science bear a direct relation to the human mind and body, and prescribe certain courses of practical action or restraint. Every function of the body, and every faculty of the mind has probably received from the Creator a sphere of action, as certainly defined and as wisely appointed as is the orbit of every planet. Each is liable to aberrations by the disturbing influence of the other powers; but limits are prescribed to its deviations, and counteracting forces are instituted to draw it back into its normal course. Sound expositions of these laws of mind and body constitute at once science, religion, and practical wisdom; yet how rarely are the teachings of science thus applied! Scientific discoveries are employed with promptitude and vigour to increase wealth, to improve the arts of destruction, and to augment our sources of recreation and amusement (all proper in due season and proportion); but they are too much shut out from the school and the pulpit as rules for human conduct, and themes for human devotion.

It is true that in interpreting the Book of Nature, as in construing the Bible, many difficulties will present themselves that are inexplicable in the present state of our knowledge. They perplex our moral sentiments, and confound our understandings. But we should not on this account reject or un-

dervalue such truths as are clearly revealed in either record. The same Divine Intelligence which appointed the order of nature, constituted the human faculties; and as we meet with no discordant design in those departments of the universe with which we are sufficiently acquainted, we may fairly believe that, in the scheme of creation itself, there is no real incongruity; and that the apparent instances of it which we perceive, will diminish in proportion to the advance of our information. At one time the aberrations of the planets from their orbits were considered to be incompatible with the permanence of their revolutions, and the solar system was supposed to contain within itself the elements of its own destruction; but advancing science has demonstrated that these aberrations themselves are exemplifications and fulfillments of the laws which regulate the normal movements of the spheres. A profounder conviction, therefore, of harmony, in the design and revolutions of the heavenly bodies, has taken place of the doubts previously raised by imperfect knowledge. If men could be induced to regard the mundane creation in this disposition of mind, science would no longer be called "godless." If they would believe that when God instituted the external world, and the human mind and body, He adapted the one to the other with the same consistency of design and transcendency of wisdom which we discern in his arrangements of the planetary system, we should consider the Book of Nature as replete with instruction, in regard to the objects and employment of all our faculties; and we should call *that instruction religious*.

It is this unfortunate blindness to the essentially religious and moral character of science and its applications, and the fear of infidel consequences, that prompt the Church so doggedly to keep watch over the gates of the universities, and to refuse admission to every man as a teacher, who does not swear to his belief in all her doctrines, not only regarding man's conduct in this life, but in reference to eternity. Nevertheless, a law of faith and practice is written in the constitution of Nature which men may partially, but can never wholly, overlook. Being woven into the texture of their existence, it forces itself upon their attention, and exacts their obedience. In the ordinary affairs of life, Jew and Gentile, High Churchman and Low Churchman, Believer and Infidel, act upon the same principles of prudence and morals; they view any practical measure as good or bad according to its influence on their temporal happiness, irrespective of its relations to the different religious creeds which they severally embrace. They act on what is called the principles of "common sense;"

the familiar name given to the practical judgments which we form from all that we know regarding nature, animate and inanimate, and the course of providence by which this world is governed. This knowledge, traced to its principles, and systematized, is science; and as mankind, both in their individual and social capacities, practise upon it, without reference to its relations to their religious opinions regarding eternity, it is to be regretted that certain religious sects oppose that systematic teaching of it which would render it much more efficacious for good, unless it be accompanied by their religious tenets which have no *natural* connection with it. They have succeeded in impressing the public mind with the belief that this science, on which, when unsystematized, they themselves and every one else act, under the name of the "dictates of common sense," has no solid basis except that which their religious tenets lend to it; whereas it derives its whole efficacy for good from its foundations being laid in nature; and it is in virtue of the power which it thence derives, that it controls and gives consistency to human actions amidst the wildest conflicts of religious creeds.

