

4
The Minister General
with the Author's complimentary

A SERMON

ON THE

IRISH EDUCATION QUESTION,

PREACHED IN THE PARISH CHURCH OF ST. BRIDE'S,

ON 21ST JANUARY, 1866.

BY

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A SERMON.

COLOSSIANS iii. 20.

“ Children, obey your parents in all things : for this is well pleasing unto the Lord.

I HAVE undertaken, with no little diffidence, to advocate before you, my Brethren, on this day, the cause of your Parochial Schools. Believe me, this duty is entered on, with earnest prayer to God for his blessing upon my endeavour to discharge it faithfully—that I may speak the words of wisdom and of truth, on the “ Education Question”—(a subject specially connected with the cause of these Schools, as they are the only Parish Schools of our Church, in this city, which have accepted aid from the National Board)—that I may speak in the spirit of Christian love and forbearance, and that, at the same time, I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak. And may I not hope, may I not believe, that your prayers, my dear Brethren, ascend with mine to the throne of grace, for this Divine guidance and this Christian courage.

With respect to the Schools themselves, I shall

be very brief. They are well known to many of you, as Parishioners of St. Bride's ; and to your most liberal support of these Schools, their efficiency is in a great measure to be ascribed. Six or seven years ago the average attendance was forty-five, now it is one hundred and twelve ; then there were but two Teachers, now seven. The expenditure on Salaries and School Requisites was then £52, it has last year reached £179. During the last three years these Schools have been receiving aid from the National Board, and thereby acquiring undoubted benefits, but I cannot attribute to that cause altogether the present satisfactory state of their resources ; to do so would be unjust to you and to your pastor. The payments made by the Board amounted to £71 ; more than £100, therefore, has been raised, partly by an Annual Charity Sermon, principally by local contributions for the Schools of St. Bride's Parish.

There are at present on the rolls of the Day Schools one hundred and seventy-nine children, and on the Sunday School roll one hundred and twelve. The children of our communion receive daily instruction in the Holy Word of God, and in the formularies and doctrines of our Catholic and Apostolic Church. And they, with twenty Roman Catholic children, receive the great advantages of the united secular instruction imparted by the National Board. Twenty years' experience

has taught me, how great is the benefit conferred on a parish by the National System, and the experience of three years lately has taught me, how great is the loss where that system is not in action.

Further let me add, that the success of these Schools has been tested by the fact, that four prizes last year were obtained by its pupils in the Government School of Design.

I do not refer to all this detail so much to praise you, as to make my own appeal short and confident ; your past liberality is the best guarantee for the future support of your Parish Schools. Where such interest is not only felt and expressed, but honestly acted on, there, we may be sure, the true estimate is formed of the value of the Parochial System, there, it is understood, that the School is the nursery for the congregation.

When you are gone, and gathered to your fathers, these children are to take your places : some of them, may we not believe, to rise in the world, and to be in their day the supporters of the Schools, to which they owed almost everything : many of them, to continue poor, but with intelligence quickened by their training, with habits of order, with the results of early discipline, to be the attentive and regular hearers of that glorious message, of which the honorable commendation uttered from the lips of its Divine author, was,

"The poor had the Gospel preached unto them," and from the inspired Historian, "the common people heard him gladly."

Oh ! yes, my Brethren, our beloved Church must, for her own safety in this land, if it were for no higher motive, strive to retain her poor : she must seek to extend her roots, and to spread far and wide, and then the tree of the Lord's planting will not be in danger of being overthrown by every passing storm. It will not then be a mass of foliage and of showy blossom, which, for want of the nourishment drawn from the earth, for want of support from that, which is too often looked on as vile and refuse and trampled under foot, but which, nevertheless, contains all the elements of growth, perishes branch by branch, fades year by year, and at length is cut down as a cumberer of the ground !

May God avert such a judgment from the Irish branch of the United Church ! May He cause all of us to see that the best safety lies in the care with which the spiritual and temporal interests of our poorer brethren are regarded ; may He grant that the rich may be profuse, and those in competent circumstances liberal, and all determined to supply means, that the very best secular instruction, and the full religious education of our Scriptural Church, shall be imparted to the children of her poorer members ;

and at the same time that these inestimable benefits shall be free and open to all children who, under the God-appointed sanction of their parents, will receive them.

Charity Sermons are recognised as exceptional cases ; the preacher is not expected to expound a passage of Scripture, to explain a doctrine, or teach some moral duty, as is usual in the ordinary discourses from the pulpit ; moreover, if the preacher be a comparative stranger to the congregation, he is permitted to speak freely his own sentiments and his peculiar views, without subjecting himself to the charge of egotism ; because in referring constantly to his own opinion, the design is manifestly to take on himself solely, the responsibility of the statements that are brought forward.

