CHAPTER I
Of the Expenses of the Sovereign or Commonwealth

PART 3
Of the Expense of Public Works and Public Institutions

ARTICLE II
Of the Expense of the Institutions for the Education of Youth

There are no public institutions for the education of women, and there is accordingly nothing useless, absurd, or fantastical in the common course of their education. They are taught what their parents or guardians judge it necessary or useful for them to learn, and they are taught nothing else. Every part of their education tends evidently to some useful purpose; either to improve the natural attractions of their person, or to form their mind to reserve, to modesty, to chastity, and to economy; to render them both likely to become the mistresses of a family, and to behave properly when they have become such. In every part of her life a woman feels some conveniency or advantage from every part of her education. It seldom happens that a man, in any part of his life, derives any conveniency or advantage from some of the most laborious and troublesome parts of his education.

Ought the public, therefore, to give no attention, it may be asked, to the education of the people? Or if it ought to give any, what are the different parts of education which it ought to attend to in the different orders of the people? and in what manner ought it to attend to them?

In some cases the state of the society necessarily places the greater part of individuals in such situations as naturally form in them, without any attention of government, almost all the abilities and virtues which that state requires, or perhaps can admit of. In other cases the state of the society does not place the part of individuals in such situations, and some attention of government is necessary in order to prevent the almost entire corruption and degeneracy of the great body of the people.

In the progress of the division of labour, the employment of the far greater part of those who live by labour, that is, of the great body of the people, comes to be confined to a few very simple operations, frequently to one or two. But the understandings of the greater part of men are necessarily formed by their ordinary employments. The man whose whole life is spent in performing a few simple operations, of which the effects are perhaps always the same, or very nearly the same, has no occasion to exert his understanding or to exercise his invention in finding out expedients for removing difficulties which never occur. He naturally loses, therefore, the habit of such exertion, and generally becomes as stupid and ignorant as it is possible for a human creature to become. The torpor of his mind renders him not only incapable of relishing or bearing a part in any rational conversation, but of conceiving any generous, noble, or tender sentiment, and consequently of forming any just judgment concerning many even of the ordinary duties of private life. Of the great and extensive interests of his country he is altogether incapable of judging, and
unless very particular pains have been taken to render him otherwise, he is equally incapable of defending his country in war. The uniformity of his stationary life naturally corrupts the courage of his mind, and makes him regard with abhorrence the irregular, uncertain, and adventurous life of a soldier. It corrupts even the activity of his body, and renders him incapable of exerting his strength with vigour and perseverance in any other employment than that to which he has been bred. His dexterity at his own particular trade seems, in this manner, to be acquired at the expense of his intellectual, social, and martial virtues. But in every improved and civilised society this is the state into which the labouring poor, that is, the great body of the people, must necessarily fall, unless government takes some pains to prevent it.

It is otherwise in the barbarous societies, as they are commonly called, of hunters, of shepherds, and even of husbandmen in that rude state of husbandry which precedes the improvement of manufactures and the extension of foreign commerce. In such societies the varied occupations of every man oblige every man to exert his capacity and to invent expedients for removing difficulties which are continually occurring. Invention is kept alive, and the mind is not suffered to fall into that drowsy stupidity which, in a civilised society, seems to benumb the understanding of almost all the inferior ranks of people. In those barbarous societies, as they are called, every man, it has already been observed, is a warrior. Every man, too, is in some measure a statesman, and can form a tolerable judgment concerning the interest of the society and the conduct of those who govern it. How far their chiefs are good judges in peace, or good leaders in war, is obvious to the observation of almost every single man among them. In such a society, indeed, no man can well acquire that improved and refined understanding which a few men sometimes possess in a more civilised state. Though in a rude society there is a good deal of variety in the occupations of every individual, there is not a great deal in those of the whole society. Every man does, or is capable of doing, almost every thing which any other man does, or is capable of doing. Every man has a considerable degree of knowledge, ingenuity, and invention: but scarce any man has a great degree. The degree, however, which is commonly possessed, is generally sufficient for conducting the whole simple business of the society. In a civilised state, on the contrary, though there is little variety in the occupations of the greater part of individuals, there is an almost infinite variety in those of the whole society. These varied occupations present an almost infinite variety of objects to the contemplation of those few, who, being attached to no particular occupation themselves, have leisure and inclination to examine the occupations of other people. The contemplation of so great a variety of objects necessarily exercises their minds in endless comparisons and combinations, and renders their understandings, in an extraordinary degree, both acute and comprehensive. Unless those few, however, happen to be placed in some very particular situations, their great abilities, though honourable to themselves, may contribute very little to the good government or happiness of their society. Notwithstanding the great abilities of those few, all the nobler parts of the human character may be, in a great measure, obliterated and extinguished in the great body of the people.

