

**STRICTURES ON THE NEW
GOVERNMENT MEASURE
OF EDUCATION**

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Strictures on the New Government Measure of Education by Edward Baines

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BY EDWARD BAINES.

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STRICTURES, &c.

ON the presentation of a new measure of Education by the Government to the legislature, it is no less the duty than the interest of the people freely to examine its merits. A measure which its authors expect to entail local and general taxation to the amount of TWO MILLIONS or TWO MILLIONS AND A HALF *per annum*, and which must deeply and long agitate the burgesses and town councils of nearly *Three Hundred* Municipal Boroughs, as well as decide the future character of Education in England, certainly demands the most careful consideration of the public.

It is six years since the Minutes in Council were brought into operation; and within that period a Census of the kingdom has for the first time obtained authentic particulars of the extent of education in this country. We now possess means never possessed before, of judging on several points of the first importance to the whole question. The information obtained throws invaluable light on the controversy between the friends of the governmental and the voluntary systems of education; and it cannot but be received with interest by all who care either for the reputation or the moral welfare of their country.

The writer is one of those who, from the interest they have taken in popular education, will be expected to declare their opinions on the new proposition of the Government.

Of the benefits of Education, there is happily no question. Many years have passed since any champion of ignorance ventured to "peep or mutter" on the stage of public controversy. For myself, my principle and my practice are now, as they ever have been, to promote the universal instruction of the people. Whilst I shun the errors of those who imagine that education would cure all the ills of the body politic, and correct all the moral diseases of our nature, I maintain that knowledge is one of the first of blessings to individuals and to communities. The controversy is as to the means, not as to the end. Principles of the first importance, social, political, and religious, are involved; and no man of a right spirit would sacrifice the interests either of truth or liberty, for the sake of promoting education in one way rather than in another. We see men who entertain all the different opinions on systems of education agreeing in this, that there are things too sacred to be given up for the sake of any system. The rights of conscience and the interests of religion are among those sacred things; and of secular interests I esteem the spirit of independence one of the most precious, because lying at the foundation of English liberty, and of the nobility of English character.

ACTUAL EXTENT OF EDUCATION IN ENGLAND.

The first inquiry that arises in regard to any Government measure of education is this, *is Government interference needed?* And to form a just opinion on that point, we naturally inquire further, what is the present extent of education, and what has been its recent progress? In making these inquiries on the very threshold, I follow not only what appears the dictate of common sense, but also the course suggested by the speech of Lord John Russell in expounding the Government measure in the House of Commons; as the Noble Lord began by a succinct history of popular education in England within the present century, and showed how it had arisen, expanded, and borne large fruits, by the spontaneous action of individuals and associations of men, through a space of thirty years before Government meddled with the question. He then very briefly alluded to the measures of Government, but hastened on to lay before the House the present extent of education in England, as shown by the school returns obtained in the Census of March 31st, 1851.

I shall be forgiven if I attach the greatest consequence to these returns; and if, before stating them, I remind my readers of the many controversies which have been carried on for the last six years on this all-important point. It will be remembered that before the Minutes in Council of 1846 made their appearance, many able writers and speakers represented the state of education in England as alarmingly and disgracefully deficient; that I, on the other hand, endeavoured to show the erroneousness of this view; but that my estimates were treated with little respect, and were by many pronounced to be entirely undeserving of credit. As the Rev. Dr. Hook, the Vicar of Leeds, had, in a pamphlet which attracted much notice, assumed a deficiency of school accommodation which it was quite impossible for any means but the power of Government to supply, my first object was to show that this was a mistake; for that the bare addition of the schools which he stated to have been built since 1833, to the number of scholars shown by the returns of Lord Kerry's Committee to have existed in that year, would make an extent of accommodation very nearly equal to the reasonable wants of a community situated as England was in regard to its population and industry. I thought it certain that all the children within the school-age, say, from four to fourteen, or from five to fifteen, could not attend school the whole of the ten years over which the school-age extended; and that, considering the circumstances of the working classes, who form about three-fourths of the whole population, (and a larger proportion, be it remembered, than in any other country, owing to the unequalled extent of our manufacturing industry), and the numbers of children kept at home by sickness, domestic necessity, or for the purpose of home-education, we could not reckon on finding a number of the juvenile population at school beyond what would yield an average of *five years' schooling for the whole*. Of course the school-room required if the children remained at school five years would be only *half* as much as if they remained at school ten years. It was shown that there *must* already be about that extent of accommodation: and I proceeded further to argue, from Lord Kerry's returns and various known facts, that the actual number of day-scholars could scarcely be less than 1,876,947. The whole number of children of the school age would be 3,891,127, half of which number was 1,945,563; and as I

