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NECESSITY

OF

EDUCATING THE PEOPLE.

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*A Lecture delivered before the Maltese Literary and
Scientific Society, on the 4th of March 1865*

BY

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MALTA
1865.

*With the Author's
compliments.*

THE NECESSITY OF EDUCATING THE PEOPLE.

A Lecture delivered before the Maltese Literary and Scientific Society, on the 4th of March 1865, by S. Savona.

Gentlemen,

Being called upon by the 3rd article of the fundamental statute of this Society to address its members on some subject relating to the general improvement of the community, I have selected, as the argument of this evening's discourse, "The Necessity of Educating the People." The Education Question is, without exception, the most important of all questions, whether it be looked at from the moral or intellectual, the social or political, point of view; and I am fully persuaded that every friend of true progress cannot but feel the deepest concern in a subject, upon which mainly depend the happiness and prosperity of man, both here and hereafter.

Regarding the Biblical as the only true account of man's creation, and of his lamentable fall from that state of supreme beatitude, to which he had been called by his Divine Maker, no study can be of higher moment to the Christian Philosopher and Statesman, than that which promises, in any way, to restore God's noblest creatures to that perfection, for which they had been

originally intended. Nor is the field thus opened up to the enlightened philanthropist limited either in extent or in the numbers immediately concerned. If we take a comprehensive view of the denizens of this world of ours from the beginning, what do we behold, with very few exceptions, but a countless mass of hewers of wood and drawers of water, dragging on a purposeless existence, entertaining the faintest possible idea of their duties to their Maker, their country and themselves! It would be ignoring the infinite love and wisdom of the Creator, if we were even for one moment to assume that man, the image of his Maker, was endowed with so many noble qualities, with such great aptitude for all that is good and beautiful, in order to lead the life that 999 out of every 1000 of our fellow-creatures, are leading. I do not think it expedient here to enlarge upon the paramount importance of educating the people, from a religious point of view. It is impossible for the great majority of illiterate men fully to understand and appreciate the sublime precepts of morality, first taught by Our Lord, and which are daily preached by His ministers; and even when they do succeed in forming some idea of their justice and usefulness, they are wanting in that moral training without which, their faculties being undeveloped, they find it next to impossible to conform their lives to those salutary maxims. But I willingly leave this part of the question to the care of those who are much better qualified than I can be expected to be, for the discussion of such subjects; and I do so with the greater readiness, because I am fully convinced that nothing will be left undone by the highly-gifted Prelate to whom the destinies of the Maltese Church are entrusted, towards promoting the religious education of his flock,—a work in which he will receive the hearty support of every member of the Maltese Clergy.

I shall, therefore, endeavour briefly to point out this evening some of the reasons which should

induce every government that has at heart its own safety, and the happiness and prosperity of the people entrusted to its charge, to promote and encourage by every means and appliance at its command the rational instruction and education of all classes of the people. Neither a very profound, nor a very extensive knowledge of history is required to show us how easy it is to govern even a moderately civilised and enlightened people, and how fruitless, on the other hand, have been all the efforts of wise and benevolent rulers, when dealing with intractable, because ignorant and superstitious, subjects. The importance of having all classes of the people properly instructed and educated that they may know, not only their rights, but their duties as well, is assuming, if possible, still greater magnitude in these days, in which the tendency of most governments leans towards democracy; in these days in which the people are daily demanding and acquiring more power and privileges. But what benefit can accrue to society at large from granting additional political privileges, such for instance as extending the elective franchise, to that class of the people which could contribute nothing towards the better guidance of the bark of the State but ignorance, and the violence and obstinacy which have always been inseparable from ignorance. In spite of all reasoning to the contrary, however, it will be impossible for constitutional governments much longer to deny to the people a larger share and a much greater influence in the direction of the affairs of the nation. And it will be well, when this will come to pass, and it must eventually come to pass, it will be well if the majority of the people shall have so far been instructed and educated, as to be enabled to exercise a beneficial and salutary influence on the happiness and prosperity of the greatest number, which is universally admitted to be the object of all good government.

But the danger of being compelled to grant political power to those classes, whose defective

education unfits them for the profitable and rational enjoyment of that privilege, is not the only consideration which ought to lead every wise ruler to educate the people. For even supposing, for the nonce, the non-existence of this danger, it is an unquestionable fact, a fact proved by the statistics of even the most civilised countries, that the system of hanging and imprisoning and transporting criminals has not as yet tended in any appreciable degree to diminish crime. On the contrary, humiliating as the confession must be to our pretended civilisation, it must be admitted that far from diminishing, crime is on the increase. Besides, considering the large portion of the public revenue which is at present being expended on the apprehension and punishment of criminals, even leaving out of the question the sufferings and misery that might be avoided, and the happiness that might be conferred on a large proportion of the community, it would be worth the while of the legislator to try in real earnest whether a portion of that sum might not be more profitably employed in preventing the commission of crime. And what can have a greater tendency towards diminishing, if not destroying altogether, the criminal propensities in the heart of man, than the dispelling of that ignorance, which is the fruitful parent of so many crimes? What is more likely to prevent crime, than a sound moral and intellectual education,—an education that shall develop the faculties which God has bestowed upon man, for far other purposes than that of destroying the life or seizing the property of his fellow-creatures,—an education that shall prove to demonstration the justice, as well as the truth, of the old adage that “Honesty is the best policy?” For who, that had received the benefit of sound moral training, would commit any of the crimes that make it incumbent upon the government to keep up the vast and complicated establishments now organised for the apprehension and punishment of criminals?

