

THE

IRISH EDUCATION QUESTION.

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THE subject of national education may be regarded from either of two points of view—the political or strictly educational—as connected with the wider and more fundamental topics of the sphere and duties of Government, or with reference to the principles upon which education, claiming to be national, should be based. The solution of both these problems should doubtless be included, as essential elements, in any discussion of the subject which pretended to be exhaustive. But for the present, our object is of a more special kind. We propose to consider the question of national education in Ireland in connexion with the recent controversies to which it has given occasion; and for this purpose it will not be necessary that we should travel beyond the purely educational aspects of the case. The subject will properly divide itself into two distinct branches; one involving the question of primary education for the masses; the other, those higher forms of education to the benefits of which the wealthier portions of a nation can alone aspire.

In order to understand the present position of education in Ireland, it is necessary that we should take a short historic retrospect of the stages through which it has been reached. At the commencement of the present century, notwithstanding the

* 1. "Reports of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland." Dublin. 1834—58.

2. "Parliamentary Debates on the Colleges (Ireland) Bill." Hansard. 1845.

3. "Report of the President of Queen's College, Galway." 1856.

4. "Report of the Queen's Colleges Commission." 1858.

5. "The Queen's University and the Queen's Colleges." By a Professor. London. 1859.

6. "The Calendar of the Queen's University in Ireland." Dublin. 1860.

7. "Addresses delivered at Meetings of the Senate of the Queen's University to confer Degrees, by the Right Hon. Maziere Brady, Vice-Chancellor of the University." Dublin. 1859.

backward state of the country, alike in its material and mental aspects, it would seem that a sort of intellectual activity prevailed to a considerable extent among the people. A certain demand for education existed, and a certain supply was forthcoming; but unfortunately, as the demand was made in entire ignorance of the nature and scope of that which was required, so the supply was answerable to the demand; and the education given was a curse rather than a blessing. This education was procured mainly by voluntary exertion. In many parts of the country it was carried on in evening schools, to which the children of parents too poor to spare their services during the day were sent, and where they picked up, in an indifferent manner, and blended with much that was dangerous, the merest rudiments of knowledge. The progress, however, which the movement was making was such as to convince those most competent to judge, that it could not be simply arrested, and that if it was to be diverted from its course, it must be provided with another channel—that, in effect, the question did not lie between knowledge and ignorance, but between knowledge which was sound and useful, and knowledge which was shallow and pernicious. Such was the condition of affairs in 1806, when a Royal Commission was appointed to inquire into, and report upon, the subject. In their report, which was not published till 1812, the Commissioners, fully recognising the imperative necessity of the case, recommended that the question of national education for Ireland should be taken up by the Government.

It was thus absolutely necessary that the State should interpose, and the only question was, by what principle its action should be guided. On this important point the Commission which we have mentioned was not silent. It recommended the adoption of “a system which, while it should afford the opportunities of education to every description of the lower classes of the people, might at the same time, by keeping clear of interference with the particular religious tenets of any, induce the whole to receive its benefits as one undivided body, under one and the same system, and in the same establishments.” And the Commissioners go on to observe:—

“We conceive this—to disclaim and effectually guard against all interference with the particular religious tenets of those who are to receive instruction—to be of essential importance in any new establishment for the lower classes in Ireland, and we venture to express our unanimous opinion, that no such plan, however wisely and unexceptionably contrived in other respects, can be carried into effectual execution in this country, unless it be explicitly avowed, and clearly understood, as its leading principle, that no attempt shall be made to influence or disturb the peculiar religious tenets of any sect of Christians.”

This recommendation is signed by the highest dignitaries of the Established Church, and is remarkable as well on account of the source from which it emanates, as from being the first of a *catena* of authorities for the principle upon which the National System of Education was subsequently based.

Unfortunately the Government of the day, instead of instituting a public board of education, as had been recommended by the Commissioners, sought to carry out their suggestions through the agency of a private society, familiarly known as the Kildare Place Society, the leading principle of which was entirely at variance with the principle which had been so wisely laid down. The fundamental rule of the Kildare Place Society was, that the reading of the Scriptures should be obligatory upon all receiving instruction—a regulation ill-adapted, one would imagine, for recommending education to a Roman Catholic community; and such in the event it proved. The Kildare Place Society was found wholly unequal to the task it had undertaken. In 1824, when there had been fully time to test the efficiency of the system, the result was as follows. The total number receiving instruction in the Society's schools was 56,201, of whom 26,237 were Protestants, and 29,964 Roman Catholics; figures the full significance of which, with reference to the principle of the Society, will be better understood when we add, that while this small fraction alone of the Roman Catholic population were availing themselves of the *gratuitous* instruction given in its schools, there were at the same time attending in the general schools of the country, *in which the education was paid for*, out of a total of 400,348 children, 319,288 Roman Catholics. Nor was this the only society which gave practical proof that the contradiction of a fundamental tenet of a people's faith is not the way to win its confidence. Simultaneously with the Kildare Place Society, two other societies adopting the same principle, received support from the State—the Incorporated Society for Promoting Protestant Schools in Ireland, and the Association for Discountenancing Vice. The result was even less promising than in the former case. It may suffice to say, that in the year 1825, there was in the schools of all three societies a total of 69,638 children, educated at an expense to the State of 68,178*l*.

Failure so signal led to renewed inquiry. A fresh Commission was appointed in 1824. Its report was made in 1826. In this report the Commissioners, following in the steps of their predecessors of 1812, recommended that "schools should be established for the purpose of giving to children of all religious persuasions such useful instruction as they might severally be capable and desirous of receiving, without having any grounds

to apprehend any interference with their respective religious principles." They, however, proceeded farther, and stated their opinion, that the manner in which this should be effected was by giving religious instruction to Protestants and Roman Catholics, not jointly but separately. Acting upon the suggestion of these Commissions, a Select Committee of the House of Commons, to which, in 1828, both the reports were referred, recommended a system to be adopted "which should" (to employ Lord Stanley's summary) "afford, if possible, combined literary and separate religious education, and which should so far be capable of being adapted to the views of the religious persuasions which prevail in Ireland, as to render it in truth a system of national education for the poorer classes of the community." Lastly, the recommendation of this Committee is fully endorsed by a Committee appointed in 1830 to examine into the state of the poor of Ireland. The Committee express a hope that no further time will be lost in giving the public the benefit of the expensive and long-protracted inquiries before the Royal Commissioners of 1806 and 1825, and of the practical recommendations of the Committee of 1828. This hope was soon realized. In the following year, 1831, the National Board of Education was established, the principle of whose constitution is thus stated by the Commissioners:—

"The principle of this Board is, that the national schools shall be open alike to Christians of all religious denominations, and that accordingly no child shall be required to be present at any religious instruction or exercise of which his parents or guardians may disapprove; and that opportunities shall be afforded to all children to receive separately, at particular periods, such religious instruction as their parents or guardians may provide for them."

Such is the principle on which national education in Ireland is based—a principle, it will be seen, from this brief review, not hastily adopted nor on slight grounds, recommended by two Royal Commissions and two Committees of the House of Commons, but urged still more forcibly by the utter failure, after prolonged experiments, of all schemes into which the opposite principle entered.

Before bringing the system to the test of practical success, it will be desirable here, in order to appreciate fairly the results which have been obtained, as well as to point the lesson which its history teaches, to state somewhat more particularly the extent of the field which the Commissioners proposed to occupy, and the spirit with which they were animated toward the other educational bodies in the country. It was no part of the design of the National Board to monopolize educational

activity, or to throw obstacles in the way of the freest development of private enterprise engaged in the same task. The functions which they undertook to discharge were not to supersede, but to supplement, to aid, and to improve—to supply schools where schools were wanting, to assist them where they were in operation, and above all, through the example of their own models, to raise the general character of education. Agreeably with this design, the Board framed its rules upon a threefold plan, under which three distinct classes of schools were established—the model, the vested, and the non-vested schools.* In the first of these the Board supplied all the funds, and exercised in return exclusive control, appointing the teachers, selecting the books, and regulating the courses of instruction. Of these model schools it was originally intended, though the intention has as yet been but partially realized, that one should be placed in every county in Ireland, with a view, as the name indicates, not merely of supplying education, but still more of serving at once as rivals and models to stimulate and direct the existing educational machinery. In the case of the vested schools the assistance was more limited, as was also the authority exercised. The State supplied to them, as a maximum, two-thirds of the expense of the original foundation, requiring the remaining third to be made up by local exertions; and further contributed to the current yearly expenditure according to the exigencies of each case. In return for this assistance it exacted an adherence to the fundamental rules respecting religious teaching, and claimed a general superintendence over the school, but left to local patrons, subject to the approval of the Commissioners, the appointment of the teachers, and the regulation of the details of instruction. Lastly, in the case of the non-vested schools, the connexion with the Board was of a still slighter kind. In this case, what may be called the “capital” of the undertaking was supplied entirely by local parties, the State merely contributing in the way of salaries and books; while the control was limited to a general veto on the books and teachers employed, the right of inspection, and a prohibition of all compulsion in imparting religious instruction.

Such was the machinery by means of which the Board, established in 1831, proposed to carry out the important task of national education, and the success of the scheme has been commensurate with the wisdom with which it was framed. The Commissioners had, from the commencement of their labours

* That is, schools vested in the Commissioners as trustees for the public, and schools not so vested, but remaining the property of those by whom they were erected.

down to March, 1858, trained nearly 5000 teachers. At that date they had under their control 5308 schools; and these schools were attended by 569,364 pupils. These numbers speak for themselves. They leave no doubt as to the magnitude of the operations of the Board; it is instructive to compare them with the futile results of former systems. It is further curious to observe, that the number of children in attendance is as nearly as possible that for which the Commissioners originally estimated that the aid of the national schools would be required. Their estimate was, that ultimately 570,000 children would need to be brought under public instruction. No less unquestionable is the excellence of the education given. We but express the concurrent opinion of all who have examined the subject, when we say that the primary education of Ireland is not surpassed, if equalled, in any portion of the empire. When we add that the National Board do not confine their attention to literary and scientific training, but are disseminating, with the happiest effect, a sound knowledge of the principles and practice of agriculture in 160 establishments in various parts of the country; and that the Parliamentary grant by which all this is achieved does not much exceed 270,000*l.*, we may confidently assert that never were grander results brought about by a smaller outlay. So much for the first criterion of the system's success—that afforded by the extent of its operations. Let us now apply a second test to which in fairness it must submit. It professes to be a *mixed* system; how far has it succeeded in bringing together children of different religious persuasions for common instruction?

The most extraordinary misapprehensions prevail as to the success of the National System of Education considered as a mixed system. The last time a discussion was raised on the subject in Parliament, it seemed to be taken for granted by both friends and foes, that the system would not bear investigation on this score; that whatever its theoretic principle might be, it was practically denominational; and that save the surrender of a principle—a matter of light moment in politics—but little would be lost by making the theory correspond to the fact. Now nothing can be more erroneous than all this. We have been favoured with official returns made up to March, 1858, which prove incontestably that, even regarded as a mixed system, the National System of Education has been reasonably successful. We shall place some of these results before our readers.