The extent to which science is banished from the University of Oxford (in which belief in the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England is insisted on as an indispensable condition before her halls can be opened to the student), may be judged of from the following extract from Mr Lyell's Travels in America, lately published:—"After the year 1839," says Mr Lyell, "we may consider three-fourths of the sciences still nominally taught at Oxford, to have been virtually exiled from the University. The class-rooms of the Professors were, some of them entirely, others nearly, deserted. Chemistry and Botany attracted, between the years 1840 and 1844, *from three to seven students*; Geometry, Astronomy, and Experimental Philosophy, scarcely more; Mineralogy and Geology, still taught by the same Professor who, fifteen years before, had attracted crowded audiences, some *ten to twelve*; Political Economy still lower; even Ancient History and Poetry scarcely commanded an audience; and, strange to say, in a country with whose destinies those of India are so closely bound up, the first of living Asiatic scholars gave lectures to *one or two pupils*; and these might have been absent, had not the cherished hope of a Boaden scholarship for Sanscrit induced them to attend." It has been added, that the Geological Professor lectured, during his last course, to a class of *three*. What notions of the relative importance of the Thirty-nine Articles of the Church of England, and of God's physical, moral, and intellectual creation, can be enter-



tained by men who place the former so high above the latter in reverence and honour? It is obvious that the idea that the constitution and laws of creation are addressed to the intellect of man as rules for his practical conduct, and stimulants of his devotional feelings, can scarcely have entered into their imaginations: and still less can they have formed a conception of the fact that the Christian precepts can become practical in this world only in proportion to their harmony with the constitution of this, in Oxford, despised and neglected nature. Well might Sir Robert Inglis, their representative in Parliament, designate the study of science, apart from the Thirty-nine Articles, as "a gigantic scheme of godless education;" for apparently the University considers Nature to be infidel, God's works to be "godless," and only the Thirty-nine Articles and certain kindred studies to constitute religious instruction!

I solicit the attention of the reader to those views, because the present practice is replete with grave injuries to society. The notion that morality and religion rest *exclusively* on the Bible as their basis, has produced something like a divorce, not only between religion and science, but between religion and literature, religion and legislation, religion and history, religion and the drama; and left religion in a kind of ideal desert, from which she ever and anon issues to disturb the march of human affairs. Generally speaking, a foreigner might peruse the works of many of our standard authors, study our statute-book, and read our plays, without discovering that we possessed any religion at all; except when he met with enactments and controversies, directly relating to the church and the dissenters. He could find no consistent religious principle pervading, animating, blending with, and hallowing, these productions of the human mind. This could scarcely have happened if the constitution of nature and its relations, of which these works are meant to be expositions or applications, had been taught to the nation as of Divine origin and enactment. But it is easily accounted for when we attend to the fact, that, a few centuries ago, the knowledge of nature and its laws was even more imperfectly developed than it now is; that at that time classical literature, and theology, relating greatly to a future state of existence, and resting for its evidence not on nature, but on acts of supernatural power setting aside its established laws, constituted the chief learning of Europe, and took possession of schools, universities, and the public mind; and that this literature and theology have retained their sway over these institutions and society ever since, without cordially inquiring

into the moral and religious claims and character of science ; without modifying their own tenets into accordance with her increasing lights ; without throwing over her the mantle of their refinement and sanctity for her encouragement and protection ; but, on the contrary, too frequently vilifying, opposing, and paralyzing her by every means in their power.

The result could not be other than that which we see ; Science “ godless,” although emanating from and teaching most eloquently and impressively the “ wisdom of God ;” and Religion by far too powerless in the secular affairs of the earth, because not acknowledging this world’s constitution in its own basis, but substituting in its place doctrines and tenets, the grand object of which is to propitiate an interest in eternity. Religious persons, distressed by the “ godless” character of our periodical and other literature, have established rival works, in which they endeavour to blend their doctrinal tenets with secular affairs ; but they do not succeed. In point of fact, they place doctrinal disquisitions in juxtaposition with secular knowledge, without uniting them ; and for the simple reason, that, as taught, they are incompatible. The sectarian world, especially the Calvinistic sects, must view nature in a light widely different from that in which they now regard it, before they shall be capable of blending religion and mundane interests harmoniously together.

Another evil attending the prevailing views on this subject, is the very inadequate appreciation entertained by the scientific and literary classes of the strength and importance of *the religious sentiments*. Debarred by the present state of theology from combining these emotions with their own studies and teaching, they overlook them altogether, and leave them to be wielded as active powers at discretion by the church and the religious sects, without troubling themselves about the uses which are made of them, except when they are directed against science and themselves. The consequence is, that theology reaps small benefit from science ; and that its stupendous powers are not unfrequently wielded as engines of personal or sectarian aggrandizement by men who retard, instead of advancing, the temporal welfare of mankind. By their blind dereliction of the God of nature and his teaching, they occasion a vast waste of mind and physical resources, in so far as regards the reclamation of this world. The men of science see this, yet stand by, timid and inactive. They *feel* a want of social importance and consideration for themselves and their pursuits ; yet so dark are their perceptions of their own splendid position, that instead of

going forth in the full confidence and panoply of natural truth, to proclaim the sway of the great God of nature in every department of human affairs, to teach his wisdom, and to instruct men in his ways, they felicitate themselves on the visit of a prince to one of their scientific meetings, as a certain means of commanding that public homage which they are conscious that they have never yet secured by their own influence over the public mind.