Not that I am so sanguine a believer in the effects of a good education, as to look upon it as the universal panacea for all the moral evils that the flesh is heir to. But this I most certainly maintain, and I do so with the greatest and most enlightened men of ancient and modern times, that nothing can have a greater tendency towards raising man from the state of mental and moral degradation, into which the majority of the species have allowed themselves to sink, than a rational education. Nor, apart from all utilitarian considerations, can it be gratifying to the thinking portion of the community to reflect on the wretched lives which by far the most numerous class of every nation must unavoidably lead, so long as the present state of society remains unaltered. How many of the most noble qualities which God has implanted in the human breast are allowed to lie dormant, without producing any of those beneficial results, both to ourselves and to others, for which alone they were bestowed upon us? And can nothing be done towards improving, at least in part, the condition of those who are thus circumstanced?

I am sure that no friend of progress, certainly not one of those assembled here this evening, will be disposed to question the "Necessity of Educating the People." But the question is far, very far from being solved, even when that principle is assented to. What is meant by education, and what education is suited to a given people, and to the several classes of the same nation, are other questions, which have at different epochs engaged the attention of philosophers and statesmen. I shall not detain you with an exposition of the views entertained by the contending parties in these questions, which are by no means of easy solution. But if you will kindly lend me your attention, I purpose, bearing always in mind the circumstances peculiar to these Islands, to lay before you the measures that might, in my opinion, be taken, with the view of placing the in-

habitants of Malta and Gozo on a level with those of more fortunate, because more civilised countries, and securing for my countrymen some of the advantages, of which they have so long been deprived. Of the actual state of the local educational establishments, I will say nothing. With a most laudable anxiety to be informed of their condition, His Excellency the Governor has already appointed a Commission to inquire into, and report upon, the instruction given in the Primary Schools and the Lyceum. As soon as the Report of the Commissioners shall be published, two questions must arise: What can be done towards improving those institutions? What can the Maltese reasonably expect the Government to do for their education? It was with the view of aiding, as far as in me lay, the definitive solution of those questions, that I have given my attention to the subject. If I only succeed in increasing the number of those who take an interest in the moral and intellectual improvement of the inhabitants of these Islands, I shall be amply repaid for the time devoted to the consideration of this important Question.

“Education,” says a well-known writer on the subject, “means the process of acquiring that knowledge of our Creator, of ourselves, and of external nature, and the formation of those habits of religious, moral and intellectual enterprise and activity, which are indispensable to the evolution of all our faculties, and to the performance of the parts allotted to us with intelligence and success.”* Now, as every human being is born with an immortal soul, endowed with the faculties necessary for acquiring a knowledge of the Creator, of himself, and of external nature, looking at the question from a theoretical point of view, it would necessarily follow that every human being should receive that complete education, which alone can fit him rightly to understand and to perform his duties to God, to his neighbour, and to his coun-

* George Combe.

try. But I have no wish to add another to the numberless elaborate and beautiful systems which many excellent, but visionary men have devised for the education of the human race. My object is simply to propose such practical and practicable measures as might, if approved, be carried into effect, before this year, nay before this present month of March, is over. It seems to me, therefore, that every village should have its primary school, in which the children of the people shall be "trained up in the way they should go, so that when they grow old they may not depart from it." By what means is this to be done? I hold it to be of the highest importance that, even before the child is taught to read, he should be trained in, not simply taught, but trained in those principles of morality which, when early instilled into the hearts of children will be their safest guide in after life, and the surest guarantee that they will grow up to be honest and virtuous men, and useful members of society. But a very serious difficulty presents itself when dealing with Maltese children, at the very beginning. In what language should knowledge be communicated to the children attending the primary schools? It is needless here to state that the Maltese language has not, in its origin, the remotest connection with either the English or the Italian language, and although the latter is, to a certain extent, spoken and understood in Valletta and the three Cities, to the majority of the inhabitants of the country, it is just as unknown as Spanish or German to an English child. In fact, on referring to the last Census of Malta, Gozo and Comino taken on the 31st October 1861, we find that out of the 134,055 Men, Women and Children that were then living, only 15,806 could speak, and 14,103 could read, the Italian language; whilst 8,675 said that they could speak, and 6,404 read English. This is certainly meagre enough; but small as they are, these numbers would become smaller still, if we were to stay and enquire what

value is to be attached to the declaration made by individuals concerning their knowledge of English or Italian. Many who know little more of Italian than to say: *Come state, buon giorno, buona sera, addio*, and such common expressions, would have no hesitation in asserting that they could speak Italian; nor would it be possible to inquire into the real extent of their knowledge. Besides, in the towns especially, one would do anything before plainly stating that he can neither speak, nor read Italian.