It appears, then, that of 5222 schools from which returns had been received on the 31st March, 1858, 2929, or more than fifty-six per cent. of the whole had, in point of fact, a mixed attendance. Nor were these schools in isolated districts, but diffused through the whole country, apparently in fair proportion to the geographical

distribution of religious sects. Thus, according as the humbler classes, from which the National schools derive their pupils, were more divided in religious persuasion, the number of mixed schools increased, while it fell in proportion to the prevalence of some one form of religious belief. In several of the counties of Ulster, for example, where the various religious sects are fully represented, the proportion of mixed schools was above ninety per cent., and in the whole province it was eighty-four per cent.; while in some of the Roman Catholic counties it fell as low as thirty per cent. It is, however, satisfactory to think, that in two counties alone in the whole of Ireland did the proportion fall below this per centage, and still more so, that the proportion is increasing. The return from which we quote exhibits an advance of two per cent. on a return made in 1853. How, in the face of facts like these, the National schools can be said to have failed in bringing together for common instruction the children of the various religious sects, we are wholly at a loss to conceive. They have succeeded in this object to an extent which, looking at the numerous obstacles they have had to contend with, may well excite surprise.

But there is a third test by which the system may be tried, and according to which it has been again pronounced a failure. It is admitted—for this point appears to be too clear for cavil—that the National schools have succeeded so far as the Roman Catholics are concerned; but it is maintained that this is the limit of their success, and that the Protestant portion of the nation derives no adequate benefits from the system. Let us for a moment inquire how far this charge is consistent with the facts of the case. As we have already seen, the number of children on the rolls of the National schools for the year ending March, 1858, was 569,364. To this aggregate the different denominations contributed in the following proportions:—

Roman Catholics	481,000
Presbyterians	57,018
Established Church	29,130
Other Protestants	2,216

It hence appears that the Presbyterians contribute considerably more than their quota to the total sum;* on the other hand, it must be admitted that the numbers contributed by the Established Church are below their due proportion; but we shall not find much to wonder at in this, when we remember how much more

* In the last census, in which the religious denominations of the population of Ireland were noted, the Presbyterians were less than one-tenth of the Roman Catholics.

wealthy the Protestants are than the Roman Catholics, and consequently how much better able to provide education for themselves; as in fact they do through the schools of the Church Education Society.*

Thus much for the pupils. It is interesting to observe that amongst the teachers the various creeds are represented with equal fairness. From returns which lie before us it appears, that while the proportion of Protestants of the Established Church on the school rolls is five per cent., the proportion of teachers of the same communion comes out six per cent. The Roman Catholic pupils make up eighty-four per cent., and the proportion of Roman Catholic teachers is eighty per cent. Lastly, the Presbyterian pupils number ten, the Presbyterian teachers twelve per cent. This correspondence, amazingly exact considering that it was undesigned, and in fact accidentally brought to light by a hostile critic,† admirably illustrates the skill with which the rules of selection have been made, and the fairness with which they are administered by the National Board.

On every ground, then, whether we regard the admixture of children in particular schools, or the aggregate numbers of the great religious denominations which divide the country amongst them, or again the representation of the several creeds in the staff of teachers, we assert that the National System of Education in Ireland is fairly entitled to be called a mixed system; and that in this respect, no less than in the extent to which it has been instrumental in diffusing education, it has fairly vindicated its claim to success. It might have been thought that success so complete would have silenced all opposition: and so it would,

* It is further to be observed that the number of Protestants has in recent years largely increased. If we again compare the returns given above with those of 1853, we find that of the gross number of pupils on the rolls in that year (490,027) there were—

Of the Established Church . . .	23,629
„ Presbyterians	39,751
„ Other Protestants . . .	2,083

making a total of 65,463 as against 88,364 of the year 1858. We have thus an increase of 35 per cent. in favour of the latter year, an increase shared by all the items of the calculation. Surely, if there is any faith to be put in statistics, these figures show that the National System is largely and increasingly acceptable and beneficial to Protestants. We may add that in the model schools, where the highest class of education is given, the Protestants of the Established Church considerably exceed their due proportion, making up one-third of the entire number of pupils in attendance. This fact confirms our impression, that the deficiency of members of this communion in the ordinary schools is due to other causes than hostility to the system.

† The correspondence was discovered from returns called for by Mr. Monsell, M.P. for the county of Limerick.

were the education of the people the primary object of religious parties. This, however, is far from being the case, and consequently the success attending the scheme, instead of disarming, has, it is to be feared, in some instances inflamed the hostility of its opponents. These comprise, on the one hand, the bulk of the clergy of the Established Church, and, on the other, the ultramontane party in the Church of Rome; and are represented respectively by the Church Education Society and the Roman Catholic prelates. We shall endeavour to state the objections of each to the System, and the plan which they severally propose to substitute for it.

The main objection of the Church Education Society to the National System is that the reading of the Scriptures is not made compulsory on all the children who attend the schools. It is not denied that the National Board has recognised the right of patrons to give any kind of religious instruction they please in the schools under their control. This permission, however, is accompanied with a proviso, that they do not compel the presence of those children, whose parents or guardians disapprove of the instruction given; and to the objectors the proviso destroys all the merit of the concession. To use their own language,—

“They conceive that no system of education can be sound in principle, or prove beneficial in its results, which exempts any portion of the pupils it admits into its schools from instruction in the inspired volume. Whatever such a system may be, as regards those whom it permits to *receive* such instruction, it is essentially defective as regards those whom it permits to refuse it.”

This objection, it will be observed, goes very far beyond the principle of denominationalism. The ideal of a system which it presents is one in which Scriptural teaching is made an indispensable element in every course of instruction; in which every school is fashioned on the Society's model. Nor does the Society make any secret of its views in this respect. Even in a recent address it thus deprecates the introduction of a denominational system:—

“There is hardly any measure which the Church Education Society would contemplate with deeper regret than that which would partition off, under irresponsible management, the public funds given for educational purposes, to the several denominations of which the people are composed. They are convinced that the result of such a measure would be seriously to retard educational progress, to foment the strife and bitterness of party spirit, and to place the Church of the country in a grievously false position, namely, that of being only one denomination out of a number equally recognised by the State.”

Nay, so strong is the objection to having a denominational

character fastened on the Church, that it has been alleged as an insuperable obstacle to the Society's co-operation with a Mixed Board.

"They cannot," they say, in one of their earlier appeals, "co-operate with the National Board, because of the constitution of the Board itself. Not only are the clergy of the Established Church deprived of the trust committed to their hands by the legislature, of superintending national education, but this superintendence is taken from them for the purpose of being vested in a Board composed of persons whose qualification for the office consists in their being representatives of the most conflicting religious opinions. The principle thus practically acted upon, that persons of all religions are equally fitted to guard and conduct the education of the country, has a manifest tendency, by overlooking the distinction of truth and error in a matter of such vital importance, to make them be overlooked in all, and thereby tends to that indifference respecting any particular form of religion, which, at least in the vulgar mind, is almost identical with attachment to none."

These were the pretensions of the Society in its palmier days, while the recollection of Protestant ascendancy was still fresh in its mind, and while the National System was still struggling with the difficulties of its first establishment. But those days are past; the National System has become firmly rooted in the institutions of the country and the hearts of the people; and the pretensions of the clergy have undergone a corresponding abatement. Descending from the lofty ambition which was satisfied with nothing short of universal dominion, they are now content to stipulate for such conditions as these: (1) That aid and superintendence be extended to those schools of the Society which are sufficiently near National schools to afford parents the opportunity of choosing to which they will send their children, and to those alone; or (2), failing this, that the Society's schools may be admitted as exceptional schools, under the precedent of the monastic and conventual schools, which, as it is stated, now enjoy exceptional privileges.* We have here two proposals: with respect to the former we cannot help observing that the solution of the difficulty appears singular, as coming from men who have grounded their opposition to the National System of Education upon principle. If the clergy have hitherto kept aloof from the System, because its principle is inherently vicious, how can they justify to themselves the recognition of its principle which the proposal involves? Not only do they give up their exclusive pretensions to be the educators of the people, but they make their

* See the recent correspondence of the Church Education Society with the Chief Secretary.

own activity, so far as it is recognised by the State, depend on the presence of those very agencies which formerly they sought to exclude. Suppose the condition realized, and never was so deplorable a case of divided will as the poor clergyman must exhibit. On the one hand he must wish to drive out from his parish the objectionable school, because pernicious to his people; on the other, he must seek to bring it in as the necessary preliminary to his own operations. He must erect a fortress for the pleasure of besieging it. Without doing the evil that he would not, he cannot do the good he would. Can absurdity be pushed farther?

With reference to the latter proposal, the simple answer is that it is founded on a mistake. Not the slightest relaxation of the rules of the National Board has been made in favour of conventual schools. It is true that these schools have, as might have been expected, shown a disposition to evade the rules; but the disposition has never received any sanction, and its manifestations have been checked when brought under the notice of the authorities. We do not wish to use harsh language, but it certainly seems to us that there is something highly derogatory, we had almost said degrading, to the Church in this proposal. The Committee of the Church Education Society objects to the denominational system, because it would place the Established Church on a level with the other religious communities into which the country is divided. But surely there is something almost dignified in being ranked with the great body of Roman Catholics, as compared with the position of being classed with an obscure section of that community, which has gained the unenviable reputation of seeking to evade the rules under which it receives assistance from the State.*

So far, as to the Protestant opposition to the National System. The demands of the Roman Catholic prelates present themselves in a more specious guise, but are really not a whit less unreasonable, and would, if conceded, we cannot doubt, prove far more

* Since the above was written, an important letter from the Lord Primate has appeared, in which, while he professes unabated attachment to the Church Education Society, he recommends those of the clergy who are unable to maintain efficient schools by its aid, to accept assistance from the National Board, rather than allow the children of their flocks to fall behind their neighbours in respect of education. We hope this excellent advice will be extensively followed, but we wish to direct attention to the fact that it is by no means novel. The language held, nearly thirty years ago, by the Archbishop of Dublin, who, we need not say, was, up to his retirement from the National Board, the *bête noire* of the Church Education Society, was remarkably similar. "I am very far from wishing," he said, "that a more imperfect system should be introduced in any place where one intrinsically better can be made available Where schools, on the Kildare plan, or on one intrinsically better, are found to work well, and to embrace the great mass of the population, I

practically mischievous. The form which they take is a demand for the denominational system. "It is the denominational system which is in force in England; it has been found to answer there; and why should not the same measure of justice, and the same rule of expediency, be applied to both countries? What is there in Ireland that it should be treated exceptionally in our national policy?" It cannot be denied that there is some plausibility in this: we shall endeavour to meet fairly the argument which it contains.

In the first place, then, we must observe that the educational institutions of the two countries differ in other respects than those in which the Roman Catholic prelates require assimilation, and further, that the particulars in which they differ are of the essence of the case. In Ireland, as we have seen, the expense of elementary education is supported principally by the State. In the model schools the expense is exclusively borne by the Government, if we except the small sum derived from pupils' fees; in the vested schools it sustains perhaps three-fourths of the expense; and even to the non-vested schools its contributions are considerable; while the training of teachers is conducted exclusively at the public expense. On the other hand, in England, the principal weight of the charge falls upon the local subscriptions and pupils' fees: it is estimated that over the whole country the resources derived from voluntary effort bear to those derived from the State the proportion of three to two. With this difference in the mode in which the schools in the two countries are supported, it does not seem strange that there should be a difference in the mode of imparting religious instruction—it is not strange that, while in England schools which are called into existence, many through voluntary efforts, take their religious tone from the localities in which they are founded, those in Ireland, which are supported chiefly by the State, should exhibit, in their mode of dealing with religion, somewhat of the comprehensive character of the source from which they derive their origin.

should be truly sorry to see an inferior one substituted. —But in the many districts where the case is otherwise, it does seem to me highly desirable that at least an attempt should be made to impart some useful knowledge to those who would, otherwise, either be left in hopeless ignorance, or would learn more evil than good from, perhaps, some hedge-schoolmasters," &c.

