

OPENING OF THE NEW BOARD SCHOOLS AT SALTAIRE

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The new schools erected by the Shipley School Board in Albert Road, which have been occupied for teaching about five weeks, were formally opened on Monday last, when the infants had tea in the school, and a public meeting of parents took place in the evening in the Victoria Hall of the Institute. The beautiful Hall was densely crowded, the area being set apart for the boys and girls, and the gallery allotted to the parents. Mr Titus Salt (Chairman of the Board) presided, and there were also on the platform Miss Stephens (mixed department), Miss Smith (infants' department), Mr C Glendenning (Huddersfield School Board), Mr Swire Smith (Keighley School Board), Messrs. James Fyfe and W H Ellis (Shipley School Board), Mr G Morrell, Mr Jon Shaw (Clerk to the Board) and others.

THE CHAIRMAN opened the meeting with a few remarks. He thought he had never seen the Hall so completely packed as on the present occasion; and he felt very much gratified, because it showed that the parents took an interest in the education of their children, and would be interested in what they might hear as to the manner in which the new schools at Saltaire were being conducted. When it became necessary to consider the planning of these schools, the Board entered very fully into the matter by visiting various schools up and down the country - London, Birmingham, Leeds and other places - and, gathering all the information possible, they arrived at a decision which he thought they should never regret - and which he was sure the parents would always be thankful to them for adopting - that the schools be conducted entirely on the classroom principle. Those who had visited the schools when open for inspection on Saturday would have noticed how they were planned - that every class was in a room apart from the other classes. After attending to other features adopted in conducting the schools, he said that of course only the future would prove whether they were right in the opinions formed. As far as he had been able to see, there was nothing to regret in the plan adopted, and he felt almost sure it would be a success. On visiting the schools today he found 1,000 children in attendance, which was very satisfactory considering the building had only been opened five weeks for teaching. Those who had children to manage knew that they were not always easily managed; but if they ever visited the new schools during teaching hours they would be surprised to find how wonderfully the children were controlled by Miss Stephens and her assistants. (Hear, hear). The principal thing that induced the Board to adopt the mixed plan was on account of the half-timers, who only attended school three hours per day, yet were expected to produce the same results as if in attendance a full day; therefore it had been decided to abolish the pupil teacher system and only employ efficient trained teachers. In Bradford no half timers were allowed to go to work who had not passed the second standard. He was afraid if this

policy was carried out in Shipley the parents would grumble very much indeed, but it would have to be done sometime in the future. There were almost two hundred children in the mixed school who were working half time and had not passed the second standard, so that if the regulations be carried out, those children would all have to be sent to school a full day, and their parents would be deprived of the earnings. He would allude to another feature connected with the half-timers and it was this. Those who were over thirteen years of age and had not passed the fourth standard were not allowed to go to work full time. He found they had about forty who were in this predicament. He wished to impress upon the parents the importance of helping the Board by sending their children to school young; by all means let them come to the infant school. They ought to be sent at three years of age; and there were some in the school younger than that. If sent to school young it would be not only easier for the children, but also easier for the teachers. He never visited a town but what he called to see the board schools; and what had been produced at Shipley would compare favourably with any he had seen. (Applause).

The children then sang 'Before all lands in east of west,' after which

MISS STEPHENS said: It is well known to you all that our plan is to educate the boys and girls together, and I will endeavour to show you that this mixed system is to be desired and encouraged. It is quite a new system in Shipley, and I dare say was never even dreamed of here a short time ago. But why? Is it not the natural order of things? Are not boys and girls brought up together when belonging to the same family? Do they not work side by side at the mill? Will they not associate with each other and have common ties and interests when they grow up? Then why not educate them together, to fit them for such companionship? It is a well-known and constantly admitted fact that boys without sisters are less refined than those who have been more fortunate in this respect; and girls who have no brothers are often more timid, shy, and nervous than those who have been accustomed to the society of boys. I have no doubt there are many people who, knowing the roughnecks of the generality of boys, would be afraid to trust their girls among them. I admit that unless the buildings are specially constructed (as ours are) for such a system, and the school is skilfully managed, there may be much reason in such hesitation. The mixed system is not an untried one. It has been long common in Scotland and America, and has proved most successful in both countries. A Scotch inspector remarked a short time ago, that 'it will certainly not decline in Scotland, for it is based on nature, has excellent results under good teachers, and will increase in extent.' So far from mixed schools being conducive to harm, I believe that many of the evils common among young men and women arise from the sexes being separated in youth - or, rather, separated as regards their education. If they work together and associate with one another, they should be trained together, taught to be courteous and polite to one another, taught to help and bear with each other, taught to speak