What is to be done in a country so unhappily circumstanced? Many say: Abolish that useless Maltese dialect, (gibberish some call it) and introduce the Italian language in the Schools. Others will tell you, why not go the whole length and establish the English language as the only language of communication? Whilst others, wishing to please everybody, hold that it is possible to teach the three languages. This is what is at present attempted in our primary schools. In order to illustrate the whole question, I shall put an extreme case indeed, but one that will best illustrate the subject. Let us suppose that Henry V. of England had lived to consolidate the conquest of France, which he had so rapidly accomplished. Nothing can have a greater tendency to denationalise a people, than to make them forget their language and adopt that of their conquerors. But would any one in his senses have advised Henry to publish an edict abolishing the French language throughout the length and breadth of that great country, substituting English in its stead? The thing would have been impossible; it would besides have been so absurd that no one in his senses could entertain such visionary schemes. In my opinion, the proposal of abolishing the Maltese language from the primary schools, with the view of introducing either Italian or English, is equally absurd. The only rational plan appears to me to be this. The Maltese having spontaneously placed themselves under the protection of the British

Crown, it is the duty of the latter so to govern them, that they shall participate, to the highest possible degree, in the blessings secured to all British Subjects by the British Constitution. It is the duty of the British Government to assimilate, as much as possible, the laws and institutions of the Maltese, to those of England. And as nothing can be done before the majority of the people become conversant with the English language, it is incumbent upon the local authorities to encourage, as much as in them lies, the study and progress of the English language among all classes of the population. But in order that this may have some probability of success, it is necessary to look a little more closely into the question, with the view of ascertaining first of all its practicability, without, at the same time, neglecting the interests of the people themselves. Now, as the Maltese language is not a written language, and as the natives, in order to carry on their business, must learn some other language, it is evident that they must first of all be taught that language which is more strictly and indispensably necessary to them. That language is without a doubt the Italian. Merchants and traders, great or small, keep their books in that language, their correspondence is principally carried on in that language, Italian is the language of the Courts of law, and of the Council. Is the English language then to be entirely abandoned? Not at all. But instead of attempting the impossible, instead of attempting to teach English to the children of all the villages of Malta, who can never learn it, the greatest attention should be bestowed by the Government upon the teaching of the English language in the City Schools. A full knowledge of the English language should be exacted from all candidates for the medical or legal profession, as well as from all government employés. And a knowledge of the English language should not be considered all that's required. The History and the Literature of England should be duly taught by properly qualified professors, in all the superior schools, as well as

the history of that Constitution which has contributed so much towards making England and the English what they are.

To begin with, therefore, in those remote villages where a word of Italian or English is very seldom, if ever, heard, let the Maltese be the language of communication, and let the Italian language be taught just as foreign languages are taught in other schools. We know not whether the children that attend the primary schools do so for a period sufficiently long to enable them to acquire a competent knowledge of that language. But to add the English language to the Italian; to attempt to teach two foreign languages in the inferior primary schools, is simply condemning the Maltese to perpetual ignorance of both languages. I have thought it necessary to discuss the question at some length, because it is one of the most difficult, and also because its solution is one of the very last importance to the improvement of the primary schools, especially the inferior ones. For if it be attempted to impart in the Italian language the first elementary lessons in Scripture History and Arithmetic, or the object lessons which should be given in every primary school, before that language is well understood by the pupils, such instruction would be worse than useless; for it would only tend to produce a confusion of ideas in the minds of those innocent creatures. If, on the other hand, nothing is taught till a competent knowledge of the language is acquired, nothing will ever be taught; for by the time the Italian language becomes at all familiar to the children, they will be leaving school.

Besides a competent knowledge of the Italian language, Scripture history, the Catechism, Writing and Arithmetic should be taught in every primary school, together with as much general knowledge as may be found in the several reading books, on the proper selection of which the greatest care should be bestowed.

As to the city schools, in which owing to the

comparatively greater civilization of the inhabitants, the children are sent more regularly to school, and are left there during a longer period than is practised in the country districts, besides Italian, the English language should be taught; and together with the English language, some knowledge of English history and of general geography should be added to the other elementary instruction required in the inferior primary schools. Nor is it to be expected that the children attending these schools should acquire a very full knowledge of the English language. If they are taught to read it with tolerable fluency and to write it from dictation with tolerable correctness; if they learn the principal grammatical difficulties, and acquire a fair portion of the vocabulary of the language, the primary school will have done its duty.

This is what, in my opinion, should, for the present, be required of the primary schools of Malta and Gozo. Besides that moral and religious training which must ever occupy the first place in every school, but more especially in those of the people, the instruction proposed to be given is as extensive, as the time during which the children attend school, and other local circumstances, admit. If the children of the working classes of Malta and Gozo, and the Primary Schools are meant only for those classes, are able to read and understand with facility the Italian language; if they can write, if not with elegance and purity, at least without grammatical errors, a familiar letter; if they can add, subtract, multiply and divide simple and compound numbers, and have a correct, though general, idea of the world in which they live, with a clear conception of the object for which they were created; if they are taught their duties to their Maker, to themselves, and to their neighbour, I do not see what more could be expected.