thought the probable number of scholars was 1,876,947, it came very near what in my opinion could be reasonably expected.* The proportion of our estimated number of day-scholars to the whole population was about one to nine; and it was shown that Lord Brougham had estimated this proportion of one day scholar to nine inhabitants as a thing to be desired and aimed at; whilst the Committee of the House of Commons on the education of large towns in 1838, had declared that *school-room* for "not less than about *one-eighth* part of the population" was desirable.

I was followed by two able investigators, Mr. Charles Knight and Professor Hoppus, the former of whom (in the "*Companion to the British Almanac*" for 1847) estimated the number of day-scholars at 2,200,000, and the latter (in his "*Crisis of Popular Education*") estimated them at 2,000,000. On the ground of their facts and authority, I thought it safe and right to take the estimate of Professor Hoppus, which was in the medium between my-own and Mr. C. Knight's; and thenceforward I estimated the number of day-scholars at 2,000,000 for a population of 17,026,024 (in 1846),—being in the proportion of 1 to 8½. Pointing, then, to the returns of scholars obtained by Lord Brougham in 1818, viz., 674,883, or 1 in 17 of the population; and to the returns obtained by Lord Kerry in 1833, viz., of 1,276,947 scholars, or 1 in 11½ of the population; I argued that there had been so steady and rapid an improvement as to give assurance of our soon reaching a satisfactory state of education without any help whatever from the Government.

Both these estimates and conclusions were treated as sanguine even to the extent of being ridiculous. At that day it was the fashion to regard the educational deficiencies of England as something unlimited and appalling. Dr. Hook maintained that, "compared with the educational wants of the country, we had done *next to nothing*."† Dr. Vaughan said—"if there are neighbourhoods in which the existing schools are sufficient to receive one in nine of the population, there are others, such as Oldham, where the provision made for day-school tuition is *not for one in a hundred*, and where the actual attendance is "in a much less proportion." Lord John Russell, in the House of Commons, quoted an article of Dr. Vaughan's in the *British Quarterly*, which contended that only *one-third* of the children of the school age were attending school, and that "nearly 1,250,000 souls were thrown upon society every ten years who had never had a place in any day-school." Lord John added—"The statements made by members of the Church of England, by Drs. Hook, Burgess, and others, who had shown great understanding of the subject, all concurred, in opposition to Mr. Baines's statement, that the education of this country is "extremely deficient."‡ Mr. Horace Mann, of Massachusetts, in his "*Report of an Educational Tour in Germany, Great Britain, &c.*," quoted a British writer as stating that there were in England "*more*

* The population in 1846 was 17,026,024; and as, according to the Census of 1841, the children between the ages of five and fifteen bore the proportion of 22.854 per cent. to the whole population, if we apply the same proportion in 1846, the number of children between five and fifteen would appear to be 3,801,127.

† Letter to the Bishop of St. David's.

‡ Speech, April 19, 1847.

"than a million and a half of children, of a suitable age to attend school, who are left in a condition of complete ignorance." Mr. W. J. Fox, M.P., in moving his bill for education, in the House of Commons, on the 26th February, 1850, said—"The very highest estimate of the most sanguine calculator of the proportion of scholars to population in England—he meant Mr. Baines—only gave it at 1 to 8½; to make out this proportion every kind of school, day and Sunday school, had to be reckoned [of course this was perfectly erroneous]; and there was great reason to believe that it was very inaccurate, and that 1 in 13 would be much nearer the mark." The Rev. Dr. M'Kerrow, of Manchester, at the conference held in that city, in November, 1850, alleged that the scholars in England were 1 in 14 to the population.

