

**NATIONAL EDUCATION;
ITS PRESENT STATE
AND PROSPECTS, IN
TWO VOLUMES, VOL. II**

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National education; its present state and prospects, in two volumes, Vol. II by Frederic Hill

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FREDERIC HILL.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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NATIONAL EDUCATION.

PRESENT STATE OF EDUCATION IN AMERICA.

NEXT to the question, "What is the state of education in our own islands?" perhaps the most interesting inquiry to an Englishman is, "What is its state in America?"

In considering this question, we should try practically to bear in mind the vast extent of the country; and to reflect how much one part differs from another in climate, population and even political institutions. Vast magnitudes shrink to a point as they enter the mind's eye. We talk familiarly of thousands of miles and of millions of acres, while our imagination is really unable to cope with hundreds of miles and thousands of acres. Hearing that a person is gone to America, raises much the same impression in the mind as the announcement that he is gone to Madeira, or any other spot of land. So, again, if two native Americans meet in an English party, we immediately entertain a vague kind of expectation that they will be found to know each other; forgetting that one of them may come from Boston and the other from New Orleans, a distance five times as great as that from London to Dublin.

It is only by forcing the mind to dwell on the extent of separation we have pointed out, and the endless

diversity of local circumstances which exists, that we can guard our imagination against assuming uniformity in the condition and degree of civilization among the people of different parts of a distant country.

In point of fact, the several states of America do differ essentially in all the characteristics of civilization, education, wealth, and morals:—nay, different parts of the same state afford strong contrasts. And this is what may reasonably be expected: indeed, it would be extraordinary if such were not the case. In our own country, which does not greatly exceed in size a single state in America, but in which the roads and other means of communication are better beyond comparison, a wide difference is apparent in the condition of the inhabitants of different districts. There was no danger of Northumberland, with its educated, thriving and contented peasantry, being seared by fires like those which disgraced Cambridgeshire, Sussex, and Kent, with their ignorant, turbulent and poverty-stricken population. The inhabitants of Birmingham felt secure in their persons and property, while the people of Bristol were at the mercy of a lawless mob.

In treating, then, of America, we must be very cautious against forming general conclusions from facts relating to particular towns or particular districts; and still more cautious when the facts regard only individuals in those towns or districts. Much that Mrs. Trollope says may be true without exaggeration; and yet there may be some millions of people in America who would compare advantageously in education, comfort, and morality,—in a word, in happiness, with those of Great Britain. On the other hand, Mr. Stuart's state-