We hope that this case will not be lost on the numerous class who are continually declaiming against "expediency." It affords a fair example of the relative position of those who always strive to do the best they can under existing circumstances, and the "*cælum ruat*" school, who foreclose discussion on their favourite theories by the ominous word "principle." The man of "principle" finds himself, after the lapse of a generation, pretty much where the man of "expediency" started from. The coincidence is seldom so complete, and perhaps seldom so unconscious, as in the present instance.

What the Roman Catholic prelates really desire, in appealing to the precedent of England, is to obtain all the privileges possessed by the various denominations in England, without making the sacrifices with which those privileges have been purchased. They wish to dispose of the funds of the State with as much freedom as the English enjoy in disposing of their voluntary subscriptions. Their demand is, not that they may be placed on the same footing with the English—for we have had no intimation of a desire to undertake the English share of the expense—but that they may be permitted to deal with the national funds according to their uncontrolled discretion—that they may be entrusted with prerogatives which have never yet been entrusted to any religious party, not even to the National Church. An exceptional privilege which is to be conceded for what purpose? Why, for this—that the Irish youth may be moulded after the fashion of the most approved ultramontane models.

But we may go farther than this line of argument carries us. We may accept the claims of the hierarchy as made in good faith—with an honest desire to assume the responsibilities along with the privileges of the English position; and even on this assumption we have no hesitation in saying that a concession of their demands would be nothing short of a death-blow to educational progress in Ireland.

For what is the history of national education in England—if indeed any education given in England at present deserves that name?—and what are the social forces on which its progress depends? On this subject we gladly refer to the authority of Mr. Temple:—*

“Nearly, if not quite, half of the elementary schools have been founded since the establishment of the Committee of Council in 1839. The religious action has been, in fact, to a great extent the mask behind which the influence of the Government has been at work. When Sir J. Shuttleworth commenced his operations, he found (as his failures in 1839 and 1843 would have been enough to prove, if proof had been needed), that the time was not yet ripe for legislation, nor even for independent action by the executive. It was necessary to lay hold on some popular impulse, to give it guidance, and inspire it with energy, and compel it to work for the public good. No impulse, except religious zeal, had the independent strength necessary for the purpose. Religious zeal was thus made the driving wheel of the machine. The Government defined its aim so as to be thoroughly in harmony with the force on which it was intended to rely. No schools were to be aided which did not embody religious teaching as a part of their system. The archbishop was to have a veto on the appointment of inspectors of Church schools. The feelings of the Dissenting commu-

* “Oxford Essays,” 1856, p. 234.

nities were to be consulted on the appointment of the inspectors of Dissenting schools. Religious liberty was to be so scrupulously respected, that the Government was not to interfere, except indirectly, with the management, discipline, or instruction. Founders of schools were, in fact, to be fettered by no restrictions except such as were necessary to secure permanent efficiency."

In this way the Government adroitly pressed into its service what constituted its main difficulty in establishing a comprehensive system of national education. The various religious communities, being set to work on a plan perfectly congenial to their own principles, vied with each other in giving it effect. Prodigious efforts were made, and unquestionably important results have been produced; but, ere the plan so eagerly embraced had been long in operation, the incurable defects of its origin began to display themselves; and it has now become but too evident that it is incapable of expanding into a really national system. The fundamental vice of the English scheme it is not difficult to discover. As grants are only given to meet local subscriptions, it is necessary—if the system is to be universal—that persons should be found in every part of the country able and willing to contribute to the establishment of schools. Now, so far is this from being the case, that no such persons are forthcoming in districts which most stand in need of aid. Hence arises the anomaly that the assistance of the State is given most liberally where its aid might best be dispensed with. A striking instance is given by Sir John Pakington.* He mentions four poor parishes in London, which having an aggregate population of 138,900 had received 12*l.* 0*s.* 8*d.*; and four rich parishes, which having an aggregate population of 50,000, had received 3908*l.*

Such is the mode in which this miscalled national system provides for the education of the poor! But the system is not merely inefficient, it is unjust. The poorer districts pay their taxes equally with the richer. We do not know the proportions in which the parishes referred to by Sir John Pakington contribute to the national resources; but the poor parishes yielded, if not as much as the rich, at all events their full quota to the Chancellor of the Exchequer; and it is certain that many districts pay largely to the State, which yet are too poor to fulfil the conditions on which alone its assistance can be obtained. Thus the English plan not merely fails to furnish aid where aid is most needful, but positively increases the burden of education to the poorer classes; it makes no provision for their education, while it taxes them for the education of the comparatively rich.

Nor should the objection be overlooked, that while theoretically

* Cited by Mr. Temple, *ubi sup.*

conceding liberty of conscience, the system frequently violates it in practice. Take for example the common case, where the members of a religious community residing in the same parish are too few or too poor to have a school of their own. For persons so circumstanced the only educational means available are the schools supported by other sects, in which doctrines are taught of which they disapprove; in which, consequently, a sacrifice of conscientious conviction is the price exacted for the education of their children.

The truth is, the system is as ineffectual in practice as it is indefensible in theory, and its failure as a *national* scheme is now generally acknowledged. It has become apparent that it cannot reach those parts of the country which are most deficient in education, while its operations in those districts which it has penetrated is partial, embracing not the people at large, nor even necessarily the most numerous religious sects, but only those whose members are sufficiently rich and liberal to comply with the conditions on which grants are made. The practical result is, that of 3,000,000 of children, who, according to the best estimates, ought to be brought under public education, only 821,000 are receiving instruction in schools assisted by the State. Thus two-thirds of the work still remains to be done, and yet the system seems incapable of much further expansion. "Religious zeal," Mr. Temple tells us, "has reached, or nearly reached, the limit to which religious rivalry could push it; and religious zeal without religious rivalry is a much weaker power. The towns have done as much as the system will get them to do, and yet there is much improvement wanted in the towns: extensive rural districts will do nothing, and can do nothing."

In these circumstances, the position of the Government is truly embarrassing. They are reduced to the necessity either of checking an impulse on which they have hitherto exclusively relied, and which has produced results undoubtedly considerable, or of abandoning the idea of national education in any adequate sense of the term. All policy forbids the latter course; and besides, there are circumstances which may make them less scrupulous in retracing their steps. The gratification of religious exclusiveness is a most expensive luxury. The educational grant last year for England was 761,000*l.*, for the education of 821,000 children; that for Ireland somewhat more than 270,000*l.*, for the education of 560,000; and when we state that the former sum only represents two-fifths of the total amount expended in primary education, while the latter represents the bulk of the expense incurred for the same object; and when we further add that the Government undertakes in Ireland branches of education entailing much more than the average expense—such as practical agriculture,

which requires, in addition to the ordinary machinery of teachers and books, expensive establishments and appliances, which are altogether dispensed with in England—some idea may be formed of the comparative cost of the two systems.*

It may well seem strange, if anything in the history of religious party could seem strange, that the moment in which these defects are all but universally recognised in the English system of education should be chosen for urging its adoption in Ireland, where another system, simply by avoiding these defects, has attained unexampled success. The demand is the more remarkable when it is considered, that the objections to the English system would be increased a hundredfold, were it transplanted to Ireland. In truth, it would puzzle the ingenuity of man to find a scheme of education less adapted to that country than one based on the rivalry of religious sects, and giving aid under inflexible rules to meet corresponding local exertions. The effect of such a scheme would be to confine the area of instruction within the limits of moderate wealth, leaving the larger portion of the country entirely unprovided for, while it would at the same time embitter to the utmost religious differences, already one would think sufficiently strong,—differences which, by the admission of statesmen of every party, have hitherto presented the most serious obstacle to all improvement.

It is true, as we have already intimated, that the object proposed to themselves by the Roman Catholic prelates is far different from this. Voluntaryism is a heresy that has never struck deep root in the Irish soil. What these gentlemen want is the license enjoyed by the English sects, not the sacrifices by which the license was purchased. But just for this reason it cannot be too strongly insisted upon, that voluntaryism is the very basis of the English system; that it is this alone which saves it from unmeasured condemnation; and that just in proportion as it ceases to be voluntary, it must cease to be denominational. Were this more fully understood, we should be perhaps less importuned with an analogy which fails just in the important point: and some of the opponents of the National Board in Ireland would be less disposed to substitute a halting expedient—adopted only because the public mind was unripe for legislation, and now that it has done its work ready to pass away—for a well-ordered plan which every day gives increasing proof of the marvellous vitality and fruitfulness of a sound principle.

We have hitherto treated the demand for the introduction of

* It is estimated, that in the matter of inspection alone, a saving of one-third might, without any decrease of efficiency, be made, were it not for the rule, established in England, which requires that the inspectors shall be of the same denomination as the schools they inspect. A consideration of this sort is not likely to be forgotten in these days of rigid economy.

the English system as proceeding exclusively from the Roman Catholic prelates; but although the principle of that system has been, as we have shown, repudiated by the authorities of the Established Church, this repudiation has not been very consistently adhered to, and the two extreme sections of religionists are frequently found urging precisely the same objections, and apparently aiming at the same result. We shall, before passing from this part of the subject, notice two of the objections, which are thus held in common by both parties, though one of them is more insisted upon by the Church clergy, the other by the Romish hierarchy. These objections are—(1), that the national system does not make sufficient provision for religious teaching; (2) that it involves a violation of religious liberty.

In answer to the first of these objections, it may be said that the State could not go further than it has done, without introducing that defect which we have seen so fatal to the development of national education in England. It gives to all Christian ministers the amplest facilities and encouragement to instruct children of their own persuasion. But this is the extent of its concession. It leaves no scope for proselytism: no child is compelled to be present at any religious instruction to which his parents or guardians object. It is against this permission to withdraw from a part of the instruction that the Church clergy most strongly protest. The most distinguished opponent of the National Board has admitted "that he could as patron of a school under the National Board give a perfect education to his own flock, but that for the sake of the Roman Catholics he would not accept it." Now, not to dwell on the preposterous injustice involved in the demand, that the clergy of one denomination should lay down the conditions under which the children of another should receive a public education, we have no hesitation in saying that the interests of religion itself are better secured by the present rule than by the scheme which finds favour with the objectors. The great vice in our ordinary religious teaching is, that it is doctrinal rather than practical; sharpening the intellect, not moulding the character; helpful rather as a manual of controversy than as a rule of life. This blemish, as might be expected in a country where religious rivalry so much prevails, is peculiarly conspicuous in Ireland, reaching its maximum in those districts where proselytism has been most active. We remember being greatly struck, when visiting, some years ago, some of the schools of the Irish Church Mission, with the extent to which the wrangling spirit was developed in the children. A slight anecdote may perhaps convey to the reader a part of the impression produced on our own mind. A clerical friend, wishing to turn the examination into a practical

channel, asked some children in one of these schools for a text which forbade them to be idle. He was immediately answered—"Little children keep yourselves from *idols*;" and, what is still more significant, the same question drew forth the same answer in a similar school in a different part of the country. Religious teaching, of which this is a specimen, is simply noxious, and we can scarcely conceive a greater curse to Ireland than the emission from its schools of a swarm of such urchins—*mala gramina pastos*—scattering the venom of controversy throughout the land. But the most effectual way to prevent such a consummation, is to bring together children of different religious persuasions for secular instruction, and by precluding all hope of proselytism, to take from religious teachers all temptation to controversial teaching. We would recommend those who are doubtful of the capabilities of the combined system for inculcating religion, to read the reports of the various ministers attending to the spiritual wants of the Belfast Model School. The catechist of the Established Church, after stating that the bishop in whose presence the annual examination was conducted, expressed his entire satisfaction with the proficiency of the children in the various subjects in which they were examined, goes on to say: "The Rev. Professor Reichel, who examined the senior class in the Evidences of Christianity (a subject which was entirely new to the children, not having been taught in any of the Church schools in Belfast), has permitted me to say that he never met so good answering, in a subject of corresponding difficulty, in any school in which he had previously examined." Again, the Roman Catholic clergyman says, "The progress of the children in the knowledge of their religious duties, always steady, has been, in many instances, most astonishing—a fact which I attribute partly to the very abundant time set apart for such purposes, and partly to the zealous energetic co-operation of the Catholic teachers." Lastly, the minister of the Presbyterians says, "that the answering of the children at the examination called forth repeated expressions of admiration from the visitors present."*

