

**EDUCATION, AS A MEANS OF PREVENTING  
DESTITUTION: WITH EXEMPLIFICATIONS  
FROM THE TEACHING OF THE CONDITIONS  
OF WELL-BEING AND THE PRINCIPLES AND  
APPLICATIONS OF ECONOMICAL SCIENCE  
AT THE BIRKBECK SCHOOLS**

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Education, as a Means of Preventing Destitution: With Exemplifications from the Teaching of the Conditions of Well-Being and the Principles and Applications of Economical Science at the Birkbeck Schools by William Ellis

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**WILLIAM ELLIS**

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*John Deane Esq  
with the Author's  
kindest regards*

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AT THE

BIRKBECK SCHOOLS.

PREFACED BY A LETTER

TO THE

RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.

BY WILLIAM ELLIS,

AUTHOR OF THE "OUTLINES OF SOCIAL ECONOMY," ETC.



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EDUCATION  
AS A MEANS OF  
PREVENTING DESTITUTION.

TO THE RIGHT HON. LORD JOHN RUSSELL, M.P.

MY LORD,

I AM aware that it must be matter of more than ordinary importance, which alone can justify an obscure individual in trespassing upon your time and attention. When I state that the subject upon which I would trouble you is "Education," I think I may flatter myself, that you will not disdain to spare a few minutes for the consideration of what I would now venture to bring under your notice—especially if I add, what is well known to many in this metropolis and elsewhere, that I am not merely a talker or writer, but an actual worker in the great Educational harvest-field.

There is, I believe, among all who are taking an active part in the diffusion and improvement of Education, a common feeling of regret, for the deficiency, both in quality and quantity, of the Education acces-

sible to the masses of the people, and also for the backwardness and inability of parents to avail themselves, in behalf of their children, of the indifferent education offered for their acceptance.

No greater difficulty presents itself to the Educational philanthropist than this parental inability. It was dwelt upon at the late annual meeting of the British and Foreign School Society, presided over by your Lordship, and drew forth from you some observations far too valuable to be allowed to pass into oblivion, and which I beg to introduce here as reported in the *Times* newspaper of the following morning (13th May).

“ It has been said by some who have spoken to-day, and with great truth, that a parent is responsible for his children, and he should be called on to see that no son or daughter of his was ignorant of the truth of religion, nor of their duty to God and man. But, on the other hand, I think it might be said with great justice that the parent has had some excuse who was unable, without the aid of his children, to obtain sufficient bread for his family, or a home to shelter them from the inclemency of the weather, or clothes to dress them. These are wants which a parent might justly allege as grounds why he could not afford to give his children that education which they might otherwise reasonably demand. But I trust and hope, that as comforts are increasing, and I believe the means of the great mass of the people are greater than they have been, of providing for their necessaries and comforts of life—I trust and hope that you will perceive them more anxious for education. I think that there is not wanting in the people of this country the desire

of all moral and spiritual good, and that they will be anxious, when they have the means, to confer those blessings upon their children."

If it had been compatible with the narrow limits within which you were obliged to compress your remarks, you would, I dare say, have drawn a distinction between the parents of the present and the parents of the future. At all events, I entertain little doubt that you will agree with me that, among the parents of the present, most of those who are unable to do their duty by their children are the victims of neglected, indifferent, or mistaken education, as are the vagrants and criminals of society. They are, as your observations indirectly imply, deserving of the deepest commiseration from all right-minded people. Nevertheless, it is our duty to use every effort to circumscribe the misery which must result to society from the misconduct of these several parties. We apprehend vagrants, we confine criminals, we extend the hand of charity to unprotected children, and while smarting under the suffering thus inflicted upon us, and which we can do no more than mitigate in the present, ought we not to take precautions against the recurrence of similar suffering in the future?

As the existence of parents unable adequately to perform the parental duties is mostly a consequence of insufficient teaching and training, so a succession of improved parents can only be looked for after the means of education shall have been both improved and extended. I am not insensible to the difficulties that surround this question of the extension of education—the jealousies of the different religious denominations, and the dislike prevalent among most of them of seeing the secular