In approaching the great question, sufficiently well known to you by the name of "the Education Question," I trust I shall speak in the spirit of true humility and of Christian charity. It ought to be especially easy for me to speak moderately and kindly, because I believe, it is possible, that both the advocates and the opponents of the National System have, generally speaking, acted conscientiously : and in a case of this kind such a possibility being once admitted, the great probability, the moral certainty, that both sides are acting in accordance with their convictions follows. In this it resembles the important ques-

tion of the observance of days, a question on which, strictly speaking, there could be only a true and a false view. Yet St. Paul declares that the great criterion was not the observance or non-observance of the day, but whether it was observed or not observed to the Lord, and that every man (whatever view he took) was fully persuaded in his mind. Here we find the inspired Apostle setting on the very highest pinnacle the decisions of conscience. Now is it not possible, that before one class of minds, while prayerfully considering the Education Question, one great principle constantly presents itself, namely, the Word of God is the only rule of faith, and the true standard of morals. Let it be granted that this man, inquiring after his duty on the subject, is one to whom that blessed book has truly been the guide of life ; one also who has sworn at the sacred altar of his Church, to instruct the people committed to his charge out of that book ; one who has vowed to drive away all strange and erroneous doctrine, contrary to God's Word—suppose also that he continually ponders over these things in their theoretical practicability for all times, and places, and persons. It is no uncommon thing to see the minds of men thus exclusively occupied by one great principle, and all secondary principles, not put in their proper subordination, but completely lost sight of. With such a person, it is impossible to

imagine that he will say, "I will take aid from the National Board ;" "I will confine myself to religious instruction for an appointed hour ; and I will let the poor ignorant Roman Catholic children go away each day without hearing in my school one single chapter of the Word of God." Surely, my Brethren, when it is possible, nay, rather when it is undoubtedly a fact, that the majority of our Clergy think thus, we must respect their conscientious convictions. God forbid, that we should ever speak a word slightlying, or contemptuously of those servants of their Lord. God forbid, that we should judge another man's servant, "to his own master he standeth or falleth." Let us rather begin by honoring this claim, that the voice of conscience urges them to make, to be unrestricted in the use of God's Word ; for all the strength of our side of the question lies in the respect that is due to the rights of conscience.

We may believe firmly, I have said, that these convictions are genuine, but what can be done practically to satisfy them ? What can be done, when the first difficulty that meets us in practice is, that this conscientious conviction will not permit them to yield to the conscientious convictions of others ? Surely in such a conclusion, there is evidence, that in the reasoning there must be either a false premiss, or a misapplication of a true principle. Just as in mathematical reasoning, if we ar-

rived at the conclusion, “that the part was greater than the whole,” we start back, and retrace our steps, and are sure to find a false premiss, or an erroneous hypothesis. Similarly, when they arrive at the point, that their consciences will not permit them to attend to the dictates of the consciences of others, this ethical “reductio ad absurdum,” should make them return on their reasoning, and examine again carefully each premiss, or question the applicability of their great leading principle.

I speak thus of the great and good men who have led the Church Education party; of course, there are numbers, who have not really examined for themselves, but who fancy perhaps that they have done so, and who follow the party, because they have lived in the atmosphere of its opinions; who know well indeed their side of the question, but who are strangely ignorant, or misinformed about the plainest rules and principles of the system they condemn.*

And now in describing the formation of the opinions of the leaders of the National System, I must first put out of our account a large party similar to the last, men who do not, or who cannot

* The two important rules (2 and 14) are constantly mis-stated. The English National System is generally referred to, omitting all reference to the Conscience Clause. Trinity College is brought forward, though it is obviously conducted on the principle of a non-vested National School under Protestant Patrons.

form an estimate of the question and of its difficulties ; who do the greatest injury to our cause, and who are generally the loudest in their wonder at the obstinacy or stupidity of others. But those who led this question, and put it on its proper basis, were men of conscience—men of large and enlightened views—brave and true men. They themselves men of conscience, and therefore ready to listen to the conscientious convictions of others, from whom they most widely differed—men of large and enlightened ideas, because to maintain the stringency of our vows, and yet to raise a doubt about their just interpretation, to uphold their spirit, rather than their letter, to prefer a stated and fixed mode of carrying them into effect, rather than a general and random method ; to assert and act on all this was, at the time, a giant's stride in the advance of just and liberal opinions. And they were true and brave ! for it does require truth and courage, in answer to the most popularly telling arguments, that I have just alluded to, derived from the supremacy of the Word of God, and from our ordination vows, to say, “In what way, *practically*, are those vows observed”? “Can we, or do you yourselves, who press us with these arguments, observe them without restriction for all persons, and all times, and all places”?