Now, how are we to account for these remarkable results? We think they are traceable to two causes—first, the capacity of the children's minds for receiving religious truth is enlarged by the high order of the intellectual training they receive, while their reverence for things sacred is not impaired by the vain jangle of controversy, and the rude gibes of unlettered disputants; and, secondly, the teachers, having no by-ends, husband their energy for the proper work of their calling—the inculcation of a religion

* See Appendix to the Twenty-fourth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland, p. 62.

of peace. Far, then, from conceding that the system is irreligious, non-religious, or even inadequate as regards religion, we hold it the very best that, in existing circumstances, could be devised for fostering the spirit of true religion—well calculated, if any, to further the poet's aspiration—

“Let knowledge grow from more to more—
But more of reverence in us dwell,
That mind and soul according well
May make one music as before.”

The statement that the combined system is an infringement of religious liberty is not only not true: it is the reverse of the truth. What gives it a moment's plausibility is the ambiguity of the phrase, religious liberty. This phrase may denote either the liberty of religious communities to regulate their own internal affairs, or the liberty of individuals to act in accordance with the dictates of conscience.* Now, as the concessions in favour of religious freedom have been most frequently made, not to the abstract right of liberty of thought, but to the menace of powerful religious sects, the former sense is that which our historical recollections at once call up, and hence the danger that the latter sense should, in the minds of the unthinking, be obscured, if not altogether extinguished.

Such an illusion is the more to be deprecated, as the two species of liberty, far from being identical, are often found in inverse ratio to each other. And this is actually the case in the instance we are considering. It is notorious that in agitating against united education the Roman Catholic priesthood are not seeking to redress what is felt to be a grievance by the members of their communion. On the contrary, there is nothing which the great bulk of the laity more strongly dread than the success of the agitation. It is seen to be a hierarchical move to strain the bonds of spiritual authority, already too tight, and to extend it over a domain now exempt from its influence. True, we have had no loud protest against clerical usurpation; but it is no less true, that the sense of it is widely diffused, and the people have hitherto opposed a passive resistance, which has been proof against the most energetic assaults.

In these circumstances the course of true policy is perfectly plain. It may be that the Church of Rome denies the right of private judgment, not merely in the affairs of religion, but in civil matters also, and in the arrangements of society. But she can scarcely call the State to assist her in enforcing such a doctrine as this. To make such a demand in the name of religious

* This distinction is admirably illustrated by Mr. Temple, “Oxford Essays,” 1856, p. 240.

liberty is to invoke religious liberty against itself. The freedom asked is freedom to oppress. No well-ordered State would be so fatuous as to enthrall its subjects to a principle of despotism—nay more, of despotism not only not coincident with its own power, but strongly antagonistic to its aims. On the contrary, any Government worthy of the name will encourage the assertion of natural freedom against an arbitrary and noxious exercise of authority.

The National System of Education led to the establishment of the Queen's Colleges in two ways: first, the very high order of education given to the lowest classes, while those of a superior station were wholly neglected, gave weight to the only objection which can be urged with any plausibility against the education of the people—that, namely, arising from its unequal diffusion; and secondly, the marvellous success which attended the application of religious equality to primary education, led to the hope that the same principle might be equally fruitful if applied to the higher education.

The deficiency of the provisions for academic education in Ireland at the time the Queen's Colleges were founded, was indeed remarkable: while Scotland, with one-third the population of Ireland, had five Universities, attended by about 2900 students, Ireland had but one, and even this one was, from its constitution, not available for the nation at large. True, the University of Dublin offered education equally to all; but being in immediate connexion with a Church opposed to the religious faith of the vast majority of the people, and excluding all dissenters from its administration and higher emoluments, it at once discouraged them from seeking admission, and produced in their minds a feeling of irritation which perhaps almost counter-balanced the benefits it conferred. The result was, that of nearly 6,000,000 of Roman Catholics in Ireland, about 100 were receiving an university education.

Such a state of things in any country might well have arrested the attention of thoughtful statesmen; but there were circumstances connected with Ireland which invested it with peculiar gravity. In that country, from the habitual absence of the higher aristocracy, the middle classes enjoyed an importance and exercised an influence, political and social, to which elsewhere they are strangers. Now, the only way to prevent this influence from being noxious, and to turn it to good account, was to make its possessors worthy to wield it; and yet no effort was made for the attainment of an object so desirable. Already, not to speak of Protestant dissenters, a large proportion of the classes we speak of were Roman Catholics, and the proportion, thanks to the repeal of the penal laws and the removal of civil disabilities,

was daily increasing; but the principle upon which the higher education was conducted was such as, both in tendency and fact, to exclude Roman Catholics from its advantages. And this was all the more unfortunate, as it was just for Roman Catholics, as being most obnoxious to clerical influence, that the antagonistic force of education was most imperatively required, in order to make them safe depositaries of power. When to these considerations it is added that, simultaneously with the total neglect of middle class education, the education of the lower orders was pushed forward with the most energetic and successful efforts, we must admit that the state of things was one of serious menace to social order. There are few more explosive conditions of society than that presented by wealth divorced from intelligence seeking to control intellectual poverty. We need not, then, be surprised to find a committee of the House of Commons in 1838 declaring it to be "unwise, dangerous, and pernicious to the social condition of the country and to its future tranquillity, that so much encouragement should be given to the lowest classes, without at the same time due provision being made for the education of the middle and higher classes."*

* As the income-tax has but recently been introduced into Ireland, we do not possess the facilities for estimating the increase and distribution of its wealth, which the returns under this tax supply for England; but, in the absence of this more general standard, the following statements, showing the extent, and still more, the peculiar character of the changes which have taken place in the landed proprietary of that country, will give some idea of that rapid growth of a middle class to which we have referred.

The Act for the Sale of Encumbered Estates in Ireland was passed in the autumn of 1849. By the autumn of 1853, the number of estates for the sale of which petitions had been sent into the court established under the Act was 2878, of which rather more than one-third, or 1081, were at the above date sold. The manner in which these sales were distributed over the country will appear from the following table:—

Value of landed property sold by the Encumbered Estates Commissioners from the establishment of the court to the end of 1853.

In Leinster	£2,768,210
— Connaught	2,218,162
— Munster	3,270,287
— Ulster	2,173,202

£10,430,461

It will be perceived from this, that the districts in which the largest sales have taken place are Roman Catholic districts, and this becomes still more evident when we descend into details. Thus the county in which the largest quantity of land was sold was Galway, the next Cork, the next Tipperary, the next Limerick, the next Mayo—all intensely Roman Catholic districts; the pecuniary value in each being as follows:—viz., Galway, 1,200,000*l.*; Cork, 1,100,000*l.*; Limerick, 660,000*l.*; Tipperary, 670,000*l.*; Mayo, 500,000*l.* Such was the mode in which the sales were distributed with respect to locality. Let us now observe the mode of their distribution as regards the number of proprietors. We

In providing a remedy for the evil thus distinctly recognised three courses were open to the legislature. It might have opened the emoluments of Trinity College, Dublin, to all classes of the population without religious distinction; or again, it might have founded colleges for the several religious communities which divide the country amongst them; lastly, it had the alternative of establishing colleges based upon the principle of religious equality—colleges which should give combined secular instruction, and which, whilst they afforded facilities to the various ministers of the Christian faith to teach their respective flocks, should steadily repudiate all interference, positive or negative, with the conscientious scruples of their students.

To the first two courses there were insuperable objections.

have said that the total number of estates actually sold at the time specified was 1081. These 1081 estates were divided into about 6000 lots, which were bought by 4214 *distinct purchasers*, giving on an average about *four* landed proprietors for *one* under the former *régime*. But, further, it is well known that the smaller lots—that is to say, lots ranging from 50*l.* to 70*l.* per annum—brought, proportionally (*i. e.*, when measured in years' purchase), a much higher price than the larger ones, a result which was owing to the greater competition among the purchasers of smaller lots. This strikes us as a very significant circumstance, since it shows in an unequivocal manner the large amount of disposable capital amongst the middle classes, which is the point we wish to establish. The manner in which the notoriety of this fact led to the breaking up of the large estates is very remarkable. We have been informed on the best authority that the following estates—the Portarlington, the Kingston, the Belmore, the Thomond, the Mornington, the Oranmore, and the Donegal—were broken up into not less than 2094 lots. In some cases, no doubt, the same purchaser obtained more than a single lot; but even on the improbable supposition that on an average there was but one purchaser for two lots, the effect of the sale of these estates would be to substitute 1047 landed proprietors for seven!

We have only further to add that of 10,430,461*l.*—the amount which passed through the hands of the Commissioners up to 1853—only 1,779,608*l.* came from England, Scotland, and the Colonies; the remainder, or 8,650,853*l.*, having been furnished exclusively from Irish sources; and we have been informed that the proportion of English and Scotch investments has since declined. The upshot of the whole is, that in four years, ending in 1853, land in Ireland to the value of ten millions and a half changed hands, passing from the possession of large to that of small proprietors. The funds were in the main furnished from Irish sources, and the purchases took place chiefly in Roman Catholic districts. Though this does not amount to demonstration, we think it is sufficient, when taken in connexion with the testimony borne on all hands to the increasing prosperity of Ireland, to justify us in the assertion that there is rapidly growing up in Ireland a middle class, numerous, wealthy, and aspiring, in which the Roman Catholics are largely represented, and for which the advantages of a university education are, in the interests of society at large, imperatively demanded.

We should state that the above figures are from official sources. We have been obliged to confine our review to the period ending 1853, as no detailed statements have been published with reference to the years which have since elapsed.

