WHERE SHALL I EDUCATE MY SON?: A MANUAL FOR PARENTS OF MODERATE MEANS

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By CHARLES EYRE PASCOE,

EDITOR OF "A PRACTICAL HANDBOOK TO THE PRINCIPAL SCHOOLS;" "EVERY-DAY LIFE IN OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS;" "SCHOOLS FOR GIRLS AND COLLEGES FOR WOMEN," ETC., ETC.

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1884.

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INTRODUCTORY.

I HAVE frequently been asked, as the author of one or two books on our Public Schools, "Can you tell me how to proceed in the matter of getting my son elected into such a school?" or, "Will you advise me as to where I shall be likely to find a good school whose annual charges do not exceed twelve or fifteen guineas a year?" Such questions have come to me from strangers who have done me the favour to read some of my contributions to school literature; and, reading between the lines of their letters, I have judged the writers to be persons to whom the world has not been too lavish of its favours. In other words, my correspondents were of the number of those "to middle fortune born." They were, speaking generally, retired officers of the army and navy, a few professional and business men, with a sprinkling of literary toilers like myself: persons, in fact, of the Middle-classes.

That well-worn word of old-time respectability has seen but little service of late, having been somewhat elbowed out of the way by one of,

practically, the same meaning, with greater power to force its way into print—"the Working-man." The terms should be, and indeed are, in a sense, synonymous; though it may suit a political purpose, occasionally, to play off the rougher hard lot and straitened circumstances of the one against the smoother life and comparative comfort of the other. It would be a difficult matter precisely to define the limits of that great aggregate of English society known as the Middle-classes. In general, they may be supposed to include all ranks between the titled and landed aristocracy and those who earn a livelihood by manual labour. But so broad a definition can hardly be advanced without misgiving; and many exceptions might easily and fairly be taken to it. The boundaries which separate class from class in England are, in truth, so obscure and shifting, that to attempt to decide off-hand where one begins and another ends is to enter upon a task not likely to lead to any useful result, and of not much interest even if it were completed. Neither is such an inquiry pertinent to the matter in hand. The nice distinctions of society have nothing to do with the subject which I have to discuss, except in so far that this manual being specially intended for Middle-class people, it becomes essential to define the class in whose interest it has been written.

A recent writer on French politics has defined the Middle-classes of his country as follows: "The *rentiers*, persons living on the interest of their capital, and men who as masters or speculators gain by the labour of others." Now, if this definition were accepted as true of our own Middle-classes—and most assuredly it is not—it would serve my purpose briefly to say that this is exactly the class of persons I most wish to avoid. Such persons are in sufficiently easy circumstances to be well able to take care of themselves. But there is a very large section of English society, honourably and worthily bearing the title of gentlefolk, whose every-day needs are not one whit less pressing, or more easily met, than are those of the industrial classes below them. In its ranks will be found men and women of superior attainments, hard-working, energetic, thrifty, deserving. Their number will include not a few professional men, clergymen, doctors, and the like, with narrow means and large families; merchants in a small way of business and their clerks; and widow ladies left with children on their hands, who eke out a meagre subsistence by teaching, or receiving boarders, or letting lodgings—persons of honourable record with slender means. This is the class whose suffrages I humbly venture to solicit. It is a class that has no Board Schools (or, at least,