The remarks I have made upon schools for boys, equally apply to those for girls; the in-

dustrial occupations in which females are instructed during a part of the day, need not alter very materially the system of instruction. Infant Schools, when properly conducted, by properly qualified teachers, have also been found of the greatest utility. A skilful teacher can impart a considerable amount of useful knowledge even to infants; and the infant school may be made the feeder of the primary school. As to industrial schools, I have purposely abstained from making any mention of them, in order not to require too much; although when established in connection with the day-schools, they have been found to be productive of the best effects. There is another subject which should not be lost sight of in a well devised system of popular education: I mean physical exercises, to secure the "*Mens sana in corpore sano.*" Nor should the time devoted to gymnastics in airy play-grounds be looked upon as lost. Besides being the means of physical improvement, the play-ground may easily be converted into a field for moral culture by the intelligent educator.

But even to do this, which may to most people appear too meagre a programme, two things are indispensably required, and without which not even that little can be properly done: I mean well trained teachers, and efficient and independent inspections. It may seem superfluous to many of my hearers that in the days in which we live, I should think it necessary to insist upon the importance of training those who are destined to form the mind and mould the character of the rising generation. But it has recently been asserted in an official Report that there is no necessity for Training Schools, and that £50 a year are sufficient to train all the Masters and Mistresses that may be required for all the primary schools of Malta and Gozo. When Heads of Departments who are supposed to be fully acquainted with the subject make such statements to the Head of the Government; when such suggestions are recommended

on the score of great economy; it becomes necessary to correct any erroneous impression that similar assertions are likely to produce in influential quarters. It is not I who maintain the necessity of efficient schools for training Masters and Mistresses. I might allege the authority of Prussia, Holland, Germany and France, where such schools are to be found in every part of the country; but I shall only appeal to the united experience of the Committee of Council on Education in England, and the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland. They all found it impossible to secure the services of properly qualified teachers, until training schools were established all over the country. And do you know what is the cost of training *each* master, exclusive of the cost of the building, but simply for education and maintenance? Just about £50 per annum, the same sum which is made to cover all the expenses for training all the Masters and Mistresses, required for all the Schools of Malta and Gozo. I trust it is useless to say more on a subject, which has so long been settled in those countries, by whose experience we should be only too happy to profit. But even after admitting the necessity of training teachers, we have yet to consider whether it would be more convenient to establish a training school here, or to send young men to be trained in the United Kingdom. Having maturely considered the subject, I incline to believe that it would be safer, though perhaps a little more expensive, to establish a Training School in the Island. For great as is the want of properly qualified Masters, the want of properly qualified Mistresses is greater still. Female education has been, until very recently, most lamentably neglected, especially among the class of persons who are likely to embrace the career of a primary school-mistress. Nor do we see how females of a certain age can be sent for training abroad. But the establishment of an efficient training school would not alone create a supply of good

teachers. The position and emoluments of the primary teacher must also be improved; for otherwise very inferior subjects will present themselves for admission into the Training School; and it will be very difficult to turn such inferior material into properly qualified instructors.

The other indispensable requisite to guarantee, and, at the same time, to promote, the efficiency of the primary, as well as of all other schools, is a rigorous system of inspection. I shall again refer to the example furnished us by the Committee of Council, that have done so much towards extending and improving the blessing of a good education all over Great Britain. The means by which they have effected so much good, has unquestionably been the able staff of Inspectors that regularly examine every year almost every elementary school throughout the kingdom, laying the fruit of their observations and experience before the Committee of Council, in their annual reports. We cannot do better, if it is intended really to educate the people, than follow the example set us by the Mother Country, in a matter of such paramount importance. Nor should any additional expense that might be required to carry out a sound and rational system of primary education, deter the government from so noble and withal so useful a task. Due regard being had to the financial condition of the Island, too much can never be expended upon securing a sound education to the sons and daughters of the people.

Having sketched, as briefly as was compatible with clearness, my notions concerning what the primary schools of Malta and Gozo should be, and pointed out the most important measures that should be carried into effect, in order to ensure their permanent efficiency and gradual extension and improvement, I shall now, if I have not already tired out your patience, state what I think of the schools for secondary instruction. Although the primary schools are principally intended for the education and instruction of those

who are too poor to pay for their education; though, strictly speaking, the primary schools are the only ones that should be provided by Government, there are many parents who wish their children to obtain a higher and more complete education, than that imparted in the elementary schools. And as it is the duty of the State to encourage such praiseworthy intentions, we find that nearly all governments have organised schools, which are intermediate between the primary schools and the Universities. Before enquiring what should be taught in these schools, which under the various names of Colleges, Lyceums, Gymnasiums Grammar Schools, Intermediate Schools, Secondary Schools &c. are to be found in every civilised country, let us first of all determine the purpose which they are intended to serve. They are intended first, To prepare students for the University; 2ndly, To complete the education of those young men who, though not destined for any of the learned professions, intend to qualify themselves for the civil service, the scholastic profession, engineering, or commerce. It is evident that before a young man in Malta can enter upon the study of Theology, Jurisprudence or Medicine, with any hope of success, he must be fully acquainted with the Classical Languages, Moral and Intellectual Philosophy, Mathematics, Natural Philosophy, Natural History, and Chemistry, as well as with the English and Italian Languages, History and Geography. These branches of knowledge should be thoroughly studied in a school that professes to prepare students for the University. Some of these subjects, however, are not indispensable for those that are not destined for the learned professions. What is a government or a commercial clerk, or a civil engineer, to do with Greek and Latin? They all require, on the other hand, some knowledge of Political Economy. Again, in a country whose chief, nay whose only resource may be said to be Commerce, great attention should be bestowed on those branches of learning that contri-