Once admit exceptions in time, place, and

persons, and the whole force of the appeal to the ordination vow, as an argument in its usual form, is gone. If exceptions may be made, and are constantly made, then it becomes a matter of detail. Firstly—how and when an exception is to be made? and secondly—the case is to be examined as to the persons for whom an exception is legitimate.

1st.—We need hardly pause to give instances of the practical interpretation of those vows, yet for a moment we may remind our opponents, that they meet Roman Catholics, and Dissenters, Presbyterians, and Socinians constantly, and though we are not driven to suppose that they never take an opportunity with any, to point out errors of doctrine by an appeal to the Word of God, certainly time and place limit their practical use of those vows, with regard to men whom they meet every day in business or in society. And yet we are told at our peril not to neglect them with respect to little children, and to be ready in the midst of History or Geography lesson, to interrupt the School business, and teach the Word of God; or to point out, if it seem convenient, an error of Romanism.

We need not push this argument further than its most obvious application. In the same way that the feelings of good taste, the laws of society, or respect for what is known to be the settled convictions of others, limit the constant use of our

right to attack the opinions of others, so also it is lawful to arrange, or enter into a compact, that during certain hours we will abstain from "religious instruction" in our Schools. Though there be no written code to turn to in the case of the laws of society, yet as John Locke has well pointed out, its laws are more sure to be attended to than either the law of God or the law of the land. When these advocates of "no restriction on the appeal to the Word of God" meet with Roman Catholics, whom they believe to be in dangerous error, and are not only silent on the subject, but go into society, knowing that they are just as much restricted, as if "secular conversation" were hung upon the walls, they place themselves in the very same position as the patron of a National School, who agrees to put up "secular instruction" for hours, and during that time to abstain from "religious instruction." In the one case it is an open and explicit rule, in the other it is a silent, and implicit covenant; but both are equally binding in practice; break the law, or violate the covenant, and in both cases the offender will be punished similarly, by exclusion from the advantages (whatever they be) of the society, whose code he has rejected.—It is important to add, all these laws that society has imposed are observed with respect to secular conversation and religious conversation without its being even insinuated that "the Word of God is dethroned,"

that "our ordination vows are broken," and that "the eternal interests of the Protestants committed to our charge are damaged by our time serving and unfaithful yielding to an erroneous creed," and by "our losing the precious opportunities the providence of God has cast in our way." Charges which are constantly made by men, who notoriously recognise as a law of society the very same practice which they denounce as a rule of the Board.

Thus far I have endeavoured to justify by a familiar case the rule of the National Board, which restricts the Religious instruction to appointed hours.

We must pass by the point, though an important one, that the reading books contain a very great amount of religious instruction, that the common principles of the Christian religion are inculcated, and the narrative of both the Old and New Testament History is faithfully given, quite as fully as in Sellon's "Abridgement of Scripture History," a book which was in common use in former years at Protestant Schools.

All this we must omit, in treating of this subject from the pulpit, because no assertion would be sufficient, without reference to the works themselves.

In the second place, let us examine that rule that permits the children to retire, whose parents

or guardians forbid them to be present at the time of religious instruction.*

There is a time in the history of this, as indeed of every controversy, when the combatants abate somewhat in their fierce denunciations, and no longer charge their opponents with desertion of every duty, breaking their vows, violating their consciences, and all those unpardonable offences which, for at least five-and-twenty years, were laid to the charge of the supporters of the National system. It is not much more than five years since an armistice, a pause in the warfare, occurred, and then, that question, which ought to have been the first examined, was seriously asked—"Is it a sin?"† Is it really and truly a sin in the sight of heaven, to permit fathers and mothers to chose for the children whom God has given them, the religious instruction they are to receive? Then apparently for the first time, the question was discussed under the form—"Is it a sin for Roman Catholic parents

* RULE 2, SECTION 4.—"Religious instruction must be so arranged that each School shall be open to children of all communions,—that due regard be had to parental right and authority,—that accordingly no child be *compelled* to receive any religious instruction of which his parents or guardians disapprove, and that the time for giving it be so fixed that no child shall be thereby in effect excluded, directly or indirectly, from the other advantages which the School affords."

† See an excellent pamphlet published anonymously—"Is it a Sin?" Hodges and Smith. 1860.

to forbid their little ones in their tender years to be taught by the ministers of another church, even from the Holy Word of God."