The education of the common people requires, perhaps, in a civilised and commercial society the attention of the public more than that of people of some rank and fortune. People of some rank and fortune are generally eighteen or nineteen years of age before they enter upon that particular business, profession, or trade, by which they propose to distinguish themselves in the world. They have before that full time to acquire, or at least to fit themselves for afterwards acquiring, every accomplishment which can recommend them to
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the public esteem, or render them worthy of it. Their parents or guardians are
generally sufficiently anxious that they should be so accomplished, and are, in
most cases, willing enough to lay out the expense which is necessary for that
purpose. If they are not always properly educated, it is seldom from the want of
expense laid out upon their education, but from the improper application of that
expense. It is seldom from the want of masters, but from the negligence and
incapacity of the masters who are to be had, and from the difficulty, or rather
from the impossibility, which there is in the present state of things of finding
any better. The employments, too, in which people of some rank or fortune
spend the greater part of their lives are not, like those of the common people,
simple and uniform. They are almost all of them extremely complicated, and
such as exercise the head more than the hands. The understandings of those
who are engaged in such employments can seldom grow torpid for want of
exercise. The employments of people of some rank and fortune, besides, are
seldom such as harass them from morning to night. They generally have a good
deal of leisure, during which they may perfect themselves in every branch
either of useful or ornamental knowledge of which they may have laid the
foundation, or for which they may have acquired some taste in the earlier part
of life.

It is otherwise with the common people. They have little time to spare for
education. Their parents can scarce afford to maintain them even in infancy. As
soon as they are able to work they must apply to some trade by which they can
earn their subsistence. That trade, too, is generally so simple and uniform as to
give little exercise to the understanding, while, at the same time, their labour is
both so constant and so severe, that it leaves them little leisure and less
inclination to apply to, or even to think of, anything else.

But though the common people cannot, in any civilised society, be so well
instructed as people of some rank and fortune, the most essential parts of
education, however, to read, write, and account, can be acquired at so early a
period of life that the greater part even of those who are to be bred to the
lowest occupations have time to acquire them before they can be employed in
those occupations. For a very small expense the public can facilitate, can
encourage, and can even impose upon almost the whole body of the people the
necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education.

The public can facilitate this acquisition by establishing in every parish or
district a little school, where children may be taught for a reward so moderate
that even a common labourer may afford it; the master being partly, but not
wholly, paid by the public, because, if he was wholly, or even principally, paid
by it, he would soon learn to neglect his business. In Scotland the
establishment of such parish schools has taught almost the whole common
people to read, and a very great proportion of them to write and account. In
England the establishment of charity schools has had an effect of the same
kind, though not so universally, because the establishment is not so universal.
If in those little schools the books, by which the children are taught to read,
were a little more instructive than they commonly are, and if, instead of a little
smattering of Latin, which the children of the common people are sometimes
taught there, and which can scarce ever be of any use to them, they were
instructed in the elementary parts of geometry and mechanics, the literary
education of this rank of people would perhaps be as complete as it can be.
There is scarce a common trade which does not afford some opportunities of
applying to it the principles of geometry and mechanics, and which would not
therefore gradually exercise and improve the common people in those
principles, the necessary introduction to the most sublime as well as to the
most useful sciences.

The public can encourage the acquisition of those most essential parts of education by giving small premiums, and little badges of distinction, to the children of the common people who excel in them.

The public can impose upon almost the whole body of the people the necessity of acquiring those most essential parts of education, by obliging every man to undergo an examination or probation in them before he can obtain the freedom in any corporation, or be allowed to set up any trade either in a village or town corporate.