bute towards forming the enlightened and honest merchant. And why should not the principles of Architecture be taught to Maltese Land Surveyors? How much would our houses, even those that are being built at the present day, gain both in elegance, in comfort and in salubrity, if the principles of that Science were taught in the Lyceum, if some pains were taken to provide the Island with that very necessary, but rare article, properly qualified architects? There is another subject which, if I am not mistaken, has hitherto been too much neglected, even in the United Kingdom, but which appears to deserve the greatest attention. In all the secondary schools of Italy, the students are now made acquainted with the rights and duties that pertain to them, as the free citizens of a constitutional state. Now it is evidently of the highest importance that we too, that have for the last 65 years been under the Government of the British Crown, should have some knowledge of the English Constitution; the more so that unhappily such knowledge is far from being too widely spread in these possessions.

The Lyceum, then, which is the only secondary School supported by Government, should be so organised as to answer all the purposes for which secondary schools are instituted. Nothing that is taught in the primary schools should form part of the instruction to be given in the Lyceum; and no one should be admitted therein, except after a searching examination on all the subjects taught in the most advanced class of the City Primary Schools, viz.: A competent knowledge of the English and Italian languages, Arithmetic to Vulgar Fractions, and a general idea of English History and Geography. The General Education given in the Lyceum should be divided into two Departments: one preparatory to the liberal professions, the other to the civil service, the scholastic profession, engineering, commerce, &c. Besides the English and Italian languages, Mathe-

matics, History and Geography, a full knowledge of which should be made obligatory for both Departments, the Classical languages, Moral and Intellectual Philosophy, Natural History, Natural Philosophy, Chemistry, and Political Economy should be added to the Professional Department; the French Language, Book-Keeping, Commercial Law, and such other branches as might be considered necessary, being added to the other Department.

But by far the most important question to be attended to in the organization of the Lyceum, is the proper distribution and graduation of the several branches of study. A boy between 12 and 14 years of age should possess the knowledge required for admission into the Lyceum, viz.: A competent knowledge of the English and Italian languages, Arithmetic to Vulgar Fractions, and a general idea of English History and Geography; so that if a period of six years be allowed for the completion of the studies to be pursued in the Lyceum, young men will be able to enter the University, or embrace one of the other professions, when they are between 18 and 20 years of age; and I see no reason why, in six years of steady and well-directed application, under good masters, the youth of Malta should not receive as sound and as extensive an education as the youths of any other country in the world.

The next question to be settled, after the qualifications of candidates for admission, is the language which, for want of a better term, I have already called the language of communication; the language, I mean, in which the several masters should give instruction. Did I see any possibility of its being adopted, I should certainly pronounce in favour of the English language; because I am firmly convinced that very few things could confer more lasting benefits on my countrymen than the spread of the English language among them. But as it would be entirely out of the question to find masters for the se-

veral branches, possessing a full knowledge of English, the Government can have no choice left: Italian must, for the present at least, be the language of communication. That language being selected as the medium of communication between Master and pupils, a competent knowledge of it must be exacted from all those who wish to continue their studies in the Lyceum; for if the pupils do not thoroughly understand the language spoken by the Mathematical Master, the Professor of History and Geography and the other Instructors who should not be allowed to speak any other language, and who even if they were allowed, could not give their explanations in the Maltese dialect, what progress can the students be expected to make?

In order to forward the progress of English, the teachers of that language should speak nothing but English to their pupils; and it would be well if some other branches of learning, such as History and Geography, or Arithmetic, could be taught by Englishmen, or by teachers possessing a good knowledge of the language.

No promotion should take place from one class to another, except after searching examinations, which should be conducted by officers appointed by the Head of the Government. Great attention should also be given to the number of students that each class should contain. I have heard of classes in which it is proposed to teach the elements of the English Language, containing between 40 and 50 pupils. Now this is simply throwing away the time of both Masters and pupils. The thing is impossible. It has been laid down by the most experienced educationists that no elementary class should contain more than 20 pupils.

The qualifications possessed by the several Professors and Teachers would be another knotty question for the Government to grapple with; for unless the instructors are thorough masters of the subject or subjects they are appointed to teach; unless they are acquainted with good methods for imparting their knowledge to the students, all the

reforms and all the organization in the world will not be able to effect the smallest improvement.

As to the financial question, I have not thought it expedient to meddle with it. I simply point out what, in my opinion, the Government is bound to do. From what sources and by whom the required expenses are to be defrayed, is quite a different matter.