Then, for the first time, the combatants began to view their position, as seen from the camp of their enemies, and to ask, "What would be said, if Protestant parents, for the sake of secular education, sent their children to the priest to be instructed, under the excuse that it was not in the Roman Catholic Religion, but in the Douay and Rheimish versions of the Scriptures as a text book, and the priest's explanations and expositions as the commentary?" And yet it seems quite natural to expect Roman Catholic parents to do this, from which we would shrink with horror for our offspring ; and not only to be expected, I say, but to be insisted on, so that until a few years ago the question seems never to have occurred ; in this matter of education, as well as in other things, are we not to do unto all men as we would they should do unto us? "Is it a sin" to join a system in which the children are permitted to withdraw from the religious instruction, when that withdrawal is made with the expressed wish of their parents ; when by that expressed wish they take on themselves the responsibility ?*

* RULE 14, SECTION IV.—Patrons, Managers, and Teachers are not required to *exclude* any children from any religious instruction given in the School ; but all children are to have full

But all this in truth is but the weakest view of the principles of the National System. It amounts to but little more than asserting there is no sin, no positive harm in joining ; it is indifferent. You may take your choice ; one is perhaps a little better than the other, you may take that which appears the more excellent way, whichever it be in your judgment. You are free to do so ; it is an open question. You may be for the Church Education Society, or for the National Board, or for both, or for denominational, or, stranger still, for whatever suits best ! for one in the town, and for the other in the country, if it suit the circumstances of the population !

Surely, my Brethren, when we have come to this degree of liberality we need not complain of the heat of the controversy any longer ; so many different views are now entertained, and so many escapes, and safety valves made on every side, that the steam from this furnace can no longer be generated at a high tension.

However, in this new phase of the Education question, I do not hesitate to say that I agree with the opinion from the first put forward, and consistently maintained by my own diocesan, the

power to absent themselves, or to withdraw from it. If any parents or guardians object to the religious instruction given in a National School, it devolves upon them to adopt measures to prevent their children from being present therat.

Lord Bishop of Ossory ; the principle of the National Board and the principle of the Church Education Society are contradictionaries ; if one is true the other is false, and, therefore, there can be no compromise between them. No man who sees clearly into the bearings of the question can in short pause when he has got to a certain point, if he arrives as far as "It is not a sin to take aid from the National Board," he must logically go further and assert it is righteous to accept that aid.

And the ground on which I would rest my proof of the righteousness and of the Scriptural character of the rule of the National system, which permits children to withdraw from the religious instructions that their parents condemn, is contained in the text I have selected—"Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right." It is a lesson from the book of Revelation, and it is a lesson from the book of nature, because the voice of God within each parent's heart tells him that his child is committed to his care, not merely to keep the body in life and health, in food and raiment, but also to cherish the life within, that spark of the celestial fire that shall never be extinguished !

There is no danger, my Brethren, that you should mistake this lesson for yourselves and your children. You recognize the duty, and though, alas ! in many cases it is imperfectly discharged,

and in some neglected to a strange degree, yet you, my Brethren, in the better classes of society, recognise home as the school for all these virtues that are to adorn the character, and obedience to parents, as the first lesson in that school, to be afterwards developed into obedience to all lawful authority.* Still it is thought by many that the poor man's home does not give scope for these same lessons, and that interference is permissible, there, to an extent that we would not tolerate in our own family circles ; no ! not for one moment. But all this is founded on an error—an error, into which a pastor should not fall, from his more intimate knowledge of the homes and feelings of the poor. There is implanted in the poor woman's breast as deep and true a love for her child, as in the heart of her wealthy sisters—surely as strong as in her's, who, for the sake of the pleasures of society, transfers her little one to be nurtured by another. There is as true a love for his son in the poor tradesman's or labourer's heart, who, after his day of toil, sits at his fireside and helps the little pupil, if he is able to do so ; or if he be "no scholar" himself, encourages his boy by kind words and hopes, —surely as true a father's love as in the rich man, who transfers all interest in his son's education

* See a tract by Rev. James Byrne, Rector of Cappagh, on the Fundamental Principle of the National Board. Hempton, Derry.

to others, and constantly leaves his home for the pleasures that the world offers him. That poor man's home, as well as yours, Brethren, is the little community in which submission, command of temper, self-denial, are to be learned in their rudiments, and practised with a view to their exercise in the larger circle that the world will in a few years present. And all these first lessons begin with, "Children, obey your parents in the Lord." There, too, under that lowly roof the little sister draws to her the love and affection of her brother, and he first learns in that home the true respect for woman's purity. Aye ! even among the most degraded, this home lesson does sometimes reclaim with wondrous power, through love of a mother or sister, remembered as the pure in heart. And there, too, in that poor man's home can be learned between the brothers, as they grow up together, mutual forbearance, mutual help, and equal rights. I need not dwell upon the picture, nor attempt to colour it, it is known to all, that the family is, under God's providence, the place in which we open our minds to the ideas, God is our father, man is our brother,—ideas that are the foundation of religion and civilization ; and that obedience to parents expands itself into obedience to all constituted authority, and love of home extends to love of country ; the association of our first pure joys and innocent pleasures with the

place of our birth expands itself into patriotism, and all these grow together, and all spring out of the same root, the home authority, the recognised rule of the parent, the Divine edict, "Children, obey your parents in all things : for this is well-pleasing unto the Lord."

