

**THE EDUCATION OF THE
PEOPLE: A LETTER
TO THE RIGHT HON.
SIR JOHN COLERIDGE**

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The Education of the People: A Letter to the Right Hon. Sir John Coleridge by Derwent Coleridge

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DERWENT COLERIDGE

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THE
EDUCATION OF THE PEOPLE.

A Letter

TO THE
RIGHT HON. SIR JOHN COLERIDGE.

WITH AN APPENDIX.

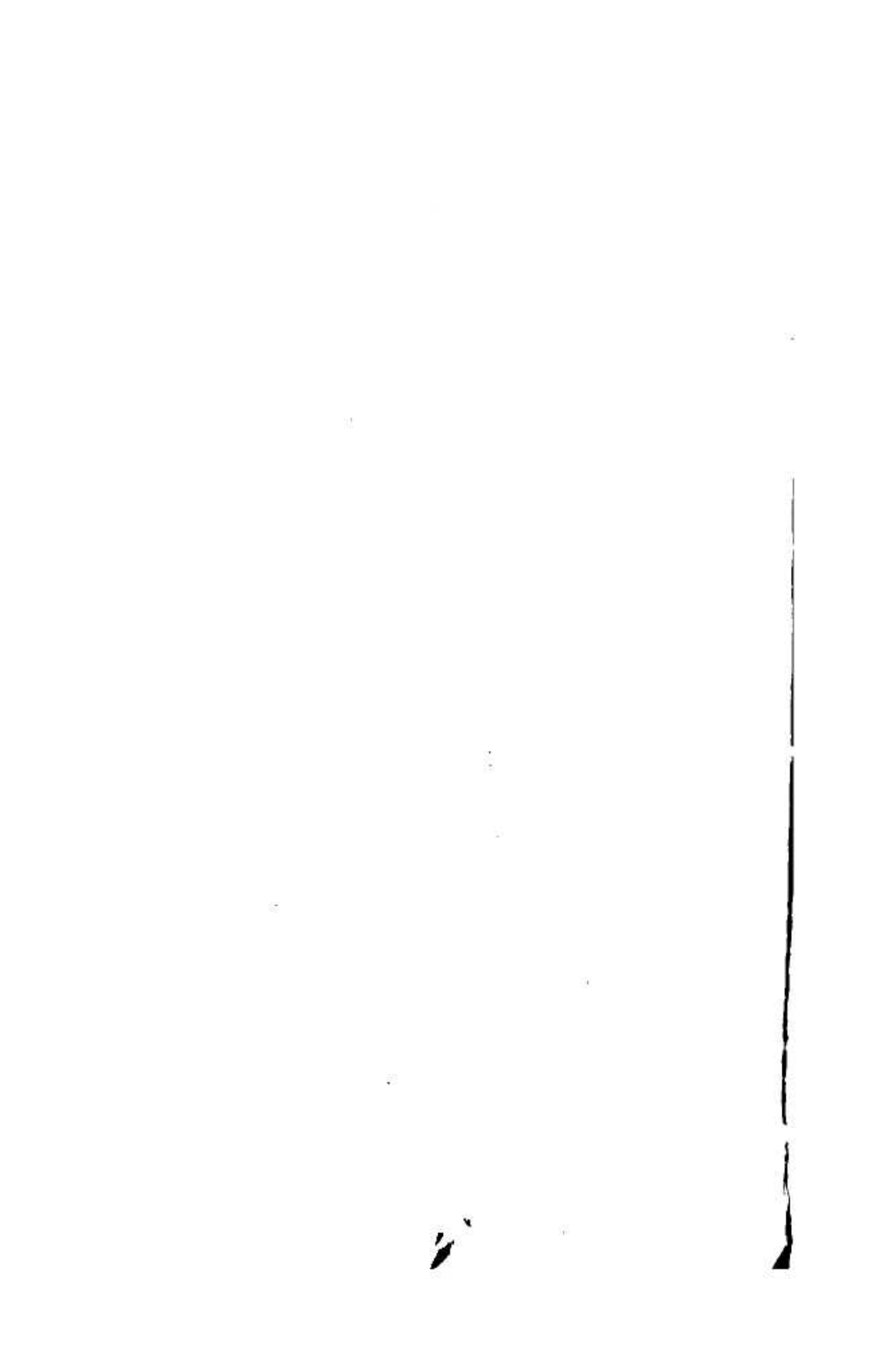
BY THE
REV. DERWENT COLERIDGE,
PRINCIPAL OF ST. MARE'S COLLEGE, CHELSEA,
AND PREBENDARY OF ST. PAUL'S CATHEDRAL.

"Natura infirmitatis humanae, tardiora sunt remedia, quam mala: et ut corpus lente augeant, cito extinguuntur, sic ingenia studiaque oppresseris facillius, quam revocaveris."—TACITUS, *Agricola*.

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1861.