But in order to establish the reformed system of Public Instruction on a solid foundation, without leaving it in the power of any inferior authority to alter or amend any of the regulations which it may be considered necessary to promulgate, a law should be enacted on the subject. Malta is perhaps the only country in the civilised world in which there is no fundamental law regulating the public educational institutions. It is true that there once existed a Statute called the Statute of the University of Malta; but it was so mutilated, and became the object of so much tinkering, that it was at last thought proper to shelve it, without any steps being taken towards publishing a new one. Nor should the Education Ordinance, to which much greater importance ought to be attached than to a great many other ordinances, busy itself with the regulation of the University alone; the Primary and Secondary Schools should also receive a proportionate share of attention. I have recently had occasion to examine, not indeed with all the attention that the subject deserved, some of the laws on Public Instruction published by the Ministers of Victor Emanuel, during the last ten years; and I was forcibly struck with the admirable precision with which everything relating to both the teachers and the students is regulated, from the lowest school, to the Universities. Should the example of the neighbouring Peninsula be thought inapplicable owing to its recency, I might refer to the laws enacted on the same subject in Prussia, Holland and France, the excellence of which has been tested by the experience of a long series of years.

Were such a law enacted among us, it might clearly define the instruction to be given in each class of the primary schools, as well as of the Lyceum; the emoluments and duties of the various teachers and professors; the time when the examinations are to take place, by whom they are to be conducted, and on what subjects. The duties of the Inspector or Inspectors would occupy another and not the least important portion of the Education Ordinance. These and many other matters of the last importance would be the proper objects of the law I have ventured to suggest. It might also settle the question as to the manner of defraying the expense required for the various institutions.

But the principal feature of this law should be an ample provision for the efficient teaching of the Language, History and Literature of the Mother Country, which branch of knowledge might well be made obligatory on all those who wish to complete their education. It is certainly deserving of the most serious consideration on the part of the English Government, that the History and Literature, as well as the Language of England, are so little known among the Maltese, who have now so long been governed by British Rulers. Even among professional men, among the educated classes, though the English are admired as a great naval and military power, as a great and wealthy commercial nation, the Literature of England is held in very low estimation. The Literature that can boast of the works of a Shakespeare, and a Milton, a Dryden and a Pope; the language in which Hume and Gibbon, Robertson and Macaulay, wrote their immortal histories; the language of the Cowpers, the Byrons, the Shelleys, and the Tennysons, is looked down upon in a country which has been, so to speak, annexed to Great Britain, ever since the beginning of this century! Nor is this to be wondered at. For what has the Government done to promote the study of the Literature of Britain, that Literature

which, in the words of one of its greatest ornaments, * “is the brightest, the purest, the most durable of all the glories of England; that literature so rich in precious truth and precious fiction; that literature which boasts of the Prince of all Poets and of the Prince of all Philosophers; that literature which has exercised an influence wider than that of British Commerce, and mightier than that of British arms; that literature which has taught France the principles of liberty, and has furnished Germany with models of art; that literature before the light of which, impious and cruel superstitions are fast taking flight on the banks of the Ganges; that literature which will, in future ages, instruct and delight the unborn millions who will have turned the Australasian and Caffrarian deserts into cities and gardens”? Strange as the assertion may appear, nothing is being done to promote the study of the Literature of England, and of the many master works of British Genius; and is it to be wondered at that young men who are familiar with the writings of the great Italian Authors, should have so low an opinion of the Literature of England, of which they know little or nothing?

It is high time that so unsatisfactory a state of affairs should seriously engage the attention of the Head of the Government; and there is only one remedy to the deficiency I have pointed out. Englishmen must be appointed to teach the English language, not only in the University and the Lyceum, but also in the Primary Schools; and if Englishmen are not to be had, young Maltese must be sent to England with as little delay as possible, to become thoroughly acquainted with the English Language. It is impossible to acquire anything like a fair knowledge of a foreign language, unless you live and move among those who have spoken it from their infancy; you must hear it spoken by the natives. And a

* Macaulay.

good colloquial knowledge of the English language is indispensable to those who are to teach it to others. Something must also be done towards introducing the latest improvements in teaching the English language. Translations should not be commenced until the student has become somewhat familiar with the language; which is best done by following the improved system adopted by Ollendorff, Ahn, and other linguists. Care should also be taken to institute a regular and complete course of English Literature, including literary history; and before the history of any other country is taught, that of England should be as fully studied as boys can study anything. "For the History of England," says a modern historian, "is emphatically the history of progress. It is the history of a constant movement of the public mind, of a constant change in the institutions of a great society. We see that society, at the beginning of the twelfth century, in a state more miserable, than the state in which the most degraded nations of the East now are. We see it subjected to the tyranny of a handful of armed foreigners. We see a strong distinction of caste separating the victorious Norman from the vanquished Saxon. We see the great body of the population in a state of personal slavery. We see the most debasing and cruel superstition exercising boundless dominion over the most elevated and benevolent minds. We see the multitude sunk in brutal ignorance and the studious few engaged in acquiring what did not deserve the name of knowledge. In the course of seven centuries, the wretched and degraded race have become the greatest and most highly civilised people that ever the world saw; have spread their dominion over every quarter of the globe, have scattered the seeds of mighty empires and republics over vast continents, of which no dim intimation had ever reached Ptolemy or Strabo, have created a maritime power which would annihilate in a quarter of an hour the navies of Tyre,