They must seek for consideration through other means. The moral and religious sentiments are the grand levers of civilized society. He who commands them is irresistible; and until Science shall discover her own character and vocation,—that she is the messenger of God, speaking directly to these sentiments in strains calculated to thrill and rouse them to the most energetic action—she will never wield her proper influence over society for the promotion of their moral, religious, and physical welfare. Never, until she does so, will she take that place in social esteem and veneration which, as the fountain of Divine wisdom, she is entitled to possess. Let the scientific world consider the gigantic power of the religious sentiments in sustaining a vast priesthood, under every form of obloquy and depression, and amidst the most appalling poverty, in Ireland; in rearing the fabrics of the dissenting churches in England and Scotland, and supporting a clergy to preach in them; in maintaining numerous schools for education in their own tenets; in rearing colleges and endowing professorships; in distributing Bibles in every land and in every language; and in sending missionaries to preach in every country of the globe—and they will obtain a glimpse of a truth which it concerns them to appreciate and apply. I honour the men who have made these glorious efforts, and who also, under the guidance of their common sense, have diffused a vast amount of secular knowledge through all ranks of society. Their aim has been pure and elevated, and their means holy, although, through the prejudices of their education, they have too much neglected to study nature in a right spirit. They have accomplished these mighty ends by wielding the religious sentiments as their lever; yet these emotions, when systematically dissevered from science, cannot have achieved their mightiest conquests over human folly, ignorance, and suffering. What influence, therefore, might not the men of science wield, and what benefits might they not confer on mankind, if they only knew their own position as the expounders and interpreters of the language which creation is ever addressing to these emo-

tions! If they saw that every word which they utter in correct interpretation of nature's constitution and course of action carries the efficacy of Divine truth along with it for the advancement of human happiness, how poor would appear the condescending notice of a prince as a means of recommending them to public consideration! But have they not done injustice to the prince! Did he not come among them merely to pay his respectful homage to the truths of nature, and without an idea of gracing science by his presence, or of elevating its professors to a more dignified position in the public estimation by his courtesies? Rather let us believe that Prince Albert came to the British Association as the enlightened admirer of the Creator's wisdom revealed in scientific truth, and esteemed himself honoured by being admitted into the temple of Nature's God, and into the society of the interpreters of His will.

It may be objected that should men of science endeavour to represent nature as the workmanship of God, and to enlist the moral and religious sentiments (Benevolence and Conscientiousness, Wonder, Hope, and Veneration), by giving a living soul and a practical efficacy to their teaching, they might in one year be under the necessity of recalling as human error, views and principles which in the previous season they had taught as Divine truths, and that this would desecrate religion and degrade science. I reply, that penetrating, well-informed, and conscientious men, in interpreting the Book of Nature, would advance as Divine truths only such facts and principles as appeared to them to be fully ascertained; and that, in interpreting the Scriptures, no other or better security against erroneous and presumptuous teaching can be found. When we contrast the conflicting views of Scriptural doctrines which are every day emanating from the press and the pulpit, it is certain that many professors of Christianity are teaching as Divine truths, views which are merely the emanations of their own misguided judgments. But this is an evil inseparable from humanity. In the case of teaching science as Divine truth, there would be this advantage, that no sect or college could claim a vested right or prescriptive privilege of interpretation, and that religious teaching would advance *pari passu* with scientific research and discovery. Besides, errors would in time be detected and exposed by their consequences. Difficulties may long embarrass us in natural as well as in revealed religion; but as a general principle it may be stated, that in natural religion every doctrine that is sound leads directly or indirectly to beneficial temporal results, and every error to evil conse-

quences. There is a test therefore in this world, by which to try our interpretations of the Divine will in natural affairs; and this is a great safeguard against continuing in error. In religious teaching concerning the life to come, no such test exists. When one sect denounces the doctrines of another as "soul-destroying errors," we cannot call in experience to settle their merits until it be too late. From the other world there is no return; and instead, therefore, of God's sacred name and authority being more liable to be abused in teaching natural than revealed religion, the case is the reverse. In inculcating the latter, human presumption, ignorance, and folly, have a wider range of action than in teaching the former. The Roman Catholics and Protestants, on account of some trivial differences, respectively reject each other's version of the Bible as spurious; but Nature speaks one language to all!