THE following Letter was written, as will be apparent, with the unreserved freedom of a private communication, and may perhaps be read with more pleasure, if not with more indulgence, on that account. It is not necessary to detail the circumstances which have led to its publication so long after its date, except to state that, while it takes place with the entire concurrence of the person to whom it is addressed, the author alone is responsible for the statements and sentiments contained, whether in the Letter itself (now somewhat expanded), or in the Appendix. It will be observed that this Letter consists of two parts, of which the former records, in a brief summary, the author's judgment on the "Revised Code." Little that is wholly new can now be brought forward on this theme, but there is a certain value in independent confirmation, and even simple iteration is not without its use. The second part of the Letter points to a topic of more abiding interest, the state and progress of public opinion as connected with the education of the lower classes, and in particular with the training of the Elementary Schoolmaster. This will form the subject of a separate Tract by the same author, now nearly prepared for the press.



A

LETTER,

&c.

St. Mark's College, Chelsea,
Sept. 30th, 1861.

MY DEAR JOHN,

As a member of the late Educational Commission, you have doubtless considered, with some attention, the recent measure of the Privy Council, to which your voluminous and valuable Report has furnished, at least, the plea and occasion.

What do you think of it? The various grants to St. Mark's College will in all probability be diminished by more than £800; and though, together with the money, we may give up the corresponding advantages,—for instance, well-paid teachers, contenting ourselves with what can be got, or kept, at a much lower rate of remuneration,—yet there will remain at the least from £300 to £400 to be made up annually, how we can, or done without. The funds of the National Society will also, it appears, be lessened by the annual grant of £1000, hitherto appropriated to the support of its Training Colleges. Hence a serious deficiency will

arise, which there is little hope of making good, either by increased subscriptions, or by the reception of pupils, other than Queen's scholars, on remunerative terms.

It is further believed that the tendency and probable effect of the measure, will be to lower the standard of the instruction hitherto afforded in the College. It may even limit the ordinary period of training to a single year. In whatever degree these results are brought to pass, the education by which the Students are prepared for their mission will in my judgment be proportionally deteriorated.

When I look on the body of young men by whom I am surrounded, and consider what they are, morally, religiously, and intellectually, with the probable, taken as a whole the certain effect of their lives and labours, in the sphere, or spheres, in which they will move, I cannot but regard the present aspect of affairs with grave dissatisfaction.

With the prosperity of the Training College that of the Elementary School is closely connected; but with the prosperity of the Elementary School that of the Training School is inseparably bound up. How will the Revised Code affect the Elementary School?

It will doubtless diminish the money grants to each school generally, if not universally; but not in equal proportion. All, or nearly all, will lose something; very many schools a great deal, and this in the direct ratio of their need. The greater the difficulty, the less the help. It will discourage the instruction both of the younger and of the older

children, where most encouragement is wanted. It will aggravate the responsibilities, lessen the means, and weaken the authority of the managers. It will increase the invidiousness, the difficulty, and the expense of inspection to an indefinite extent. It will confirm, not relax, the dependency of the country upon the central government both for aid and guidance, while it renders the aid less effectual, and the guidance less beneficial—not to say positively hurtful. It ministers aid not in accordance with total, but with partial results, which it measures by a barely practicable, and most delusive test. It separates secular from religious studies, thus introducing a false and dangerous principle, encouraging the former by bounties while it protects the latter only by penalties, inoperative except in extreme cases.

Such is my judgment. The evidence on which it is based is supplied more or less fully by each and all of the many remonstrances which are issuing from every part of the country¹.

The present system is said to be objectionable in principle. Is there any educational principle against which, taken alone and without correction, no objection can be brought? Endowment, charitable aid, public subsidy, whether from a single or

¹ These remonstrances are drawn up, for the most part, with great judgment and moderation, by persons practically versed in the subject on which they treat. Many have appeared since this Letter was written. I would refer in particular to Mr. Bromby's Letter to Mr. Robert Lowe, and to Sir James P. Kay Shuttleworth's Letter to Lord Granville.

from local centres, the unfettered action of demand and supply, each of these principles is weak and faulty in itself, while under certain checks and in certain combinations it may be invaluable. Now the present scheme is in fact a mixed system, a balanced combination of many principles, the resultant of various forces²; constructed with great wisdom, and administered from the first with much skill, and, upon the whole, in a liberal spirit. No help can be given without creating some dependence, and dependence upon a central authority is not in itself a good; but whatever evil may be in this has been confined within the narrowest limits. The aid afforded has left free play to the religious element in education. It has stimulated, not repressed, private benevolence. It has increased, not diminished, the money payments drawn from the benefited classes. It has enlarged, and to some extent guided, public opinion, yet has left free room for individual preference. It has conciliated opposition and reconciled disagreement. Its very complexity, which calls for, and doubtless admits of simplification, though at the worst it would seem to be a matter of clerks and arrangement, indicates the care with which it is adapted to the various ends which it has to serve, the various needs which it has to supply. Simplicity in legislative enactment is often but another name for indiscriminate dealing.

The success of the system, whether measured by

² See Appendix, Note A.