Athens, Carthage, Venice and Genoa together, have carried the science of healing, the means of locomotion and correspondence, every mechanical art, every manufacture, everything that promotes the convenience of life, to a perfection which our ancestors would have thought magical, have produced a literature which may boast of works not inferior to the noblest which Greece has bequeathed to us, have discovered the laws which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, have speculated with exquisite subtlety on the operations of the human mind, have been the acknowledged leaders of the human race in the career of political improvement. The History of England is the history of this great change in the moral, intellectual and physical state of the inhabitants of our own Island." *

It is this History and this Literature that I should wish to see Young Malta study and meditate. Then and only then will the English government have reason to expect that the English language shall become more generally known among the people of Malta; and from the knowledge of the language, the history, and the literature of England, the Maltese cannot but learn to sympathize with and to respect their rulers.

Next to the secondary schools, I shall naturally be expected to say something concerning the highest school, the University. I intend to do so, though my sentiments on the subject may not be so acceptable to some of my fellow-countrymen, as those I have ventured to express with reference to the Primary Schools and the Lyceum. But much as I do respect the opinion of the least of my hearers, I can neither be silent on so important a subject, nor accommodate my views to the prevailing notions. I shall put the question in this form: Even if the state of the local finances could support the enormous expense that would be required, would it be possible for us

* Macaulay.

to have such a University as might bear to be compared with the great Universities of the Continent? In putting this question, I wish it distinctly to be understood that I do so, without meaning to derogate in the least, either from the learning or the ability of the many able and learned professors of our University, some of whom I am happy to be able to reckon among my friends.

It is only a few years ago that London, the Metropolis of the British Empire, that largest, wealthiest, and most populous city in the world, founded a University; and if that University has acquired some celebrity, it is only because its founders were enabled to select the various Professors from among the most eminent men in Britain. I know that some will be found to say: "It is true we cannot have a first rate University like those to be found in larger and wealthier, and more populous countries. But ours is not a great country. Malta is neither so wealthy, nor so thickly peopled as England, France, Germany or Italy. If we cannot get a first rate University, we can surely get one proportionate to our ways and means, and adequate to our wants." But though this argument would fit very well, if the subject in question were an Opera-house, or a public garden, nothing can be more fallacious when applied to a University. In fact, one of the main objects of the University is to furnish the country with properly qualified physicians. Great as are the resources of the Paris Medical School, for instance, it certainly contains nothing more than what is considered necessary to the formation of properly qualified physicians. Consequently, if we cannot obtain as good professors, if the hospitals of Malta do not, fortunately for its inhabitants, afford the same number and variety of cases as those of Paris, it naturally follows that the physicians furnished by the University of Malta must be inferior to those that are formed in the Medical School of Paris. Now what is the

utmost that even the best Physician produced by that School can be expected to do? Nothing more than to prevent, and if he cannot prevent, to cure, the many diseases to which suffering humanity is subject. And are the Maltese either so much healthier than the Parisians, or so little careful of their health, as to require less medical assistance, and less skill in their physicians, than the people of France?

What has been said of physicians, is just as applicable, *mutatis mutandis*, to the legal profession. We must either make up our minds to have inferior articles, and of those articles which ought to be of the very best description, or resolve upon obtaining our advocates and physicians from abroad. I know that the plan of gradually doing away with the University is looked upon as sacrilegious by some well-meaning and patriotic men. "What," they will tell us, "will you destroy one of the chief glories and ornaments of our country? will you deprive us of a privilege which has so long been envied us by our less fortunate neighbours? will you cut off another from the very limited resources of this poor country?" But, with all the respect due to the opinions expressed above, let us boldly look things in the face, without allowing ourselves to be imposed upon by empty words. Does the school which we dignify by the name of University deserve to be so called, when compared with the first rate Universities of the Continent? I leave to others the odious task of instituting comparisons. But bearing in mind the paramount importance of having the country provided with properly qualified professional men, should it be found impossible to have in Malta a first rate University, we must openly confess it and send those who aspire to the honours of the Medical and Legal Professions to complete their studies abroad.

Skilful physicians and honest and able lawyers will not be the only advantage that the population of these Islands will reap from the adoption

of such a measure. Nothing is more obstructive of real progress than the narrowness of mind which is invariably produced by the perpetual confinement within the limited sphere, physical, moral and intellectual, to which all the inhabitants of small insular countries like ours are unhappily condemned. Nothing, on the other hand, can have a greater tendency to dispel the veil of ignorance and prejudice, which is inseparable from narrow-mindedness, than the direct intercourse of some of our most cultivated intellects, with those of the great European countries. This salutary opening up of the mind, this most beneficial intercommunion with the intelligence of vaster and more highly civilised countries, must indeed be the lot of but a small number of our countrymen; but on their return among us, they cannot but exercise a great influence for good upon the intellectual classes. Having studied the causes which render nations great and prosperous, they will naturally be anxious to diffuse among their own countrymen the blessings witnessed by them in other countries. This constant influx of cultivated minds cannot but be productive of the most happy results. One of which results, I most earnestly and most sincerely hope and trust, will be a greater interest felt in the cause of popular education. For if the majority of the so-called educated classes had been impressed with a due sense of the importance of this great question, it would not have been reserved for me, in this year 1865, to recommend the introduction of a reformed system of public instruction, from which other and more fortunate countries have been reaping substantial benefits for years. But till the time arrives, and I hope it may soon arrive, when the majority of the people themselves shall feel a greater interest in education, it is, in my opinion, the bounden duty of the Government to organize and superintend, not only the schools for primary instruction, but every other educational institution which the wisdom and experience of

other countries have found it necessary to establish for the education of all classes of the people. For it is impossible for private individuals, willing as they may be to forward the cause of education, to possess that influence which the Government alone can exercise. Nor would it be advisable to leave entirely in the hands of private individuals the important and most delicate mission of forming the minds and hearts of the people.