Another reason why these views may merit some consideration is, that the Theology which is based exclusively on Scripture and rejects the alliance of Nature, is actually falling before the progress of science. I have travelled in the United States of North America, in Germany, and Italy, and held converse with men of cultivated minds in these countries, as well as in the three divisions of the United Kingdom; and I venture to say that the Theology which condemns Nature and rejects her alliance, however vigorous, powerful, and triumphant it may appear externally, is in the course of its decline and fall, as no longer suited to an enlightened age. In Germany, the country in which the Reformation originated and from which it spread, and which has since that epoch cultivated Theology in all its principles and aspects with the deepest research and most unwearied assiduity,—evangelical religion, as it is understood in this country, has already fallen, and is no longer the faith of the majority of the people. This decline has taken place, not through reckless profanity, as in the case of the French Revolution, but in consequence of long-continued investigation and discussion. This fact is known to, and its significance is appreciated by, large numbers of influential men in the higher, middle, and lower ranks of British society. The masters of the prevalent Theology probably know or suspect this to be the case, but do not correctly estimate the nature and magnitude of the forces which oppose them. Far from receiving cordial support and encouragement from statesmen, men of the world, the press, and men of science, they often meet with cold indifference, plausible apologies, or direct opposition; but many of them mistake the cause of this unto-

ward state of things. Is it not, that science and reason have produced in the minds of these classes a silent conviction that the Theology in question is not a practical system in this world's affairs? It is something which often embarrasses and obstructs the movements of society even towards secular good. It is a machinery that is out of order, and cannot be made to work to the advantage of all. Nay, the clergy of various sects are themselves men; *their* faculties too have been adapted to nature's laws and constitution; and when light is abroad, they cannot remain in darkness. The press is daily giving indications that a change is proceeding even in their views; and it is probable that, in a few years hence, only a bold and good spirit will be wanting to shake the theological fabric in this country to the ground, as has already been done in Germany,—and then it will become the duty of enlightened men to reconcile the religion and morality of nature with that of Scripture, to the infinite advantage of both and of the people. I cordially subscribe to the proposition, that “the Gates of Hell,” or error, will never prevail against the Church; but the “Gates of Heaven,” or higher and purer, more practical, and more universal views of Divine truth, will prevail against all sects and churches which set themselves in opposition to the mighty march of man towards the fulfilment of his moral and social destinies.

An instructive example of the practical results of teaching religious doctrines irrespective of natural science and its applications, is afforded by Ireland; and I shall conclude these remarks by exhibiting a brief outline of the history of her educational efforts and their effects.

The Church of England long wielded the legislative powers of Ireland through the medium of the Irish Parliament, which was composed of Protestants alone, Roman Catholics being rigidly excluded. These legislators apparently embraced literally, and practically acted upon, the Church's views of the nature of man, and held that there could be no beneficial education except that which was based upon religious truth,—and, moreover, that their own church was the sole depository of that truth. They regarded the Roman Catholic faith as fundamentally erroneous, and therefore incapable of affording a sound basis for secular instruction. Under these convictions, the Government of Ireland, “for nearly the whole of the last century, laboured to promote Protestant education, and tolerated no other. Large grants of public money were voted for having children educated in the Protestant faith, while it was made a transportable offence in a Roman Ca-

tholic (and if the party returned, high treason) to act as a schoolmaster, or assistant to a schoolmaster, or even as a tutor in a private family.\* The acts passed for this purpose continued in force from 1709 to 1782. They were then repealed, but Parliament continued to vote money for the support only of schools conducted on principles which were regarded by the great body of the Roman Catholics as exclusively Protestant, until the present system (the Irish National School system) was established in 1832.†