Trinity College was a Protestant foundation, endowed for the propagation of the Protestant faith, and more especially designed as a nursery for the clergy of the Established Church in Ireland. The attempt to open its emoluments to Roman Catholics and Dissenters, not to speak of the shock it would have given to the sentiment of property, would have called forth such a storm of Protestant feeling as would have rendered it wholly impracticable. But had it even been practicable, it would not have been just. Maynooth had just been endowed with the utmost munificence for the education of the Roman Catholic priesthood, and theological chairs had been established in Belfast in connexion with the Presbyterian church. Now the only pretext for these endowments was the exclusive character of Trinity College. They were designed to establish a sort of equilibrium between the leading religious sects, at least so far as clerical education was concerned: had, therefore, the exclusiveness of Trinity College been done away, the balance would have been destroyed, and could only have been restored by the withdrawal of the Maynooth grant, and of the fund destined for the education of the Presbyterian clergy. It is questionable whether the Roman Catholic Church, at least, would have purchased religious equality in the University of Dublin at this price.*

No less inadmissible was the second plan. Fairly to have carried it out, it would have been necessary to establish collegiate institutions for all the religious denominations existing in Ireland; and a bare enumeration of these would suffice to show that a measure having this scope would have been utterly repugnant to the religious feelings of the country at large. But again, such a measure would have been decidedly retrograde. It will scarcely be questioned that the sectarian spirit is sufficiently strong in Ireland, but this would have intensified it a hundred-

* Here is Lord Stanley's review of the state of things Ministers had to deal with. (We quote from his speech on introducing the Colleges Bill to the House of Lords):—"I think that as you have given your sanction to an exclusive system in Trinity College, Dublin, for the purpose of supporting clergymen of the Established Church, and as you have connected theological professors of the Presbyterian creed with the Presbyterian Institution at Belfast; so do I think you have wisely and liberally agreed to contribute to the education of the Roman Catholic Priesthood by endowing the College of Maynooth. All these are, however, theological endowments: when dealing with the laity of these three persuasions, I do entreat of your lordships to throw, if possible, one drop of sweetness into that amount of bitterness, which too unhappily prevails throughout Ireland, and permit the youth of that country to be educated in common and under the same teachers, in all those branches of learning which do not, and which cannot affect their religious opinions."—(Hansard, lxxxii. p. 734.) The language of Sir R. Peel is to the same effect, but less rhetorical.—(See Hansard, *Ib.* p. 366.) Lord Stanley stated the case too broadly.

fold; it would have raised throughout the country a series of fortresses, to which the various religious sects would have rallied for the maintenance of a war without truce or herald. Even the small modicum of united education given in the University of Dublin would have ceased, and the reign of exclusiveness been made complete. Lastly, the primary education of the country was conducted on the combined principle, and it was not easy to see on what ground the opposite principle should be applied to the higher education. Such an inconsistency was in truth plainly indefensible; and thus arose the question whether it was expedient to retrace our steps, and for the sake of having the separate system in our colleges introduce it in our elementary schools.

Such a question was easily answered. It would, indeed, have been strange perverseness to have tied again the only knot of the Irish difficulty which had been loosed with complete success. Not only was the combined system alone tenable in theory, but its prodigious growth had shown its singular adaptation to the circumstances of the country. It was this consideration which mainly swayed the minds of the Government in its favour. They wished to complete a work which had been so happily inaugurated, and in doing so they were unwilling to forego a principle which had proved itself of marvellous potency. Throughout the discussion on the Colleges Bill, the new colleges are regarded as strictly complementary to the national schools; they are the crown of an edifice designed on the plan of religious equality, and which must not have its symmetry marred by the introduction of anything heterogeneous to its great idea.*

The question of religion having been disposed of in accordance with these views, it became necessary to determine what should be the character of the secular instruction given in the new colleges.

* Thus, it was by an elaborate review of National Education in Ireland that Sir J. Graham introduced the measure; and Sir R. Peel, to cite one passage for all, observes:—"Surely it will be admitted that the education in the new colleges ought, if possible, to be given in common. We should be counteracting the objects for which we founded the National System of Education, where the youths are educated in common, if, after having made those acquaintances in early life, and formed that bond of union which united education establishes, we were to interrupt it just when they were on the threshold of life, and say to them, 'You who were educated in schools must now no longer be educated together.' But if I am to plant new academical institutions here and there throughout the land, making each of them of an exclusive character, with professors of their own faith, of course I shall have an exclusive and separate education in each, and I must forego the advantage I hope to gain." And he adds—"I should relinquish with the deepest regret the prospect of having education in common for the Protestant, Presbyterian, and Catholic youth of Ireland."

We earnestly commend these words to those timid politicians who are tempted to dissociate the fortunes of primary and higher education.

Now, upon this point great misapprehension has prevailed, and still prevails. The idea is, we believe, extensively prevalent that these establishments were intended as a sort of higher schools preparatory to the University of Dublin; and some well-meaning people have expressed their fears that the Colleges are aiming too high, and have wished to recal them to what they believe to be their proper function. But such a notion is no less at variance with the original conception of the authors of the scheme than with the requirements of the case.

The object of the new establishments was, as we have said, to correct the inequalities existing among the various religious denominations as regards education,* and more particularly to compensate for exclusion from the privileges of Dublin University. Now, this being the case, it is plain that the compensation could be considered as other than illusory only on one condition, namely, that the education given in the new institutions should be at least of as high an order as that given in the old. Otherwise it must be assumed that Roman Catholics and Dissenters are willing to be placed on a lower intellectual level than their neighbours of the Established Church. Such an assumption formed no part of the ministerial project. When, therefore, Lord John Russell, with a strange want of appreciation, urged the objection:—

“For the Roman Catholics you establish colleges suitable to the middle classes, which are open to all, and at which persons devoting themselves to commercial pursuits, civil engineering, and professions of a similar nature, receive a good education; but with respect to a

* The selection of the three provincial sites followed naturally from this view. It was thought that the Northern College would be mainly for the advantage of the Presbyterians, while the Roman Catholics would chiefly benefit by the colleges in the South and West. From the speeches of Sir R. Peel and Sir J. Graham, it appears that the selection of the provincial sites was not accidental but of the very essence of the measure; so much so, that if a different selection had been made, the nature of it would have been reversed. To have erected, for example, a single college at Belfast, which, according to a late friendly critic, would have satisfied the exigencies of the case, far from answering the purpose of the Government, would have directly contravened their purpose. It would have aggravated the inequality in the conditions of academic education, which it was their purpose to correct.

In the debate on mixed education during the last session of Parliament, Mr. Longfield is reported to have said that he thought “that the Queen's Colleges in Ireland had been reasonably successful. They had, it is true, been overdone. One college in Belfast would have served all useful purposes, but still it could not be said with truth that they had failed.” From what we have said above it will be seen that the statement exhibits total ignorance of the scope of the measure by which the Queen's Colleges were founded. It forcibly illustrates the importance, in estimating the success or failure of institutions, of judging them with reference to the objects with which they were established, not the far different, perhaps opposed, objects which present themselves to the mind of the critic.

higher education, you find that it is solely to be obtained in the University of Dublin, and that the University of Dublin is presided over by a body exclusively Protestant. Nay more, you find that those scholarships which are intended for the advancement of students in their future career are confined in all cases to Protestants, and that with regard to professorships, such as chemistry or botany, Protestants only can be appointed to them. Here at once is not equality."

To this objection Sir Robert Peel could triumphantly reply: "Such reasoning is altogether founded on mistake. The education we contemplate is not such as you describe. Our purpose is to give 'the best education and that without stint.'"* Had the case been otherwise; had it been proposed to teach in the open colleges only certain lucrative dexterities, while all the higher culture was reserved for the exclusive one, the reasoning of Lord John Russell would have been perfectly conclusive. The Queen's Colleges regarded from the point of view in which ministers presented them, namely, as the means of establishing equality in academic education, would have been a mockery. Far from conciliating the unprivileged classes, they would have put upon them the grossest affront.†

Once it is thus clearly laid down that it is the function of the Queen's Colleges to impart the highest education, the question of determining their curriculum is much simplified. It in effect resolves itself into the more general question—what are the conditions on which the efficiency of university education depends? This is far too wide a subject to be disposed of incidentally. It may not however be out of place to glance at a misconception as to the

* Equally emphatic is the language of Sir James Graham:—"Our opinion is, that if the House shall give effect to this measure, the education thus provided by the State will be, if not superior, at least not inferior, to that provided in the Universities of Scotland, and in the University of Dublin itself." Nor was this the view of the Government alone. Thus, Lord Palmerston, in commenting on the inchoate character of the Government proposition, observes:—"When I consider all the difficulties with which the arrangement of the details must be attended, I am far from blaming her Majesty's Government for not having made an aggregate University a part of their present proposal; but at the same time I must say that their measure will be incomplete, if, sooner or later, they do not combine with it a larger arrangement of this nature."

† The method of solving the difficulties which beset academic education in Ireland, adopted by Sir R. Peel, was not novel. We find that in 1787, the Irish Parliament came to an unanimous resolution, "that the foundation and gradual endowment of a second University within this kingdom, by the aid and authority of Parliament, in addition to the present excellent establishment of Trinity College in this capital, would conduce to the greater perfection of a general system for the improvement of education, and the wider diffusion of science and learning throughout the nation."

requirements of the higher education, which, from the circumstances of the country, may be peculiarly mischievous in Ireland.

The most obvious aspect which Ireland presents, is that of a country of vast industrial resources, the due development of which has been hindered by various causes, not the least potent of which is popular ignorance. Hence we should not find it strange, that the practical tendency, which the reaction against classical learning has everywhere given to education, should in Ireland exhibit itself with singular intensity; that knowledge should there be looked on mainly as ancillary to industry; and that the ultimate test applied to any system of education should be its efficacy in removing obstacles from the career of material improvement on which the nation is entering.

Such a view is perhaps natural, but it is not the less erroneous, shortsighted, and calculated to defeat in the end the object at which it aims. The adoption of an utilitarian standard would, it is obvious from the nature of the case, at once extinguish our highest education. There is a kind of knowledge, and that the loftiest of all, which cannot be estimated by any weights or measures which the practical sense can employ. To be valued it must be possessed. It will not submit to be challenged, nor to justify itself to those who demand from it practical results. This species of knowledge, therefore, cannot lean on popular support. Its appropriate home is in the great seats of learning, and if these sink to the level of popular thought it will wither and die. Hence the necessity of securing the independence of universities by national endowments. "If we were asked," says Mr. Mill, "for what end, above all others, endowed universities exist, or ought to exist, we should answer—to keep alive philosophy. . . . To educate common minds for the common business of life, a public provision may be useful, but it is not indispensable; nor are there wanting arguments, not conclusive, yet of considerable strength, to show that it is undesirable. Whatever individual competition does at all, it commonly does best. All things in which the public are adequate judges of excellence, are best supplied when the stimulus of individual interest is most active, and that is when pay is in proportion to exertion. . . . But there is an education of which it cannot be pretended that the public are competent judges: the education by which great minds are formed. To rear up minds with faculties and aspirations above the herd, capable of leading on their countrymen to greater achievements in virtue, intelligence, and social well-being: to do this, and likewise to educate the leisured classes of the community generally, that they may participate, as far as possible, in the qualities of these superior spirits, and be prepared to appreciate them and follow in their steps—these are

purposes requiring institutions of education placed above dependence on the immediate pleasure of that very multitude whom they are designed to elevate. These are the ends for which endowed universities are desirable." If this be true; if the main function of universities is to cherish the higher forms of speculation, and to cultivate the philosophic spirit—that breadth of view which, apart from all special accomplishment, is the one distinctive mark of liberal culture—then, unless the youth of Ireland are to forego the last best gift of academical culture, we must with all earnestness protest against the grovelling policy which would convert the Irish colleges into schools of industry.

Such a policy is not less shortsighted than it is sordid. Human knowledge is not a conglomerate of sciences thrown together in any order. It is an organism, and as such obeys organic laws. If then any part of which it is composed arrogates to itself the functions of the whole or of other parts, the natural results follow—the system is deranged, the vital principle languishes, till at last by a just retribution the offending member sinks under the atrophy which it has diffused throughout the frame. It is thus that particular sciences, when cut off from that which is the "fountain-light of all their being," are starved and distorted into pedantries, which, instead of imparting that comprehensiveness of view which, as we have said, is the great end of all university education, narrow the field of vision to a nutshell, and which, instead of attracting the exclusive regard they claim, fall, from their fruitlessness, under universal contempt.