But how, we ask, can this home education in this school, the first and best, and after all the most influential, established by the laws of nature, and supported (if it be right to make a difference) by the laws of God ; how can this be carried on with any hope of benefit, if the children of that home are each day in the public school taught to set at naught the parents' authority ? Thus, at home the child hears that the Catholic Church is the one and only true Church, and at an early age, with a zeal and a devotion, and a success, that would to God, our Protestant parents could rival, the parents have instilled into his opening mind a firm faith in that Church, and a respect for its offices of devotion, and a reverence for its priests ; and in many cases they are able to teach further and to say on authority of their Church, that the Protestant version of the Scriptures is not to be received by them as "the Word of God," that it is "a poisonous pasture."* Now, observe, my Brethren, all this is the sincere belief of the Roman Catholic

* Encyclical Letter of Pope Leo XII. 1824.

parents, and they conscientiously, and therefore rightly, as long as they know no better, forbid their children to read our Protestant Bible, and we are bound to respect their conscientious objections to be present at our religious instructions.

Of course we, Protestants, believe that the Roman Catholic is in error upon this matter, and no doubt he is in grievous error. But what is it that is really wrong in the Roman Catholic parent forbidding his child to receive our religious instruction? Surely it is not the mere fact that he does forbid his child, when he conscientiously believes our religion to be false, and our version of the Holy Scriptures to be in many texts "perverted;" it is not the withdrawing his child that is wrong, but it is the erroneous creed of the parent that is the cause of the evil, and the withdrawal is the effect. All the principles of philosophy would say to us, remove the cause and the effect will cease; do not like an unskilful physician apply your remedies to the symptoms, but attack the seat of the disease.

We might confirm the non-compulsion principle of the National Board by many analogous cases. I shall select one. And we might strengthen our position by glancing at the many alterations that have been suggested during thirty-five years, and that all have failed because they would not satisfy all parties, nor even approximate to meet-

ing the scruples of all, even as far as the present system has met them.*

As an example of analogous cases, let us imagine, or it may be call to mind, an instance of a philanthropic being who establishes an asylum for the reception of the poor, or for the relief of the sick. The work progresses, we will suppose, and that which was at first the work of an individual, enlarges its sphere so much that it necessarily claims and receives the support of his friends. Then it may be, those only of his religious faith are admitted, but, after a time, the good effects being recognised, others seek admission. Still it extends ; a voluntary society is formed, subscriptions are sought, and the work is day by day expanding ; the religious instruction or edification is all this time in the hands of the patron, or of a body in whom the subscribers place the power, and with it the State does not interfere. The society is voluntary, the subscriptions freely given, the managing committee fairly represents the subscribers and their religious opinions. This is, for example, the case with all our Missionary Societies, and on the point I now

* The Archbishop of Dublin in his Primary Charge says—
“Such a compromise as has been here suggested—namely, separate grants where there is room enough for two Schools, grants on the present System to continue where there is not, would, I am well aware, thoroughly satisfy nobody, for it would give a complete triumph to nobody,” &c., &c. Page 49.

refer to, the principle was clearly laid down by the leading statesman of the time, in a correspondence last year on the operations of the Church Missionary Society in Turkey.* "If any person" (wrote Lord Russell to the Committee of the Church Missionary Society,) "is of a certain religious conviction, and is allowed to entertain that conviction, it carries with it the right of telling others that he is convinced that there is a better mode of faith than that which those persons profess, and in the abundance of his convictions to speak the arguments which have induced him to that persuasion."

So far the State will protect the right that every man has, and every society has, of making known their religious sentiments.