These words are quoted from the Sixth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, § 10, p. 135, and are deeply instructive. It was a fundamental error in the Protestant Irish Parliament to entertain the view of human nature which lies at the bottom of these enactments. Man does not possess a single power which is essentially and “of its own nature inclined to evil,” as the Church teaches us. On the contrary, there is a legitimate sphere of action for every function of the body and every faculty of the mind; and it is only the abuses of these, through ignorance and unfavourable influences, that constitute error and crime, and lead to misery. There was in man, therefore, from the first, and there is now in him, a capacity for education, by the development and right direction of his natural gifts; and both his own constitution and that of the external world are arranged with reference to that development, to render him prosperous and happy in proportion as he pursues it in a right direction, or miserable if he neglects it, or pursues it in a wrong way. Apparently the Protestant Government of Ireland, being disbelievers in these institutions of Divine Providence, and sincerely convinced that the Protestant religious faith afforded the only basis for a sound education, placed the before-recited enactments on the statute-book; and the consequences are now before us. The diffusion of the Roman Catholic faith in Ireland has not been checked; because sectarian education being in its own nature separable from secular, the priests of that religion continued to instruct their flocks in their own doctrinal tenets, and have reared nearly seven millions of human beings devoted to them in soul and body, and ready to sacrifice every thing that is dear to humanity, including life itself, in their defence. But these statutes effectually prevented the instruction of the Irish people in the great laws of Providence on which social order and temporal prosperity depend: They prohibited the

\* See 8th Anne, c. 3, and 9th William III., c. 1.

† See Letter from Lord Stanley to the Duke of Leinster, on the original formation of the National Board; dated London, October 1831.

cultivation of their intellectual powers, and the development of their moral sentiments, on which hang the security of person and property, public tranquillity, and many of the enjoyments and amenities of private life. All this, I say, was deliberately and systematically prevented by Parliament; and we now see a sincerely devotional people (for no candid observer can doubt that the Irish Roman Catholic peasantry are sincerely and deeply devotional) deplorably deficient in mental energy and industry, sunk in the lowest depths of helpless poverty, and—under the sufferings engendered by want—turbulent and murderous, false in covenants, untrue as witnesses, and wild and impulsive in revengeful action. Truly, when viewed in this light, they do seem to realize the orthodox description of human nature; but this is only the dark side of their character. In more favourable circumstances they are kindly, cheerful, affectionate, and respectful to superiors; shewing that they still possess the higher feelings of our nature: But how far may not their fearful aberrations and deficiencies have been aggravated by the imperfections of their training and education? Their qualities as a race may present obstacles to their improvement; but this affords no apology for having denied them, for so many generations, the means of secular education, except at the price of their religious faith. By prohibiting the use of the natural means for drawing forth the human powers in the sphere of virtue, the law has allowed them to luxuriate in that of vice; and in the present condition of Ireland, we read the consequences attached by the Author of nature to the neglect and infringement of His laws. We see the *beau-ideal* of the results of dogmatic teaching, when secular instruction is dissevered from it. In England and Scotland, a higher natural endowment of mind in the people, and more favourable circumstances, have led to the infusion of a certain amount of secular instruction into the schools for religious teaching; but among the Irish peasantry, for many generations, the priest alone was the instructor. Secular knowledge cultivates habits of correct observation of things which exist, of just appreciation of the effects of their qualities and modes of action, and of forethought and consideration regarding the adaptation of our conduct to their influences. *Purely doctrinal teaching*—that is, the cultivation of Wonder, Cautiousness, Hope, and Veneration, as the leading emotions—fills the mind with fearful or sublime contemplations and aspirations, having their issues chiefly in eternity; and as these doctrines appeal to faith more than to reason, they do not cultivate habits of exact observation and reflection on this world's constitution and laws. They do not ne-



cessarily direct the attention of the mind to the proper arrangement and administration of secular affairs in conformity with the laws by which they are governed; but divert it away from them, and concentrate it beyond them in regions of eternal misery, or of glory and bliss. Ireland has been taught according to these principles, and her people are imbued with them; yet, because this world is an existing reality, instituted and governed by God according to laws adapted by Him to its present condition, and because man has been fashioned by Him in relation to it, and required by his constitution to act in intelligent accordance with its qualities and agencies, and because much of this department of Divine teaching has been neglected in the education of the people of Ireland,—they present the spectacle of poverty and ignorance, and of crime and misery, which now appals the world. Again, therefore, I venture to repeat, that *an important use of the religious sentiments is to lead men to study, venerate, and obey, God's secular institutions*; and after they have done their duty in this department, they may be legitimately employed in expatiating in the fields of eternity.