Mr. Joseph Kay, the "travelling bachelor" of the University of Cambridge, in his elaborate work on "*The Social Condition and Education of the People in England and Europe*," published first in 1846, and afterwards with large additions in 1850, gave a table showing the proportion of "scholars in elementary schools to the whole population in different European countries," in which were the following among other figures:—

	1 scholar in every	6 inhabitants.
Prussia	1	7
Norway	1	7
Denmark	1	7
Holland	1	8
Bavaria	1	8
Bohemia	1	8.5
Austria Proper	1	9
France	1	10.5
Belgium	1	10.7
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But perhaps the most curious of all the strange blunders made on this subject, is in the number of the *Edinburgh Review* published this week, and which contains an article reviewing a work of Sir James Kay Shuttleworth's, also published this week, entitled "*Public Education as affected by the Minutes of the Committee of Privy Council from 1846 to 1852, with suggestions as to future policy*." Sir James had based his calculations on a principle very near to that which I had adopted, saying—"I take the rate of one scholar to eight inhabitants as that supported by most writers on the statistics of education;" and he had estimated the number of day-scholars in the schools of the "*religious communions in England and Wales*" at 1,281,077. The writer in the *Edinburgh Review* seems to confound this number with the scholars in all the "*elementary schools in England and Wales*;" and he makes the following calculations:—

"Sir James Kay Shuttleworth bases his calculations on the hypothesis that half the children ought to be in our elementary schools, who are thus of an age to go to school. [Perfectly correct.] This appears to us the lowest hypothesis which is consistent with the idea of a national system of education.

"Two and one-eighth millions (2,125,000) ought, on this supposition, to be in elementary schools in England and Wales. The number actually attending them is about ONE-AND-A-QUARTER MILLIONS

(1,250,000).—leaving nearly a million (seven-eighths of a million) unprovided for. There are, in connexion with the different religious denominations, 20,000 elementary schools, giving an average attendance of 64 children in each school. If the average attendance could be raised to 90, half a million more children would be taught in these 20,000 schools; *leaving another half-million for whom schools are yet to be provided!* For the education of this half-million of children, *5,555 new schools must be built, at a cost of not less than £2,250,000,—to contain on an average 90 each,—and 5,555 new teachers must be provided.*—p. 488-490.

In another part of the article the Reviewer says—"It is not too much to assume that a million and a half (1,500,000) of scholars are now attending daily schools in England."—p. 484.

Such strange inconsistency and confusion do we find in our leading literary journal in regard to the number of children who actually are, and who ought to be, under education. Be it observed, however, the number who *ought to be* in day-schools is estimated in the *Edinburgh Review* at 2,125,000; and the number who *are* there is variously stated by the writer at 1,250,000 and 1,500,000. Sir James Kay Shuttleworth's calculation of 1 day scholar to 8 inhabitants would require 2,240,348 scholars in March, 1851, when the population was 17,922,768.

I have now given a few samples of the notions entertained from 1846 down to the present time, of the proportion borne by the day-scholars in England and Wales to the whole population. What, then, was the actual number of day-scholars on the 31st March, 1851, according to the Census? Lord John Russell had received them only the day before his speech, and he gives them as follows:—

DAY SCHOLARS IN ENGLAND AND WALES, ACCORDING TO THE
CENSUS OF 1851.

	Schools.	Scholars.
Public Day Schools.....	15,473	1,407,569
Private Do.	29,425	700,904
Total.....	44,898	2,108,473

Proportion of *Scholars to Population, 1 to 8½.*

My calculation in 1847 was 1 to 9; and in deference to other authorities I adopted the proportion of 1 to 8½. In March, 1851, according to returns which are far more likely to err on the side of defect than of excess, the proportion was found to be exactly 1 in 8½. I believe it will be admitted that my calculation was not far from right; whilst the calculations quoted above were strangely and outrageously wrong.

**HOW FAR IS THE EXTENT OF EDUCATION
SATISFACTORY?**

But if the number of day-scholars in England and Wales is now 2,108,473, this exceeds the requirement of Lord Brougham. It may be said to exceed the requirement of the Committee of the House of Commons of 1838, as that was for school-accommodation equal to one-eighth of the population, not actual scholars to that amount. It very nearly approaches what Sir James Kay Shuttleworth and the *Edinburgh Review* estimate as desirable, when they speak of 1 in 8; and it exceeds