politely and to behave in every way as educated, civilised beings. I have only had charge of your children for five weeks, but I can already see some improvement, and I hope you can too. It will be a work of time to smooth the roughness of speech and manner, I know, but it can and must be done. - After referring to the roughness and rudeness of the children, particularly in the streets, and asking the parents to assist her in mending matters, Miss Stephens went on to say: A parent's influence ought to be the greatest, and a teacher's the next. Let us use that influence for good while we can. Ere long they will be out of your power. Will you set them a good example at home? Will you encourage and help them? If so, my task will be easy indeed. - Various ways in which parents may render valuable assistance to teachers having been communicated, Miss Stephens concluded: It is my intention to lead, not drive, my boys and girls. I want to win their love and entire confidence. I want them to feel that I and the teachers under me are their friends, and that we sympathise with them and wish them well. We shall try to cultivate their better feelings, and what a great conquest we shall achieve if we can teach them to do right because it is right and not from fear. Many people forget that children are thinking, reasoning beings, capable of right motives and actions. I am very much afraid the children too often get a blow before a word, to save time; but those who will spend a little time in reasoning with a child will find they have not cast pearls before swine. - Having thanked the audience for their attention, Miss Stephens resumed her seat amid loud applause.

After some more singing,

MR C GLENDENNING was called upon to speak. Having expressed admiration for the fine building in which they were met, and said that there was nothing to equal it at Huddersfield, he remarked that there seemed to be a bitter irony in inviting him to be present. He felt that he was there to exemplify one of the Christian graces - 'Rejoice with them that rejoice, and weep with them that weep.' He supposed they wanted him to rejoice with them because they had found a good teacher and Huddersfield had lost one. (Applause). He was very glad indeed that they had got a good teacher. He knew they had; and before they had been to the school under Miss Stephens' care half the length of time she had been at Huddersfield, he was quite sure they would be of the same opinion as himself. But there had been such a wholesale robbery going on; the Shipley Board had stolen two of Huddersfield's best teachers (laughter); and when he arrived at Saltaire today a gentleman had the audacity to ask him if they had any more good teachers at Huddersfield. (Renewed laughter). He was sure - although it was uphill work, after all, to wish them well - that in the interests of the children and in the interests of education, he wished Miss Stephens and Miss Smith every success under the Shipley Board. (Applause). He did not think the parents knew exactly the advantages of employing good teachers. When at home, it was part of his duty to look after the finances of the School Board, and wicked