In 1832, as already mentioned, the British Government, moved, not by religious teachers of any sect, but by its own secular perceptions, instituted the existing Commission for aiding in a national education of Ireland on different principles. Lord Stanley, then Secretary for Ireland, in his letter to the Duke of Leinster, before referred to, says:—"The Commissioners, in 1812, recommended the appointment of a Board to superintend a system of education, from which should be banished even the suspicion of proselytism, and which, admitting children of all religious persuasions, should not interfere with the religious tenets of any. The Government of the day imagined that they had found a superintending body, acting under a system such as was recommended, and entrusted the distribution of the national Grants to the care of the Kildare Street Society. His Majesty's present Government are of opinion, that no private society, deriving a part, however small, of their annual income from private sources, and only made the channel of the munificence of the Legislature, without being subject to any direct responsibility, could adequately and satisfactorily accomplish the end proposed." He proceeds to mention, that this Society, with the purest motives, enforced "the reading of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, in all their schools;" and that their efforts to teach the Roman Catholic population proved abortive, because this Church denies, "even to adults, the right of unaided private interpretation of the sacred vo-

lume with respect to articles of religious belief." The Roman Catholic clergy "exerted themselves with energy and success" against the system. "The Commissioners of Education, in 1824-5, sensible of the defects of the system, recommended the appointment of two teachers in every school, one Protestant and the other Roman Catholic, to superintend separately the religious education of the children;" "but it was soon found that these schemes were impracticable," and, in 1828, a Committee of the House of Commons "recommended a system to be adopted, which should afford, if possible, a combined literary, and a separate religious education, and should be capable of being so far adapted to the views of the religious persuasions which prevail in Ireland, as to render it, in truth, a system of national education for the poorer classes of the community."

Accordingly, Commissioners were appointed, "composed of men of high personal character, including individuals of exalted station in the Church," and "of persons professing different religious opinions; and Parliament placed funds at their disposal, to execute this beneficent object. The Commissioners proceeded to their task in a pure, upright, and enlightened spirit; and their first regulation is, that "the ordinary school business, during which all the children, of whatever denomination they be, are required to attend, and which is expected to embrace a competent number of hours in each day, *is to consist exclusively of instruction in those branches of knowledge which belong to literary and moral education.* Such extracts from the Scriptures *as are prepared under the sanction of the Board* may be used, and are earnestly recommended by the Board to be used, during those hours allotted to this ordinary school business." The second regulation is, that "one day in each week (independently of Sunday) is to be set apart for religious instruction of the children; on which day, such pastors or other persons as are approved of by the parents or guardians of the children, shall have access to them for that purpose, whether these pastors have signed the original application (placing the school under the Commissioners) or not." There are still other liberal and judicious regulations for increasing the facilities for separate religious instruction which I need not quote.

Tried by the principles which I have now laid down, these proceedings were essentially sound. That is to say, there is a vast field of knowledge, physical, moral, religious, and intellectual, relating to this world and its administration, which is independent of all notions concerning the best means of securing happiness in a future state, and which Jew, Chris-

tian, and Pagan, must equally study, and on which they must equally practise, before they can secure to themselves prosperity on earth ; and as the functions of Government are limited to the present world, this field is the only one over which it can legitimately exercise any control. These principles were essentially recognised and acted on by the Legislature, when it appointed the Irish Board of Education.

They did not, indeed, profess to take up this position ; but they approached as near to it as circumstances would permit. The nation consisted of the sects A, B, C, and D, each of which was deeply impressed with the importance of religious instruction, and also of secular education, to the young ; but A held certain opinions on points of faith which B, C, and D rejected ; B held some opinions, the soundness of which A, C, and D disputed ; and so with C and D, each of which had its peculiar views,—belief in which it made an indispensable condition of admission to its schools. The consequence of these differences was, that educational effort was paralysed, and schools either did not exist, or were comparatively empty. The British Parliament solved the difficulty, by leaving all sects and individuals to manage their own schools, and teach their own children in secular and religious knowledge, in their own way ; but it proffered a helping hand, in the form of pecuniary aid, to such of them as were willing to open and conduct schools on the principles, secular and religious, *in which all were agreed*. This agreement was secured by placing the schools under Commissioners chosen from different sects, each of whom had a veto on teaching any doctrine of which he did not approve. These commissioners were able, liberal, and enlightened men, and speedily discovered a vast field of solid information, both secular and religious, respecting the truth and utility of which they were unanimous ; and they followed out the instructions of Parliament by teaching this to the people. Their books embrace the elements of literature, science, morals, and religion, the latter generally expressed in Scripture language ; but they contain few sectarian doctrines.\*