It was in this manner, by facilitating the acquisition of their military and gymnastic exercises, by encouraging it, and even by imposing upon the whole body of the people the necessity of learning those exercises, that the Greek and Roman republics maintained the martial spirit of their respective citizens. They facilitated the acquisition of those exercises by appointing a certain place for learning and practising them, and by granting to certain masters the privilege of teaching in that place. Those masters do not appear to have had either salaries or exclusive privileges of any kind. Their reward consisted altogether in what they got from their scholars; and a citizen who had learnt his exercises in the public gymnasia had no sort of legal advantage over one who had learnt them privately, provided the latter had learnt them equally well. Those republics encouraged the acquisition of those exercises by bestowing little premiums and badges of distinction upon: those who excelled in them. To have gained a prize in the Olympic, Isthmian, or Nemeaean games, gave illustration, not only to the person who gained it, but to his whole family and kindred. The obligation which every citizen was under to serve a certain number of years, if called upon, in the armies of the republic, sufficiently imposed the necessity of learning those exercises, without which he could not be fit for that service.

That in the progress of improvement the practice of military exercises, unless government takes proper pains to support it, goes gradually to decay, and, together with it, the martial spirit of the great body of the people, the example of modern Europe sufficiently demonstrates. But the security of every society must always depend, more or less, upon the martial spirit of the great body of the people. In the present times, indeed, that martial spirit alone, and unsupported by a well-disciplined standing army, would not perhaps be sufficient for the defence and security of any society. But where every citizen had the spirit of a soldier, a smaller standing army would surely be requisite. That spirit, besides, would necessarily diminish very much the dangers to liberty, whether real or imaginary, which are commonly apprehended from a standing army. As it would very much facilitate the operations of that army against a foreign invader, so it would obstruct them as much if, unfortunately, they should ever be directed against the constitution of the state.

The ancient institutions of Greece and Rome seem to have been much more effectual for maintaining the martial spirit of the great body of the people than the establishment of what are called the militias of modern times. They were much more simple. When they were once established they executed themselves, and it required little or no attention from government to maintain them in the most perfect vigour. Whereas to maintain, even in tolerable execution, the complex regulations of any modern militia, requires the continual and painful attention of government, without which they are constantly falling into total neglect and disuse. The influence, besides, of the ancient institutions was much more universal. By means of them the whole
body of the people was completely instructed in the use of arms. Whereas it is
but a very small part of them who can ever be so instructed by the regulations
of any modern militia, except, perhaps, that of Switzerland. But a coward, a
man incapable either of defending or of revenging himself, evidently wants one
of the most essential parts of the character of a man. He is as much mutilated
and deformed in his mind as another is in his body, who is either deprived of
some of its most essential members, or has lost the use of them. He is evidently
the more wretched and miserable of the two; because happiness and misery,
which reside altogether in the mind, must necessarily depend more upon the
healthful or unhealthful, the mutilated or entire state of the mind, than upon
that of the body. Even though the martial spirit of the people were of no use
towards the defence of the society, yet to prevent that sort of mental mutilation,
deformity, and wretchedness, which cowardice necessarily involves in it, from
spreading themselves through the great body of the people, would still deserve
the most serious attention of government, in the same manner as it would
deserve its most serious attention to prevent a leprosy or any other loathsome
and offensive disease, though neither mortal nor dangerous, from spreading
itself among them, though perhaps no other public good might result from such
attention besides the prevention of so great a public evil.

The same thing may be said of the gross ignorance and stupidity which, in a
civilised society, seem so frequently to benumb the understandings of all the
inferior ranks of people. A man without the proper use of the intellectual
faculties of a man, is, if possible, more contemptible than even a coward, and
seems to be mutilated and deformed in a still more essential part of the
character of human nature. Though the state was to derive no advantage from
the instruction of the inferior ranks of people, it would still deserve its attention
that they should not be altogether uninstructed. The state, however, derives no
inconsiderable advantage from their instruction. The more they are instructed
the less liable they are to the delusions of enthusiasm and superstition, which,
among ignorant nations, frequently occasion the most dreadful disorders. An
instructed and intelligent people, besides, are always more decent and orderly
than an ignorant and stupid one. They feel themselves, each individually, more
respectable and more likely to obtain the respect of their lawful superiors, and
they are therefore more disposed to respect those superiors. They are more
disposed to examine, and more capable of seeing through, the interested
complaints of faction and sedition, and they are, upon that account, less apt to
be misled into any wanton or unnecessary opposition to the measures of
government. In free countries, where the safety of government depends very
much upon the favourable judgment which the people may form of its conduct,
it must surely be of the highest importance that they should not be disposed to
judge rashly or capriciously concerning it.