Inquire Within Upon Everything.

"Nothing is so easy as the invention of yesterday," is a truism of particular force when brought in connection with the Universal Knowledge and Information Office, situated in Southampton-street, Bloomsbury. The history of this remarkable institution is brief but curious, since it differs from all similar undertakings in the fact that it is neither a commercial nor a money speculation. The establishment of a Universal Knowledge and Information Office is entirely due to Lord Truro, who started the office with the double object of benefiting the public and providing a new opening for the employment of women. "It was my idea," said the founder of the bureau, "to found a central office, where any person could have any question answered without delay, where researches into literature, science, and art could be conducted, where all languages could be written or transposed, calculations be made, and statistics be kept available." Such an institution is
now in a flourishing state of existence, and its work is as various as it is interesting. The system of arrangement is simple. Correspondents have been appointed in every town throughout the world. Its interior working is divided into departments, each comprising a range of subjects, from agriculture to Hindustani and from literature to engineering. A large staff, comprising over 30 persons, is kept on the premises, and among them are linguists capable of writing and translating every tongue from Welsh to Japanese, and from Portuguese to Greek. One is a practical chemist, another an engineer, while among the rest are artists, designers, ladies well up in the various kinds of fine work, tapestry, &c., and gentlemen of liberal education and literary knowledge for general research. Besides these, some 200 others are employed on various errands. A large staff is kept making researches at the British Museum, another at the Guildhall Library. In short, there is no branch of knowledge, language, or subject on which immediate information cannot be given, provided it is not a question requiring lengthy research. There are, however, two things which the office will not do, and about these Lord Truro, who, personally superintends the bureau every day, is very particular. The first relates to questions of a detective or inquisitive character; the second rule lays down that the office shall not interfere with any of the professions. The arrangements in Southampton-street are admirable, but, although established only in January, 1884, the work has outgrown the space allotted to it, and larger premises will have to be shortly sought. Several hundred
letters are received every morning, and more continue to pour in throughout the day. Every letter is at once attended to, and put into the hands of the lady or gentlemen in whose department the inquiry may be. The questions are next registered in a book, and the answer when sent is also recorded. They comprise every subject, known or unknown. Languages to be translated into English and back again—and we may here note that a very large number of queries come from abroad. The payment for these foreign questions is generally made in money or stamps of the country from which the letters come, and in this way Lord Truro has acquired a large and curious collection of foreign money and stamps. Among those are Russian roubles, Roumanian 30 lei pieces, Italian lire, German gulden, American notes, and Spanish dollars, to say nothing of rupees and postage stamps galore.