What reception did this wise measure meet with from the Church of England and many other religious sects ? It was decried as infidel and godless, misrepresented, abused, and opposed, in the most unscrupulous and unmeasured terms. In the name of the religion of truth, the grossest misrepresentation was resorted to, in order to excite the public indig-

\* Among their books is an excellent little work on the "Evidences" of Christianity, which has obtained the approbation of all the Commissioners.

nation against it. But the excellent sense, truly Christian spirit, and calm temper of the Commissioners, with the Archbishop of Dublin and the Roman Catholic Archbishop, Dr Murray, at their head, meekly sustained and triumphed over every hostile attack: they persevered in the wise and virtuous measures prescribed by Parliament, and their success has been correspondingly great. The following Table, extracted from their last Reports, speaks for itself:—

*Table shewing the Progressive Increase in the NATIONAL SCHOOLS, and the NUMBER OF CHILDREN in attendance upon them, from the date of the First Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, to the 31st of December 1845.*

| No. | Date of Report. | No. of Schools in Operation. | No. of Children on the Rolls. |
|-----|-----------------|------------------------------|-------------------------------|
| 1   | Dec. 31, 1833.  | 789                          | 107,042                       |
| 2   | March 31, 1835. | 1106                         | 145,521                       |
| 3   | „ 1836.         | 1181                         | 153,707                       |
| 4   | „ 1837.         | 1300                         | 166,928                       |
| 5   | „ 1838.         | 1384                         | 169,548                       |
| 6   | Dec. 31, 1839.  | 1581                         | 192,971                       |
| 7   | „ 1840.         | 1978                         | 232,560                       |
| 8   | „ 1841.         | 2337                         | 281,849                       |
| 9   | „ 1842.         | 2721                         | 319,792                       |
| 10  | „ 1843.         | 2912                         | 355,320                       |
| 11  | „ 1844.         | 3153                         | 395,550                       |
| 12  | „ 1845.         | 3426                         | 432,844                       |

This is a triumphant return, and similar principles have obtained similar success in the United States of North America. Although that country is characterised by a great variety of zealous religious sects, yet it has established *State* schools, supported by public taxation, and superintended by State-appointed Boards of Education selected from all sects. In these the *elements of secular knowledge* and of *universal morality and religion* are taught, but all sectarian teaching is excluded, this being furnished by the parents and pastors of the children at separate hours; and *these schools, too, have succeeded.* They also have been opposed by sectarian men,

and reviled as “infidel and godless;” but nevertheless they have been successful, and are conferring invaluable blessings on the rising generation.

Let us, then, briefly re-survey the history of education in the sister kingdom. The Irish Government first left the Roman Catholic population of that country for nearly a century to the influence of religious teaching alone, prohibiting, under the severest penalties, secular instruction from being given to them by the only class of persons from whom they would receive it. Secondly, it tried to connect secular instruction with reading of the Protestant version of the Scriptures, as an indispensable condition; and its efforts on these two principles egregiously failed. Thirdly, the British and American Legislatures have established schools, supported and controlled by the State, for communicating secular and religious instruction, exclusive of all peculiarities of sectarian faith; and, in spite of violent and powerful opposition, they have been successful. According to my reading of the order of creation, the failure of the sectarian, and the success of the universal systems, afford instructive practical lessons to the statesman; for beneficial results are at once the evidence and the reward of the soundness of the principles by which they are attained.

In the preceding pages, I have endeavoured to shew that Government *has a right* even to *compel* its subjects to receive such secular instruction as is necessary to qualify them for the discharge of their social duties; but I am satisfied that no compulsion would be necessary, and I do not advocate it, till all means of moral persuasion and voluntary influence have been tried, and failed. In the United States and in Ireland, there is no compulsion; and entertaining, as I do, the fullest confidence in the might and efficacy of moral means, when honestly and judiciously applied, I am no advocate for the use of physical force to accomplish a moral end. But as the *right and the duty* of the State at all to interfere in education have been contested by men whose opinions are entitled to great respect, I have considered it proper to grapple with the objection, and sift it to the bottom, to the best of my ability.

