

THE THREE R'S.*

YOU must own, Mrs Bull, that your family's large,
 Say, some two or three millions at least ;
 And so many small children must prove a great charge,
 Which of late has been strangely increased.
 To their schooling, of course, we must carefully see,
 Or a slur on us both it will fling :
 But, as all of the lot cannot gentlefolks be,
 Why, I think, the three R's is the thing.

One lad must be keeping the cow from the corn,
 Or must wait on the wandering sheep :
 Another must double Cape Wrath or Cape Horn—
 A cabin-boy far on the deep.
 As soon as the plumes on their pinions grow strong,
 From the nest they are sure to take wing ;
 So their time with the schoolmaster cannot be long,
 And 'tis clear the three R's is the thing.

* There is no intention here to advocate generally a low rate of education. But it seems doubtful if general *compulsion* is allowable, or is likely to be allowed, except for essentials.

To read well their Bible, to write to a friend,
And to cast up a common account,—
This is easily taught, and though this were the end,
'Tis a boon of no slender amount.
Would they learn Mathematics, or Grammar, or
Greek,
E'en supposing we gave them their swing?
Or would these make them fitter a service to seek?
No, no; the three R's is the thing.

Would you deck out a daughter in satin and silk,
Who must work for the bread she's to eat?
Would you send out your maids to the cow-house to
milk,
With fine kid-leather shoes on their feet?
Should your ploughboys, like folks at the playhouse, be
dressed,
As if only to dance and to sing?
No! such tawdry attire would but make them a jest:
So again, the three R's is the thing.

Then, my dear, there's a matter I've lately observed,
Makes me sorely our system distrust:
'Tis that some boys are stuffed, while the others are
starved,
Which is cruel as well as unjust.

To the general mass, to the average class,

We should knowledge and nourishment bring :

Give them plain wholesome fare, but let each have a
share ;

And for *that* the three R's is the thing.