In saying, however, that the Government should organize and superintend, I do not mean to state that the Government should entirely support out of the public funds, upon which there are already so many pressing demands, all the institutions that may be found necessary for educating all classes of the people. It might be well maturely to consider by what measures the wealthier classes might be made directly to contribute towards the support of the schools, from which they will be the first to reap the most beneficial results. I think that if it be really contemplated to grant to the Maltese municipal institutions, that essential element of all healthy political life, our future corporations cannot better inaugurate their career, than by devising the means for supporting some of the educational institutions. But I am wandering from the subject, upon which I have already said much more than I at first intended; and I must conclude.

The importance of the Question to which I have ventured to call your attention is undoubtedly very great; so great, indeed, that it ought to be attended to before all others.

It is the duty of the Government, that it may fulfil its mission of promoting the greatest happiness of the greatest number, to promote the rational instruction and education of all classes of the people, so that each individual member of society may be fitted to perform with intelligence and success, the part allotted to him by Providence in this world.

Apart from these considerations, it is for the general interests of the community to promote the

education of all classes of the people, with the view of ensuring the security of life and property, and of preventing the commission of crime.

In order to attain these several objects we find in every civilised country elementary schools for the education of the sons and daughters of the people, entrusted to intelligent teachers, properly trained and instructed in the duties of their arduous and most responsible profession. These schools are periodically examined by efficient and independent inspectors, whose duty it is to inquire into, and report upon, the state of the several schools and to suggest such improvements as may tend to spread the blessings of a good education among the working class, which is always the most numerous in every country.

Secondary schools are also established in all civilised countries, with the view of preparing young men for the superior studies generally pursued in the Universities, or to qualify them for the civil service, the scholastic profession, engineering, and commerce. These schools are generally divided into two Departments intended to fulfil the purposes above alluded to. The ancient and modern Languages, Mathematics, the Physical Sciences, Philosophy and the other branches of knowledge tending to develop all the faculties of the human mind, and to fit men for the several occupations which they may have to follow in after life, are taught in these schools by Professors and Teachers possessing the requisite qualifications, and adequately remunerated for their devotion to the welfare of the state.

So much importance is attached to the necessity of having an adequate supply of properly qualified instructors, that training schools and colleges have been founded with the sole object of training teachers and professors.

All the educational institutions are made to depend from one central authority, that is held responsible to the chief of the state for the efficiency of all public schools.

The several professors and teachers are duly encouraged to give popular lectures on subjects of general interest and utility, with the view of improving and extending the education of those who have not had the time or the opportunity of completing their studies.

Provision is also made for the supply of properly qualified professional men, upon whom so much of the prosperity of the Community must always depend; either by the foundation of efficient Universities, or by enabling young men of distinguished abilities to pursue their studies abroad, at the public expense.

Such institutions have undoubtedly been productive of the most beneficial results in every country where they have been established. It was in order to hasten the introduction among us of a sound and efficient system of popular education, that I have called you together this evening. The manner in which that appeal has been responded to has justified my most sanguine expectations. If the number of those who take an interest in education is so great; if among the gentlemen that have so graciously consented to assemble here this evening, I behold many of the most distinguished for their social position, their abilities and their wealth; the triumph of the cause of education cannot be far distant. That the noble cause may, under the blessing of God, so prosper among us, as to produce the happy results which have been derived from it in other countries, is my sincerest and most earnest desire, and that, (I confidently believe), of every one present. That the prosperity and happiness of the People of Malta may be long connected with the name of our Most Gracious Sovereign's Representative, whom the Society is proud to be able to reckon among its active members, cannot but be ardently desired by all those who know with what solicitude Sir Henry Storks has applied himself to the study of the Education Question, ever since His Excellency was appointed to the go-

vernment of these Islands. By promoting the Education of the people of Malta, not only will His Excellency deserve the gratitude of all right-thinking men, but he will, at the same time, be serving the interests of the British Crown. Nothing but a good education is required to bind more closely the ties which unite this loyal population to the free and generous British Nation. It is more than half a century since the Maltese spontaneously entrusted their dearest rights and privileges to the safe keeping of Great Britain. When an improved and more extended education will enable all classes of the community to appreciate at their real value the inestimable blessings of free institutions and of self-government, the Maltese will desire nothing more ardently than to have their destinies for ever connected with those of Britain, the land of civil and religious freedom. Then will they cherish the memory of all those who shall have contributed to the good work of promoting and extending the Education of all classes of the Community.