But it is not merely by neglecting the correlation of the sciences that the utilitarian theory defeats its own purpose. If philosophy is to be fruitfully cultivated, it must have no by-ends. One object, and one alone, it proposes to itself—the discovery of truth; and if deserting its high calling, it substitutes for this some practical result, the pettiness of the aim is at once reflected on the pursuit—science is degraded into a craft, its professors into artisans. In this way everything liberal is at once stripped from education. Teachers, instead of unfolding methods, content themselves with stating conclusions; their teaching is not the living contact of mind with mind, but the inculcation of barren dogmas. All spontaneous activity is arrested; and the triumph of utility is complete when the tree of knowledge becomes an *inutile lignum*, cumbering the soil with which it has no vital connexion.

In thus condemning the narrowness which refers education to the standard of a spurious utility, we are far from overlooking the paramount importance of a recognition of utility in its true sense. Nothing can be more fatal to academic education than the dissidence between the great seats of learning and

the country at large, arising from the blind aversion to the useful evinced by these institutions, and their consequent repugnance to vary their curriculum with the variations of human knowledge. Accordingly, to remove this dissidence has been the great problem of university reformers. They have felt that the primary condition of the prosperity of universities is, that the mental activity which they embody should be in harmony with the movements of the national mind.

The connexion which should subsist between these forces is so admirably stated in the following passage in the "Oxford Essays,"* that we cannot refrain from citing it. "The university must be in intimate connexion with the movement of the world, and its connexion with the State must be determined by the relation of the intellectual activity which the university enshrines and incorporates to the general national activity; for a university is not to be considered an incorporation of teachers only, but one for the support and nurture of the higher intellect of the country. In order even to teach, the teachers must be themselves learners, and in progress in the great school which our own age is to each of us, as we come to understand its spirit and progress. They should be independent, then, but not isolated; they must be in sympathy and quick communion with the general movement of national mind—indeed, they will be themselves no small parts of it; they will at least embody and represent that movement. In its university the national mind will live and work as in its proper organ; here only it will fully develop itself. As the condition of social, and, to some extent, political independence is necessary to prevent material interests from absorbing and stifling studies, so the condition of sympathy with the general mind is necessary, both to sustain the required activity, and to make the university a proper seminary for the education of the national youth."

Regarding the University from this point of view, as a centre which collects to itself the highest and best of the national intellect which it in turn propagates and controls, it follows at once that no element which contributes to form that intellect can be excluded from its curriculum. It must be in truth a *generale studium*, admitting the whole cycle of knowledge, not indeed promiscuously, but each part in the order in which it best fulfils the end of liberal culture. And this points to the true mode of reconciling the requirements of that culture with the claims of utility. Were an university in vital union with all that is best in the great body of speculation diffused throughout the land, the most inveterately practical would hardly impute to it inutility, even though it refused to sanction the claims of certain studies

* "Essay on Oxford Studies." By the Rev. M. Pattison, B.D.

to be the exclusive instruments of education, or again to divest them of their liberal character by bounding them to some practical result.

And this leads us to notice an important use which the foundation of a new university in Ireland might serve, over and above the political gain of establishing education on the basis of religious equality. The principle upon which an university curriculum should be framed is pretty generally admitted. It is agreed by all whose opinion is of weight, that the new studies should be admitted without displacing the old. But beyond this general agreement almost everything remains to be done. How the new studies are to be adjusted to the old—how they are to be pursued so as to impart that mental culture which it was assumed to be the peculiar prerogative of the old to bestow—these great problems, with the numerous questions of detail which they involve, are still to be solved, nor is a solution to be hoped for, save by the method of patient and laborious experiment. Now it is evident that a new university, untrammelled by tradition, and undeterred by false pride from the confession of mistake and failure, is much better fitted to conduct such experiments than a venerable institution, chained to the past and labouring under the prestige of infallibility. In this way a new university might be made available for purposes wider than national—it might afford an arena whereon to test and assign their true value to educational reforms. Its successes and failures would be alike valuable to those older and more conservative foundations with which it would be brought into rivalry.

All these considerations might have been present to the founders of the Queen's Colleges, and they all, it will be observed, point in the same direction. They suppose that the education given shall be of the highest order—that far from lagging behind, it shall be rather in advance of that given in our ancient seats of learning. No less rigorous in requirement is the motive for extending academic education since called into play by the institution of competitive examinations for the Civil Service.

The design of this great revolution in the public service is thus expressed by the report of the Indian Civil Service Commissioners who inaugurated the movement:—

“It is undoubtedly desirable that the civil servant of the Company should enter on his duties while still young; but it is also desirable that he should have received the best, the most liberal, the most finished education that his native country provides. Such an education is the best preparation for every calling which requires the exercise of the highest powers of the human mind.”

It was a noble conception, and wise as it was noble, to bring our universities into closer connexion with the State, by deriving

from them to the public service that mental cultivation which entitles our professions to the name of liberal; but it would be not merely a frustration but a reversal of this generous policy, if it were found that the system of competitive examinations, instead of increasing the capacity of the service, had merely the effect of degrading the standard of general education. The only effectual safeguard against this danger, which is by no means chimerical, lies in a strict adherence to the programme of the Indian Commissioners—in making the examinations a test of the “best, the most liberal, the most finished education which the country provides.” If this be done, we augur from the movement the happiest results. It will add another link to bind the votaries of utility to the cause of liberal education, by displaying on a conspicuous theatre the advantages to be derived from mental enlargement.

“Comprehensive intellect,” it has been well said, “is nothing in any given sphere of society, until the persons of whom that society consists can be brought to see that such a thing exists. Once its existence understood, and then, like law, or like conscience, which is nothing but a comprehensive understanding of moral relations, its right to judge and to decide is admitted as a matter of course.”*

But if, in obedience to these considerations, the competitive examinations for the leading branches of the public service are pitched on the highest scale, it follows that no educational institutions, which are not willing to be excluded from competition, can suffer their teaching to fall below the required standard. And here again we are brought into sympathy with the strictest utilitarian. Unless the youth of Ireland are to be shut out from the honours and emoluments of some of the most dignified and lucrative offices of the State, the establishments founded to extend to them the blessings of academical education must be placed on a level with the best of those already existing.

On every ground, then, whether of policy or justice, we see that the founders of the Irish Colleges were justified in their magnanimous resolution of making these institutions the means of diffusing the very highest culture; and, further, that circumstances which have since occurred have supplied the strongest reasons for upholding that resolution. It would not, however, be any derogation from the principle involved to admit students who, from want of means or other causes, were debarred from the full measure of an university education, to instruction in particular branches of knowledge. Such a secondary object might be entertained, with great advantage to the commercial and manu-

* “*Essay upon Oxford Studies*,” by Rev. M. Pattison, B.D., cited above. We wish to acknowledge our obligations to this valuable essay for several thoughts in the preceding section.

facturing classes, in a country where industrial education is in so backward a state as it is in Ireland. Nor would the concession be attended with any danger, so long as the teaching body were true to their proper mission. It might be expected that the associates thus admitted to the College lecture-rooms, instead of vulgarizing the studies, would themselves catch a liberal air from the genius of the place.

Having thus briefly sketched what may be called the historic conception of the Queen's Colleges, we proceed now briefly to trace how far this conception has been realized in action.

The first criterion of the success of the Colleges is, of course, the number of students who have entered them. On referring to the Calendar of the Queen's University, we find that the total number of students who had entered the Queen's Colleges from the first session in 1849-50 to March, 1859, amounted to 1786, of whom 1265 were matriculated, 521 non-matriculated—that is, students who have not passed the matriculation examination, and do not pursue all the subjects included in the university curriculum, but particular courses of instruction which they may select.*

In ascertaining the significance of these numbers, the expectations of the public give us no assistance. They are so vague, and so little based upon reflection, that their satisfaction and disappointment are alike valueless. The only sure method of determining the question of failure or success is by comparison with some institution, the position of which is unchallenged. We will take Trinity College, Dublin. The number of students who entered in Dublin during the ten years mentioned above was 2745. Hence the ratio of the average annual entrances of the institutions compared over a period of ten years is as 178 to 274. Such an average, however, would do injustice to the Queen's Colleges, the numbers of which are steadily increasing. Thus in the year 1858-59, 196 new students entered, while in the present year the number amounts to 207.†

If we left the matter here,—if we had ascertained simply the

* We are informed by a Belfast Professor, to whose college the great majority of the non-matriculated students belong, that a large proportion of this class are medical students attending *all* the classes required in the medical curriculum—a curriculum embracing such subjects as modern languages, chemistry, natural philosophy, natural history, botany, &c. It would be obviously unjust to the Queen's Colleges to ignore this class of students in the comparisons we are instituting. On the other hand, we have no desire to place them on a level with the matriculated students. The fairest course seems to be, to give in each instance the sum total of the Queen's Colleges' students, adding the proportion which the two classes of which they are made up bear to one another.

† Of these, 158 are matriculated, 49 non-matriculated.

fact that the number of annual entrances in the Queen's Colleges was to that in Trinity College, Dublin, in the proportion of 207 to 274, we should be justified in saying that, looking to mere numbers, there is no reason to complain of the success of the new foundations. But this is very far from being the whole of the case. There are circumstances which render such a result not a little remarkable.

In the first place, the Queen's Colleges, if we make allowance for a small number of students preparing for the Presbyterian Church, are exclusively lay establishments, while Trinity College is the great seminary of the Irish branch of the Established Church. We do not know the proportion of students who enter Dublin with a view to the Church; but it is very large—far more than equal to the excess over the entrances at the Queen's Colleges.

Secondly, there are few private schools in Ireland at which a classical education can be obtained, while the endowed schools, being intimately connected with Dublin by exhibitions tenable alone in that University, send but a small fraction of their pupils to the Queen's Colleges. Thus we find that of 694 students entered at Queen's College, Belfast, up to 1856, only twenty-six had been educated at endowed schools.

But, thirdly, it is of still greater moment to bear in mind, that while in the Queen's Colleges residence and attendance on lectures are enforced, a student may, and the great majority of students do, obtain a degree in Dublin without residing or attending lectures, simply by passing two examinations in the course of each academic year. The facility thus afforded of obtaining degrees naturally attracts to the University of Dublin many who would otherwise never go to a university at all. Thus, we may presume, that this is the main inducement to the fifty English, Scotch, and Welsh students who, we are informed, annually seek admission in Dublin.* It is obvious, therefore, that in estimating by the experience of Dublin the number of students which may reasonably be expected in the Queen's Colleges, we should leave out of view not only this class—which might fairly be omitted upon other grounds in a question relating to *Irish* education, but all those who, like them, are influenced by the condition of non-residence. Without this we can have no common measure between the terms of our comparison. It would be preposterous to place on the same footing the loose tie of attendance on examinations, and the intimate connexion involved in continued residence.