folks in Huddersfield 'dubbed' him 'Chancellor of the Exchequer.' (Laughter). Well, he had noticed that an incompetent teacher was dear at any price, and they could not give too much for a good teacher. In Shipley they had had the common sense to give a price that had tempted two teachers away from Huddersfield. He was sorry that such fine young ladies should have so much regard for filthy lucre. (Laughter). He thought they were very comfortable at Huddersfield, they could not have been doing much better, for one of the members of the Board had offered to build them a house, fit it up, and make them as comfortable as if they were married, barring their husbands. (Great laughter). At Huddersfield, the children in Miss Stephens' school had earned the highest grant from Government; and it was a new school, she made it from the beginning and left it in a very creditable condition indeed. Miss Stephens had earned, as an average per child, six shillings more than the average in Board schools throughout the country. (Applause). If she could earn as much with the children at Saltaire the Board would find a great saving of money; and he apprehended that, after all, the paramount thing would be - What sort of a School Board rate are we going to have? And the way to have a low rate, he maintained, was to get the best teachers available; and if they intended to have competent ones they would have to pay for them. (Applause). Some people said - We have no children, why should we pay for others? This, in his opinion, was a very foolish way to talk. Some said their children should not go to a Board school, it was not good enough. Mr Glendenning would remind such people that lunatic asylums were built, and everybody had to pay for them whether they sent anyone there or not. If only those who used them paid for them, it would be an awkward matter indeed. Board schools were built for the good of the country - of the State. It was not in the interest of an individual child, it was because the Government of this country found that continental nations were going ahead of us; and that if we want to increase the prosperity and wealth of our country we must have an educated class of workingmen. It was in order to protect the State that these schools were called into existence, just the same as the army and the navy. And if it was for the good of the State to protect its interests, then the State ought to pay. But he held, at the same time, that these national schools ought to be free; and he believed, as Mr Forster had said to him, that if the people would only pay a little more attention to the question and make known their opinions, it would not be long before the national schools are free. Before sitting down, he would supplement what Miss Stephens had said about home influence. She had made appeals to the parents which he thought they could not resist, and he hoped Miss Stephens would have their co-operation at home in carrying out what she had said for the good of the children.

MISS SMITH then made a few observations on the Kindergarten system of teaching. She said - I am glad of this opportunity of speaking to the parents of the children who are about to be placed under my charge. It so often happens that there is too little sympathy between

parents and teachers. My desire is to secure yours, and as the first step towards gaining it, I wish to acquaint you with my plan and aim. It is intended in the infants' department to carry out the Kindergarten system, and for this purpose the furniture in the school is specially adapted. The words are German, and signify 'Children's Garden,' because as a gardener watches the growth of his plants or the unfolding of a bud, so the teacher tends her human flowers, observing the expansion of their faculties, and always having their welfare at heart. Having referred to the origin and founder of the Kindergarten system, which was fully explained by Mr Titus Salt in an address on this subject published by us a short time ago, Miss Smith remarked: In twisting and folding of paper, plating mats, laying sticks &c., Fröbel follows the order of nature, proceeding from one foundation, and unfolding step by step from the simple to the complicated. I would suggest that you question your children concerning their work at school, that you may know what we are doing, as well as keep up their interest and cultivate their habit of attention. You will perhaps be astonished to discover that after your boy has been at school a year he does not know his letters. I beg you to notice this warning, for I do not intend to teach him to read till he is five years old, and then he will not commence by learning his letters, but will be taught on the phonic method. So you will probably hear him often making what you may consider strange sounds; but I guarantee that he will read well at the end of the year, and understand the rules of reading. Our aim in the education of your children is threefold. We try to lay such foundations that there shall be nothing to uproot and undo when our pupils enter the senior school, and when they commence their employment in the world. We train them so that their present occupations may be of use to them in their various situations. 'To do is better than to know' is one of our mottoes. Our ancestors learnt by experience to weave, build, model &c., &c. We wish to teach our children to be practical men and women, and not only to give them instruction which may be forgotten or drop away like a plaster laid on the outside. We draw out their observation by making them think for themselves and individuality of character is developed by allowing free use to the powers of invention. Lastly, we wish to benefit the soul by implanting such a love of harmony in nature that the child's thoughts may be lifted to God through His works and wonders. 'Love wins love,' and will, I hope, be the sunshine of our school. To gain the affections of these little ones we need much assistance. We have a beautiful room to work in. I feel sure of help from the Board, and earnestly appeal to you for yours; but, above all, we must seek for it at the source. Coleridge points out to the teacher in the following lines:-

Alas, thou surely may'st expect some evils to endure,
E'en children's faults are hard to bear and harder still to cure.
Desirest thou a teacher's work? Ask wisdom from above;
It is a work of toil, of care, of patience, and of love.
Ask for an understanding heart, to rule in godly fear
The feeble flock o'er which the Lord hath made thee overseer.