But, returning to our Society, let us suppose that it is still more and more successful, and that no longer private benevolence can meet its requirements. It is obliged either to refuse applicants, or to ask assistance from the State. If it asks and receives aid from the Nation, then from that day the rights of the people, not of the subscribers, are to be protected. As long as it was a voluntary society the State goes very far indeed in protecting it. If it be its rule, that all children who received the benefit from it of secular in-

* See Report of Church Missionary Society. Ireland. 1865.

struction, should read the Bible, though to do so may be in opposition to the will of their parents, and in violation of the tenets of their religion—the State forbids it not, and does not interfere. It may be, relief is given to the destitute, and a certain religious condition is imposed in exchange—the State does not interfere ! It may be, to the sick man, laid upon his bed of suffering, the Scripture Reader approaches to offer the consolations of a religion he does not believe, or the Sister of Charity presses the ministrations of a system that the dying man looks upon as a superstition—the State does not interfere ! But let there be, as we have supposed, a grant made for all who need the assistance of the Society, then sooner or later (sooner or later I say advisedly)* it must come, that the State must protect the rights of conscience of her people. The State must see that when she gives bread to the hungry, covering to the naked, and medicine to the sick, there is no unholy traffic, and that no matter what the religious creed of the managers, they shall not buy that priceless thing, "Conscience," with the gold and silver of their country !

* The English National System began in the Denominational form. The "Conscience Clause" has approximated it to the Irish National System. Many think that the Irish System was too great and sudden an advance ; if it had been more gradual it might not have raised such opposition.

Now, is not this the history in other words of our Workhouses and the Infirmaries and Fever Hospitals attached to them ? Is it not received and acted on by men of all creeds and parties ? Are not the Romish Priests, and the Clergymen supporters of the Church Education system, everywhere Chaplains of the Workhouses ? By their acceptances of these offices and of the salaries attached to them, do they not most fully accept the principle of the National Board in the Workhouse, in the Infirmary, and in the Hospital ?* And how comes it that the religion of little children is to be tampered with in opposition to the will of their parents, and to the great danger to all their moral instincts ? Is it open, honourable, candid, thus to creep into houses through the youngest and weakest of the families ? May we not throw back the taunt, that has been so often cast at us, “Do not do evil that good may come.”

I have thus shown, that, under a law of the land, as before I showed under a law of society, those who object to the fundamental principle of the National system do themselves the very things they condemn us for doing in our Schools. It is, no doubt, an *argumentum ad hominem*, but in cases of this kind it is the only argument that can be used ; and it is the only one that offers any

* A pamphlet—“The Education Question,” by Rev. H. T. Jellett. Hodges and Smith.

hope of convincing our opponents, by thus convicting them of what they charge on us.

The last point I shall notice is, that negative proof of the excellency of our National system afforded by the failure of all the plans that have been suggested for its improvement during the last thirty-five years. At the first, nothing was thought of, nothing would be listened to, but the overthrow of the whole system ; and no wonder, indeed, that the Clergy of that Faith which was accustomed to ascendancy in Church and State, who saw their political influence gone by the Emancipation Act, no wonder that they, in a few years after, could ill brook the loss of their ascendancy in directing the education of the people of Ireland.

This has been so lately set forth in the primary charge of His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin, that I rapidly pass it over. Fully does his Grace enter into the feelings of the Clergy of Ireland, "who saw in 1831 the whole education of the people of Ireland suddenly taken out of their hands." It is easy to understand their inability at once to realize and to adapt themselves to a new condition of things. "Yet," adds the Archbishop, "I ought not at the same time to shrink from saying that, so far as I can judge, I should have accepted the assistance of the State with the conditions it imposed."

But at that time nothing could be done ; the

supporters of the Board claimed a fair trial, it was too soon, they said, to dig up the ground to see if the seeds were growing.* Shortly after came proposals and measures for grants for the Parochial Schools of our Church, as if it were impossible to believe that all about the loss of ascendancy was a fact, and not a horrid dream † Then the oft-repeated plan that the State should only concern itself with the secular instruction of the children. This has sometimes been proposed for all, and sometimes for Church Schools only. In the one case we should abandon 17,248 Protestant children who attend schools under Romish teachers to learn unadulterated Popery, for the prospect of being able, I will not say to proselytize, but to teach Divine Truth in its purity to some 9,300 Roman Catholic children, which is the total number attending all the Church Education Schools in Ireland.‡ In the other, we should claim for our

* This was a favorite reply of the late Archbishop to the moderate party who wished for some compromise.

† Has this delusion vanished yet? Surely not from the minds of any who still expect a grant for the Denominational Schools of the Church Education Society, and yet exclaim against denominational grants in general.

‡ Report for 1864, C. E. Society :—

Children of the Established Church	-	-	-	47,092
,, ,, Dissenters	-	-	-	12,646
,, ,, Roman Catholics	-	-	-	9,300

Church the right to use the National Funds to induce children to apostatize from the faith of their parents for the special advantages supposed to be offered to them by their being taught to read and write in Protestant Schools. Surely it is no wonder that we have never got a patient hearing when no more practical proposals, nor more equitable adjustments, have been advanced for our Parish Schools.