Now, if on these grounds we limit our comparison to the

* Report of Dublin University Commissioners, p. 56.

students *attending lectures* in the institutions we are comparing, we find that in the year preceding that in which the Dublin University Commissioners reported (1851-52),* the total number of undergraduates in Trinity College was, in the first term, 411; in the second, 361; and in the third, 196, of whom, however, only 93 got credit for attendance: while the number of students on the rolls of the Queen's Colleges at the present moment is 546†, the great mass of whom will attend throughout all three terms, the minimum requirement of the College Council from those who wish to get credit for their academic year being attendance during two terms. Hence it appears, that unless the numbers in residence at Dublin have very much increased since 1852, the Queen's Colleges have, on the most moderate computation, at least as many students in that relation to them which is alone recognised by the Universities of England and Scotland, as that University.

Now, when we consider all these circumstances,—that these Colleges are lay establishments, cut off from the profession which has hitherto in Ireland made the largest demand for academical education; that in many districts it is difficult, in some impossible, to obtain the rudiments of a classical education, while the few good schools that exist are for the most part practically severed from the Queen's Colleges by their connexion with Trinity College, Dublin; that these institutions, for the first time in the history of academical education in Ireland, enforce residence on their students, though the Dublin University Commission, after mature consideration, deliberately declined to recommend that residence should be made indispensable for students of a far higher social standing; when we add that the youth who, at great sacrifice, leave their homes to reside near the Colleges, cannot compensate themselves with the prospect of those brilliant prizes

* We have been unable to obtain returns for later years.

† Of these 452 are matriculated, 94 non-matriculated. In the above comparison some deduction must be made for a small number of graduates who reside at the colleges. The following table shows that in every year since the colleges settled into their normal state, with one exception, the number of students has shown an increase. Thus,

In the Session,	1852-3	. . .	359
	1853-4	. . .	379
	1854-5	. . .	410
	1855-6	. . .	438
	1856-7	. . .	454
	1857-8	. . .	445
	1858-9	. . .	490

While, as we have said, there are 546 students attending lectures in the present session.

which the older universities have it in their power to bestow,* any more than they can maintain themselves by tuition—a resource so largely turned to account by the resident students of

* The entire sum placed at the disposal of each College for prizes to undergraduates is 1100*l.* Of this sum 100*l.* is distributed at the end of each session in book premiums of from 1*l.* to 2*l.* each; the remaining 1000*l.* is divided into scholarships tenable for one year, varying in amount from 24*l.* to 15*l.*, according to the faculty or school to which the scholarship belongs. There are besides ten scholarships in each College, limited to graduates, and likewise tenable for one year, of the value of 40*l.* each. It thus appears that these so-called scholarships are small exhibitions to assist students in keeping themselves at college. Any one acquainted with the helps and rewards held out to students at the old universities will perceive at a glance their insignificance. Their aggregate amount is in fact less than that of the prizes open to Roman Catholics in Dublin, although it is familiarly said that Roman Catholics are excluded from the emoluments of that University. When this is borne in mind, and it is further remembered that the Queen's Colleges, unlike Dublin, insist on residence with its attendant expense, the futility of the assertion which is sometimes made—that it is solely by these scholarships that students are attracted to the colleges—will be abundantly manifest.

The statements on this and other subjects connected with the Colleges made by Mr. Hennessy and endorsed by Mr. Maguire, are so instructive as to the manner in which the opposition to the Queen's Colleges has been conducted that we may be excused for noticing them. It is only necessary to premise that, as Mr. Hennessy received his education at one of the Queen's Colleges, his allegations must have been made with a full knowledge of the facts of the case. Mr. Hennessy says, that "the Commissioners (for inquiring into the state of the Queen's Colleges) state, that the total number of those who entered the Colleges since their opening in 1849 to 1858, is 1209;" that "the total number of scholarships offered to these students in the same period is 1326;" adding, "it thus appears, assuming that every student was presented with a scholarship, that there were still left, in this case, twenty-nine scholarships which could not be filled up simply for want of persons to take them." Now, first, the Commissioners do not state that the number of students who had entered the colleges previous to 1858 was 1209. This is the number of *matriculated* students: the total number of students as given in the Commissioners' Report, is 1686. But, secondly, Mr. Hennessy is perfectly aware that these scholarships are vacated at the end of each year, and that, as former scholars are re-eligible, the same person holds, in the ordinary case, three, in many instances, four or more of them in succession. Indeed, we have no doubt that Mr. H. has himself been the holder of several of these valuable prizes. In what language, then, shall we characterize the representation which more than implies that only one of the specified scholarships had been held by each student, and thence deduces the conclusion that the number of students has fallen short of the number of prizes? At the time Mr. Hennessy made this statement, the number of students in the three Colleges was 493, while the total number of scholarships was 169, and it was by no means necessary that they should all have been filled up.

Taking the same basis for his calculations, and wishing to present "the failure of the Queen's Colleges" from another point of view, Mr. Maguire, in an interview with the late Chancellor of the Exchequer upon the subject of granting a charter to the Catholic University, stated the average number of students since the opening of the colleges as "40 in each college in each year." A reference to official returns would have shown Mr. Maguire that the average number of

Dublin; when we remember, lastly, that the Colleges have since their opening been exposed to the most unscrupulous opposition on the part of the zealots of all parties; and yet find that, despite all these adverse circumstances, their lecture-rooms

students in each College had been 135, and that at the time he spoke it was, as may be seen from the number given above, 164. A conclusion so glaringly in conflict with fact, might have led Mr. Maguire to suspect his premisses. But this gentleman is obviously not familiar with the *reductio ad absurdum*. If facts did not square with his theory—*tant pis pour les faits*. As it was, his statement passed unrebuted, and the Chancellor of the Exchequer charitably acquiesced in his assurance that he was actuated by no feeling of hostility to the Queen's Colleges.

To return to Mr. Hennessy. This gentleman accuses the Queen's Colleges Commissioners of misstating the number of students who have entered. The Commissioners give the number of entrances, matriculated and non-matriculated, since the opening of the colleges as 1768; adding, "that this number represents only 1686 individuals, 82 non-matriculated students having subsequently entered as matriculated students." Mr. H. supports his charge by representing as included in the smaller number 1686, the twice-counted names, by the elimination of which the larger number was reduced! Mr. Hennessy professes to have discovered some curious properties in numbers. His manipulation of statistics is certainly somewhat singular. One other specimen of his manner, and we close this too protracted note. Commenting, in his place in Parliament, on the lavish manner in which the Queen's University bestowed its gold medals, Mr. Hennessy pointed his observations with a contrast of the wise parsimony of the University of Dublin in bestowing the same distinction. "In the University of Dublin," he said, "four gold medals could not be awarded unless there were 160 candidates, one never being awarded unless there were 40 competitors for it." Now, with reference to the award of gold medals, the difference between the Queen's University and the University of Dublin is simply this, that while in the former only one is awarded in each department—and even this is occasionally withheld, in the latter the number is practically unlimited. In confirmation, the writer may mention two cases which fell within his own knowledge, and he has no reason to think them exceptional. In 1844, there were *four* candidates for classical moderatorship—they all obtained gold medals; and in the preceding year *six* gold medals were awarded to the only *six* candidates who presented themselves for moderatorship in mathematics and physics. The reason why the number of distinctions in the Queen's University is large in proportion to the number of degrees is that, as in the case of the mass of the students, the degrees are valueless save for the distinction they confer, few who are not candidates for honours present themselves at the examination. This last statement displays, indeed, a reckless negligence in making assertions upon matters of which the speaker was wholly ignorant—a negligence most culpable, looking to the audience he was addressing and the importance of the subject, but it is of an entirely different order from the representations of Mr. Hennessy, to which we have before referred. These are of a nature to preclude ordinary criticism. It is lamentable to think that the exigencies of Irish faction should have driven persons naming themselves Conservative to combine with the Ultramontanes in placing in the representation of an important Irish county an obscure young man, whose sole distinction has been derived from such futile attempts to injure the place in which he has received any education he may possess. We have only to hope that the legislature will judge any future contributions he may make to the collective wisdom in the light of those we have here exposed.

are as much frequented as those of the ancient University of Dublin with all its prestige and well-earned fame,—we confess we are wholly at a loss to conceive how the most exigent can bring the objection of failure on the score of numbers. To us the numbers seem far beyond what reason and experience would have warranted us in anticipating before the event.

If failure cannot be predicated of the Queen's Colleges on the score of numbers, no more can it be said that they have failed in their great object of giving united education to the youth of the various religious persuasions. In the ten years, 1849–59, the three great religious communities, which make up the bulk of the population, are thus represented among the matriculated* students:—

Established Church . . .	426
Roman Catholics . . .	445
Presbyterians . . .	343

While the 207 students, who have entered this year, are thus distributed:—

Established Church . . .	60
Roman Catholics . . .	69
Presbyterians . . .	59
Other denominations . .	19

The first thing that strikes us in reading these numbers is, that the Roman Catholics in each case head the list. This is a novelty in the higher education of Ireland, the full importance of which we cannot appreciate without entering a little into detail.

In the year 1850, Mr. Napier, then member for the University of Dublin, stated the number of Roman Catholic students in that University as one-tenth of the whole, and this proportion he justified by saying that it almost exactly corresponded with the comparative wealth of Protestants and Roman Catholics throughout the country (*Hansard*, 110, 737). We have reason to think Mr. Napier's statement rather in excess of the actual number. The total number of Roman Catholics who have entered Dublin during the last ten years is 137, giving an average annual entrance of 13·7, or less than one-twentieth of the whole number of students.† And, though the Queen's Colleges have doubtless caused some diminution in the Roman Catholic entrances in Dublin, we are persuaded that they have not fallen to less than half what they were before the opening of these institutions. We may, therefore, perhaps safely assume that the number of Roman Catholics who annually entered Trinity College before the establishment of the

* The same proportion, we understand, prevailed among the non-matriculated students.

† We have been favoured with these numbers by the courtesy of the Senior Lecturer of Trinity College, Dublin.

Queen's Colleges was from 20 to 25, giving a total of from 200 to 250 for ten years.

Now, during the first decade of their existence, which has just expired, nearly 500 Roman Catholics, if we include non-matriculated students, have been members of the Colleges of Cork and Galway alone—a number, if the above estimate be correct, at least double that of those who entered the University of Dublin, during a corresponding period, at a time when that University had exclusive possession of the higher education of the country. At the present moment, of the 171 students in Cork, 84, or 49 per cent., are Roman Catholics; and at Galway, of 118 students, 69, or 58 per cent., profess the same faith; the proportion in the case of the latter College being an increase of 6 per cent. on the preceding year. Taking the three Colleges, Roman Catholics make up about one-third, while in Dublin, judging from an average of ten years, they amount to one-twentieth, of the entire number of students.

Now, we do not wish to endorse the dictum of Mr. Napier, but we are at least entitled to claim his assent and that of all who do, to the complete success of the Queen's Colleges in diffusing academic education among the Roman Catholics. The results attained must be indeed surprising to all who, like Mr. Napier, were disposed to regard the distribution of education among Roman Catholics and Protestants as a question of comparative wealth. This was a consideration not to be overlooked indeed, but it was far from being a full account of the matter. To those who have considered the virtue which resides in a just principle, it will not seem strange that it should burst not merely the trammels of poverty, but the far more tenacious fetters of ecclesiastical despotism. That this has been achieved, we may now confidently hope. When in the stronghold of Roman Catholicism, under the immediate eye of Dr. MacHale, the only fruit of the recent pastoral has been an increase of 6 per cent. in the relative proportion of the Roman Catholic students of the Western College, we may reasonably conclude that the confidence of the Roman Catholic laity has been effectually gained, and that the only obstacle to the indefinite expansion of the College is the difficulty of the means of obtaining preparatory education.