I have intentionally avoided details, and, consequently, I may thereby have left my views on many points imperfectly unfolded:—Still it is hoped that enough has been said to start the questions,—Whether there be, or be not, in the nature of man, and in that of the external world, and in the relations subsisting between them, a fund of instruction emanating from God, enforced by his secular authority, and ad-

dressed by Him to the human faculties, calculated to lead us to secular happiness and prosperity, irrespective of every opinion concerning the best means of securing happiness in a future state?—Whether all scriptural precepts, relating to this world and its affairs, do not harmonise with, sanction, and support the rules for human conduct, deducible from the constitution and order of Nature?—And, Whether it be not possible to blend the instruction emanating from these two sources, in a system of national education? If the answers be in the affirmative, then national education will be practicable by omitting merely the peculiarities of religious belief;—peculiarities which relate almost entirely to forms of church government, and the means of securing happiness in a future life: If not, national education is now, and will continue to be, impracticable, until all our fellow-subjects are agreed in their religious views, regarding both this world and the next. If the lay members of the community, who concur essentially in the affirmative, will take courage and honestly avow their opinions, they will find that their number is legion, and their power irresistible; and many of the clergy, of all sects, will in their hearts rejoice in the prospect of having the glorious fields of God's natural providence opened up to their people as sources of practical instruction, and of elevating and purifying emotion. All this seems to be attainable under a scheme of national education such as is already in operation in Ireland, and with this every wellwisher of the country may be satisfied.

In conclusion, I may notice a point of much importance, which has not yet been generally considered, viz., the relation in which science stands to the prevalent standards of religious belief. Although inquiry into this subject has long been shunned equally by men of science and by theologians, nevertheless it lies at the threshold of all sound legislation on secular education, and it cannot therefore be much longer avoided. The following questions present themselves to our consideration.

1st, Is there an order of nature or not? (In the *Constitution of Man* and *Moral Philosophy* I have endeavoured to shew that there is an order of nature, and to describe some of its leading features.)

2dly, If there is an order of nature—is it adapted with intelligent design to the human constitution, physical and mental, in such a manner as to connect temporal enjoyment with conduct in harmony with that order, and suffering with actions done in opposition to it?

If the true answers be in the negative, then Revelation

appears to be the only possible foundation for all sound education. There will be no other.

But if the answers be in the affirmative, then the *best* basis for *secular* education will be instruction in the order of nature, and in its adaptations to the human mind and body; for on the observance or neglect of these will essentially depend the temporal wellbeing or adversity of each individual in this world.

Farther, as the religious sentiments exist in man, and exercise a powerful influence on his actions, it becomes important to inquire into the relation in which religious instruction stands to the order of nature. If there be discord between them, no proper wholesome development of the *whole* mental and physical powers can be accomplished. If religious doctrines conflicting with the order of nature be taught, there must be deflection from truth and consistency, in the operation of the intellectual, of the moral, or of the religious faculties, to enable them to embrace inconsistencies; and this weakens the whole mind. It places it in swaddling-clothes, and frightens it from advancing boldly in the career of its own natural development. The doctrines of the different sects differ widely from each other, and hence they cannot all be in harmony with nature. But the order of nature is paramount and perpetual; and it is mere weakness to shrink from the inquiry here suggested. Consequences of the deepest importance are involved in it; and sooner or later it will force itself on the understanding of the country—and the sooner the better.

If there be an order of nature adapted by God to the constitution of the human mind and body, the Government should on no account patronise a scheme of secular education in which instruction in that order is either to be omitted, or made subservient or secondary to sectarian religious teaching. Temporal happiness, either of individuals or of society, cannot possibly advance except in harmony with the order of nature; and to omit it, as is at present done in many seminaries controlled by religious sects, is worse than to act the tragedy of Hamlet omitting the character of its hero. It is substituting human error (for the sects cannot all be teaching truth) in the place of Divine wisdom. The comparatively limited beneficial results which have hitherto followed our educational efforts, are, in my opinion, owing to this substitution. Religious teaching, in so far as it transcends or is not coincident with the order of nature, should be left to the parents and pastors of the children; the Government should on principle avoid it, as a source of contention, embarrass-

ment, and weakness, and rely on teaching the laws of nature and their relations, supported by the authority of Scripture, and enforced by the fervour of the religious sentiments, as the stable foundations of secular happiness. The tendency of such a course of public instruction will be to correct all theological doctrines relative to this world which are discovered to be at variance with the order of nature. It appears to me that the practical precepts of Christianity are to a remarkable extent in harmony with it; and that hence a system of public education, such as that adopted in Ireland, will admit of the order of nature being taught, whenever the different sects become so enlightened as to discover its importance—a consummation which would be the sooner reached if none of them had the power of substituting their own wisdom in place of that of the Creator.

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