The latest suggestion that has been offered is that contained in the primary charge to which I have just referred. His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin proposes as a compromise "Separate grants where there is room enough for two Schools, grants on the present system to continue where there is not." It would ill become me to enter into a discussion here of this plan, but I do not hesitate to say, that I anxiously hope it may never be carried further. God forbid! that we should be compelled to abandon the National System. Strange, indeed, that we should be even asked to do so, when the English system, so long held up as an evidence against us, is day by day becoming more assimilated to the Irish system; but to pass this (though by no means unimportant) let us think of the danger of interfering with or changing the system which at present has under instruction, of our Church and Dissenting bodies together, no less than 160,181 children; while the

Church Education Society, with all the boasted attachment of the friends of Scriptural Education to its system has only 59,738. Surely there is a proof in these figures of the estimation in which the parents hold the two systems. I speak in these figures only of Protestants. What does the country at large think of both? The National Schools encreased by 171 last year, and by over 38,000 scholars. The Church Education Schools show a decrease of 19 schools and of 570 scholars! Is this practical proof of our advance to be cast aside? Is it not a demonstration that the system requires no change, and that if it be only allowed to work on, it will become in fact as in name, in every corner of our land, "The National System." It is so already for about two-thirds of the population. It now educates 870,401 children!

The suggestion to which I just alluded stands forth as a proof of the kindness and goodness of the Bishop who presides over this Diocese, but the parties in this unhappy contest must have strangely altered if either side can accept it. We admit that as a system of United Education there has been a failure to a certain degree, not total;* it should be borne in mind, however, that the causes which have led to

* See Appendix.

its failure are all of them accidental, and not inherent in the system ; but if, as his Grace proposes, wherever the attendance was large enough to justify it, there the denominational system should be adopted, then United Education would become impossible.—We should bid farewell for ever, to that which does truly promise to Ireland the only hope of ever soothing, and softening our religious animosities. Moreover, we should follow out this Prussian system with rigour ; not one Roman Catholic child should be allowed to enter a Protestant School, and not one Protestant child should enter a Roman Catholic : both parties should justly insist upon this. And the Roman Catholic party saw this at once.* If the denominational system be ever introduced into Ireland, it must be strictly denominational ; there must not be the smallest opportunity allowed for either party to proselytize through the denominational system. What then will the Church Education System gain by this plan ? They will certainly lose the charge over the Education of 9,300 Roman Catholics, which they have at present.—Then in the village and country schools, it is proposed, we should have the National System. Will the extreme Roman Catholic party agree to this ? I trow not.—Will the Church Education Society ?

* See the leading articles of the *Freeman's Journal* commenting on the Archbishop's Charge, 18th October, 1865.

It would, indeed, be a desertion of their principle—to have the assistance of the state for their Denominational Schools in the city, and in miserable compromise to take the grant for veritable National Schools in the country !! Surely this is to esteem too lightly all the self-denial and devotion that they have exhibited, and to set at nought that attachment to their principles, which neither the frowns of power, nor the favours of government have been able to shake during five and thirty years !

Other practical difficulties, we need not refer to, but they are many. Thus we might hope that Churchmen would not entrust their children to the Denominational Presbyterian School, when, though the Bible might be well taught, the rule of interpretation would undoubtedly be the Westminster confession of faith, and where in place of instruction in the Church Catechism, (part of the ordination vow which hardly has received its due notice in this controversy) the hatred of Prelacy would be inculcated. Similarly the Presbyterians if not at first, certainly after a little experience would not entrust their children to our Church Denominational Schools, and similarly with the Methodist Schools. In all Denominational Schools a right line should be laid down, and the religious education confined to it strictly.

My dear Brethren, I commit the cause of these

your Parish Schools to your liberality now. "Do good unto all men, specially unto those of the household of faith :" be firmly persuaded of the principles on which they are conducted, and then fear not for the result. If you believe the defence I have made of the principles of the National Board, you must adopt its cause, as the good and righteous cause ; and then, though you regret that so many differ from you, so many that you respect and love, yet you will not be apprehensive that this great establishment, that educates many more, and that influences the destiny of Irishmen more, than her Universities and all her Colleges together, that this shall be permitted to fall.

Cease not to pray, and fear not to expect, no matter what our opponents say, that God's blessing may rest upon this the best boon that the government of any country can confer on the people, the enlightenment of their understandings, the culture of their moral nature, and the protection of the rights of conscience, recognising the authority of the parents to choose the religious instruction that their offspring should receive, and teaching those little ones in their tender years— "Children, obey you parents in all things : for this is well pleasing to the Lord."

APPENDIX.