Before leaving this topic, we would add, that the policy of the Government in selecting the sites of the colleges has been fully justified by the event. The Colleges in the West and South have chiefly benefited the Roman Catholics, who, as we have seen, at present supply 53 per cent. of the entire number of students—a very large proportion looking to the relative wealth of the different denominations; and the Northern College has been mainly advantageous to the Presbyterians, who make up more than

three-fifths of its students; while in all the Colleges the youth of the less numerous religious communities have not failed to mix with the majority in the generous rivalry of academic contests.*

Passing to the quality of the education given in the Queen's Colleges, on this score but little needs be said on their behalf. The competence of the professors has, we believe, never been questioned, any more than their zeal, not only in maintaining the existing standard of education, but in elevating it to the highest point which the circumstances of the country admit. Nor have their exertions been unrewarded. Fortunately, on this subject, we are not left to conjecture. We have seen that the competitive examinations for the Indian Civil Service were designed to be a test of "the best, the most liberal, the most finished education, which the country provides;" and a careful study of the papers set will show that the examiners have not willingly let them fall below this standard. The examinations are in effect framed on the model of those to which in the universities candidates for the highest honours at the close of their undergraduate course are subjected. They supply, therefore, a fair criterion of the comparative efficiency of our educational institutions. As the universities bring into concourse the youth of their affiliated colleges, so these examinations introduce into a still wider arena the youth of the several universities. It is, then, with just pride that the Queen's University appeals to the fact that, in this competition, looking merely to

* It has of late been a favourite device of the opponents of the Colleges to gain credit for candour by admitting the success of the College of Belfast, in order that they may assail with more effect the sister Colleges. We have before shown how little a single college at Belfast would have answered the purposes for which the Queen's Colleges were founded; but if this do not suffice, and success, as measured by numbers, be appealed to, the Colleges of Cork and Galway have no reason to shrink from comparison with that of Belfast. The following table gives the number of students attending lectures in the Queen's Colleges in the current session, and the population of the towns and provinces to which they belong. It shows that the Colleges of Cork and Galway, in the aggregate, have a larger number in attendance, in proportion to the town populations, than the College of Belfast, and almost as large, in proportion to the population of the provinces, notwithstanding the great superiority of Ulster in wealth and in the means of procuring education.

	Population of the town.	Population of the province.	Students matriculated.	Students non- matriculated.	Total.
Belfast	100,301	2,011,756	197	60	257
Cork	83,745	1,857,412	144	27	171
Galway	23,605	1,010,211	111	7	118

It will be further observed that the main superiority of Belfast rests on its non-matriculated students. This is only what might be expected. As this class of students comes, for the most part, from the surrounding district, it will be proportionate to the number of its inhabitants. The total number of matriculated students from the opening of the colleges to March, 1859, is thus distributed:—Belfast, 506; Cork, 473; Galway, 337.

the number of places obtained, it stands next in order to the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, and Dublin. If, however, we regard the quality of the answering, the result is still more in favour of the Queen's University. In the only years in which the Universities we have named came into conflict, the average answering of the successful candidates from each stood as follows:—

	1856.		1857.		1859.
Oxford	1948	.....	1982	.....	2103.
Cambridge	2062	.....	2207	.....	2020.
Dublin	2473	.....	2082	.....	2139.
Queen's University	1955	.....	2261	.....	2160.*

It thus appears that in the last two years the candidates from the Queen's University stood first, in the preceding year third, in the list. This is sufficiently striking, but we cannot forbear commemorating a signal instance of success obtained by one of the Colleges. It will be ever memorable in the annals of the College of Belfast, that, while numbering not 200 students, it bore away, at this examination, from all our highest seats of learning, the first, fourth, and ninth of twelve vacant places.†

So much for the direct action of the Queen's Colleges upon the country: no less important has been their indirect influence. We shall endeavour to point out some instances in which it may be clearly traced.

1. It is surely more than a chance coincidence that, within the

* We have excluded the subjects of Arabic and Sanscrit, which are not taught in the Queen's University. If included, they would turn the scale slightly in favour of Dublin in the last year.

† Of the 113 East Indian writerships which have hitherto been given away by open competition,

The University of Oxford obtained	38
" Cambridge	26
" Dublin	18
" Queen's University	9
" University of London	7
" Scotland (five Universities)	10
" Other Institutions	5

We are far from wishing to convey the impression that the general standard of attainment amongst the students of the Queen's Colleges is as high as is desirable. The deplorable state of intermediate education renders it impossible to make the matriculation examination very rigorous; and thus, while the scholarship of the vast majority of those who enter is extremely slender, there are amongst them few or none of those highly trained youths who go up to compete for honours in the old universities. The professors have striven hard to remedy this evil, by minute subdivision of classes, and the adaptation of their teaching to the varying wants of the students, but they are deeply sensible how much their efficiency is impaired by the waste of power which this involves. It is obvious that a consideration of these circumstances greatly enhances the merit of the successes which have been achieved.

last ten years, nearly the whole curriculum of the University of Dublin has been changed; all the leading changes being approximations to the curriculum of the Queen's University. Nor is it merely the courses of study which have been revolutionized; the efficiency of the teaching has, in the same period, been vastly increased. Professorial chairs, which had become almost sinecures, have been rehabilitated, and raised by their occupants to a position of dignity and usefulness. Thus the chair of rhetoric has, by the present able professor, been developed into an admirable school of English literature, which has reflected the highest distinction on the University; while the chair of Greek, which used to be an incident of a senior fellowship, has, with the happiest results, been conferred on an accomplished scholar, whose claim was his fitness for the post. And these are but specimens of an activity, which, penetrating into every department of the University, has resulted in changes so radical, that Dublin, far from being obnoxious to the old obloquy of Universities—"morosa retentio morum,"—may, in the opinion of some, seem liable to the opposite charge of over-sensitiveness to public opinion. Can we be mistaken in attributing this reforming spirit to the emulation of the Queen's Colleges, or in discerning the same influence in the liberality, which has recently endowed scholarships in the same University (some of them of great value), open to candidates of all religious persuasions?

2. Such has been the silent recognition which the ancient University of Ireland has given to her youthful sister. Elsewhere the recognition has been, if not more obvious, more avowed. We have already ventured to say that new universities possess peculiar facilities for making those experiments, by which alone it can be determined what position the modern studies are to occupy in our university system; and that it is the wisdom of ancient institutions which possess less flexibility to profit by their experience in the way of encouragement or warning. We have lately had a pleasing example of the acknowledgment of this relativity of function in the case of the University of Cambridge. In the year 1855, the Secretary of the Queen's University received a letter from the Regius Professor of Law in the University of Cambridge, in which, after requesting copies of the University Examination Papers, and stating that he is a member of a committee appointed for the purpose of entirely remodelling the course of lectures for the faculty of law in the University to which he belongs, that gentleman goes on to say, "the questions in the Queen's Colleges for the degree of LL.B., as well as those on jurisprudence, strike me as being so admirably adapted to students of the principles of law, that I should wish to make use of them as much as I can." And again, in reply to a

letter from the Secretary, with which had been transmitted to him some copies of the University and College Examination Papers, Dr. Abdey says,—

“I sincerely trust that in many points we shall imitate the system adopted in the Queen’s Colleges in our proposed new classes in this University, as I feel no doubt of the benefit we shall derive by so doing. I speak with more boldness on the subject of the questions in jurisprudence and civil law, as that is my own department here. . . . But it is not only in their law papers that your colleges show their merit and utility. The whole system of education pursued by you is, in my humble opinion, so good, and so well suited to the times, that I sincerely trust that it may defy all opposition.”*

That a Cambridge professor, acting on behalf of his University, should thus have condescended to seek suggestions from a new University, having nothing but its merits to recommend it, is no less honourable to himself than to the institution which he consulted. But what we wish to direct particular attention to is this, that we have here distinct proof that the Queen’s University has exercised an influence beyond its immediate sphere—that it has rendered important service in defining the position of at least a portion of those subjects which modern reformers have introduced into our university curriculum. We may add, that the favourable opinion which Dr. Abdey has here expressed of the Law School of the Queen’s University, is confirmed by the fact, that the law studentship conferred by the English Inns of Court, the highest distinction open to candidates for the legal profession, has been, within the last few years, *twice* won by students of the Queen’s University.

3. We have reserved for the last what may perhaps be regarded as the most important of the services rendered to education by the Queen’s Colleges. Through them was first discovered the wretched condition of intermediate education in Ireland. The University of Dublin deriving its students from every part of the United Kingdom, and connected by exhibitions with the few good schools existing in Ireland, did not feel, at least did not complain of, an evil which yet was effectually arresting the development of liberal education throughout the country. On the other hand, when the Queen’s Colleges were called into existence, being cut off from these resources, and compelled by the rule enforcing residence to rely for support on the districts in which they were placed, they were not long in discovering that their usefulness was indefinitely diminished by the insufficiency, and, in many cases, the total absence of the means of procuring pre-

* Addresses delivered at meetings of the Senate of the Queen’s University, to confer degrees, by the Right Hon. Maziere Brady, Vice-Chancellor of the University, p. 48.

paratory education. The dearth of schools, apparent in every province, reached in Connaught its utmost intensity, where, in a population of upwards of a million, 625 pupils were attending schools called classical, but the great majority of which were utterly inefficient. Taking the whole country, it was estimated that the means of acquiring the rudiments of a classical education were denied to three-fourths of the people. To remedy this state of things was a question of life and death with the Queen's Colleges. It was clear they could never, in any adequate sense, fulfil their purpose, if they had to look for students to a narrow area, within which they were further embarrassed by the competition of a privileged institution which offered education on far easier terms. This, it was felt, and not the religious difficulty, was the true obstacle to their growth. Accordingly, those interested in their well-being have never ceased to urge upon the Government the necessity of completing the good work they have begun, by bringing within the people's reach the blessings which now, in too many instances, mock their grasp. These exertions, we rejoice to think, have at the last a fair prospect of being crowned with success; Mr. Cardwell having recently intimated, that it is the intention of the Government to introduce a measure on the subject of intermediate education during the present session of Parliament.

We have said that the palmary service rendered by the Queen's Colleges is the detection of this chasm in our educational system; and we think we were warranted in the statement, because the filling up of the void is the one condition on which depends the extension of university education in Ireland. Universities without schools are but castles in the air. And perhaps we may be permitted further to observe, that the history of this discovery abundantly justifies the wisdom of the new foundations. The University of Dublin, from its cosmopolitan character and the speciality of its object, could live, and even maintain a brilliant career, while practically secluded from three-fourths of the people; but so soon as truly national institutions were erected, destined to no other end than with missionary spirit to bear the light of knowledge into the dark places of the land, the logic of facts at once revealed the want, and demanded for the new establishments, if their purpose was not to be in a great measure frustrated, that it should be forthwith supplied.

It was our intention to have considered, in conclusion, the scheme of higher education which the Roman Catholic hierarchy have set up in opposition to the united system, and to have discussed the policy of granting a charter to the University they have established. But we have already exceeded our limits, and are precluded from entering on these topics. We do

not, however, much regret the enforced omission. We have stated, as clearly as we could within the space allowed us, the case of the Queen's Colleges, and we gladly remit to the reader's candour the claims of an institution based on the antagonistic principle, and the question how far it is deserving of the recognition and encouragement of the State. If we may judge from the success which the Catholic University has hitherto achieved, the Irish people seem to have formed a tolerably decided opinion on these matters for themselves.

THE END.

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