MR SWIRE SMITH was the next speaker. He said it was his privilege two or three months ago to be present at an entertainment in the same hall of a very interesting character, and he went from Saltaire that evening very much impressed with what he had seen. It was now his pleasure to visit them again, and he thought this occasion even more interesting than the last. He could but congratulate the parents present upon the healthy look and tidy appearance of the children, and the teachers upon the great order maintained. It had been his privilege to see many schools in different parts of the country and also in other countries. He remembered sometime ago being very much impressed with the schools he saw in the cantons of Switzerland. Switzerland, as most of them knew, was a country very much locked in by mountains, a country of very poor resources - not a single mine, or canal, or navigable river; but in spite of all these drawbacks, the country was very thriving and prosperous. If they would inquire into the singular working of society there, they would come to the conclusion which he had come to, that very much of this prosperity was due to the great interest taken in education of the young. It seemed that all classes there agreed upon this - that the young children shall have a good start in life, that their minds shall be fully trained. Switzerland had some of the finest schools to be found anywhere in this world. Such was the result of their training upon the people, that although great depression of trade existed all over the world, it was felt less in Switzerland than in most other countries, because of the higher civilisation which the people had attained through their schools. He had wondered whether such a state of education could be arrived at in England; and had pictured to himself that perhaps in thirty or forty years we might attain to something here equal to what may be found in Switzerland. To his great delight he could come to Saltaire today and find a system of educational provision, at any rate, which seemed to be altogether equal to the system organised in Switzerland. (Applause). There they had elementary and secondary schools that artisans could attend; and higher technical colleges, all free to those who could attend them. By this means they had found out one great fact - not only that education and industrial supremacy go together, but also, in taking a moral aspect of the question, that just as the education rates go up, so in proportion poor and police rates and prison rates go down. (Applause). He wished to say a few words of advice to the parents. There were a great many people in England - he dared say in Shipley and Saltaire as well as in Keighley - who were far more anxious for low rates than for good schools. They say - if you give a poor boy a good education you altogether unfit him for the position in which it has pleased God to place him. A friend of his, Mr Smith said, was visiting a village not a hundred miles from Saltaire, where there was a new Board School. One of the villagers said - It is sadly too good for poor folk. It's good enough for gentlemen's sons. With all the shortcomings of the people, he (Mr Smith) was sure they wished to have their sons in every respect gentlemen, and he thought they wished equally

as much to have their daughters in every respect ladies. A boy might be a blacksmith or a woolsorter, but it was his character that made him a gentleman.

'Honour and shame from no condition rise;
Act well your part: there all the honour lies.'

They must look at the matter of education in a rational light. If they did so they would come to the conclusion that the improvement of the individual was not only to the individual himself, but to the society of which that individual forms a part. He once visited a village, on a nobleman's estate, where there was one of the best schools he had ever seen. The agent, who went round with him, said - If the owner of this estate had been thinking of himself only, he would never have built so splendid a school, or maintained it at such a cost, for the moment the children leave school, and get to the age when they look out for themselves, instead of staying on the estate, they go off to the towns to get higher education, leaving nothing but the clodhoppers to work on the estate. The moral of all this, Mr Smith pointed out, was that young men and women, because of the better education they received, were able to get better employment than the ignorant people left behind. He had not the smallest doubt, as far as Saltaire and other factories were concerned, that the intelligent would have the preference. If they wanted to keep their children down, to guarantee that they should have no lofty aspirations, they could do so by keeping them in ignorance. But if, on the other hand, they desired them to be manly, free and independent, that their faculties should be developed, so that one having five talents should be able to go forth into the world and get five more, and leave the world better than they found it, give them intelligence. Send them to school regularly and punctually, and they would be able to start in life more advantageously than many by whom they were surrounded. (Applause).

After a few words from Mr Fyfe, the evening closed with a lantern exhibition, during which Mrs Jenkins presided at the piano.