THE foregoing discourse is sent to the press at the expressed desire of several friends who heard it delivered at St. Bride's Church on 21st January, 1866. It is not to be supposed that any new and original arguments have now been brought to light to support the National System; but it may be possible to present the old and well-known arguments in a new form, and to support them with original illustrations; and it certainly is a new thing to bring them forward from the pulpit. The preaching has been hitherto almost altogether on one side of the Education question; and this has happened without any adequate cause. At first, it is probable, that prudent and thoughtful men hesitated before they came to a final opinion on this difficult question; and when they had decided they found the ground occupied by the heralds of "Scriptural Education," and they were timid and quailed before the outcry. Then many joined in the first demonstrations, without fully comprehending the issue, and they were ashamed to speak out since, through fear of appearing inconsistent; and such is the influence of names, that to a very great many it appeared to be a contradiction in terms to belong to the "Evangelical" class, and at the same time, to be opposed to the supporters of "Scriptural Education." Some years ago an Association was formed to combine together the approvers of the National System, and it was successful in the North of Ireland, at least as far as a platform demonstration; but it did not appear to attempt the influence of the pulpit. If those who have been hitherto

silent on this topic will make the experiment, they will find that they have among the laity many more than they fancied friendly to the National System, and a great many more ready and anxious to hear and to inquire on the subject.

The publication of this sermon was delayed for the purpose of obtaining the very latest information on the all-important question of "How far united Education has been successful?"

The returns of the children, classified according to their religions, are made up only for the quarter ending 31st December; and as this sermon was preached on 21st January, it was impossible to refer to them on that day. They could not possibly have been got ready in a shorter time. They are most important in the present state of the question. The National Board men have to stand each year a very sharp and brisk fire made on them at the April meetings; but all the injury done by over thirty years attack of this kind is not equal to the damage inflicted by one shell thrown in by the Archbishop, and aimed at the key of the fortress. One sentence of the charge strikes at a vital spot: that little sentence is as follows:—"Mixed education exists already much more in name than reality, however little this may be recognized in England."

There is no doubt but that the support which the Irish National System has received from the House of Commons, from both parties, Whig and Tory, depends altogether on the belief that it *is* a system of United Education. "It was the hope and expectation of bringing about such a blending together and fusing of all our people, which animated the original founders of this system. Despite of limited and partial successes here and there, this grand hope of theirs has been defeated, and every day it is becoming more impossible to conceal the fact of a defeat."

* Primary Charge, pp. 47, 48.

It is here asserted—1st, that the success is limited and partial; and 2nd, it is implied that the state of things is getting worse and worse. Let us examine the latest returns. There surely is mixed education under any of the following circumstances:—Class A, the Teacher a Protestant, and the pupils, Protestants and Roman Catholics. Class B, the Teacher a Roman Catholic, and pupils as above. Class C, Schools in which there are more teachers than one, and those teachers themselves of different denominations; pupils as above.

	CLASS A.			CLASS B.			CLASS C.		
	No of Schools	R. Cath. Pupils.	Protest. Pupils.	No. of Schools	R. Cath. Pupils.	Protest. Pupils.	No. of Schools	R. Cath. Pupils.	Protest. Pupils.
Ulster	939	17,549	72,618	835	68,608	11,979	88	3,430	7,325
Munster	15	336	544	454	52,388	1,467	36	3,118	1,379
Leinster	36	883	1,339	483	43,970	1,939	65	5,946	1,674
Connaught	33	1,395	1,020	380	40,968	1,863	20	1,299	446
	1,023	20,163	75,521	2,152	205,934	17,248	209	13,793	10,824

Total No. of Schools where United Education
is going on - - - - - 3,384

In these Schools, Roman Catholics - - - - - 239,890
Mix with Protestants - - - - - 103,593

Total under influence of mixed Education 343,483

It does seem strange to hear this result described as “partial and limited.” 239,890 Roman Catholics mixing every day with 103,593 Protestant children; or in other words, 343,400 Irish children having, in a greater or less degree, their religious animosities softened, and learning that they are to live in peace and harmony, and to respect mutually their religious opinions. This seems a great and wonderful result to have been produced, even by the National Board, with

all the opposition it has encountered from the contending parties.

2dly. The last return made by the Commissioners of National Education on this matter of mixed Education was for the year 1859. The numbers for the quarter ending 31st December were at that time.

Roman Catholics	- - - -	215,213
Protestants	- - - -	80,117
	—	—
Total under mixed Education	- - - -	295,330

Shewing an increase of 48,153 pupils in mixed Schools; yet “every day it is becoming more impossible to conceal the fact of a defeat.”

But it is not hard to see where the fallacy lies. We have by the December returns for this quarter, as shewn above, in mixed Schools 103,593 Protestants, with 239,890 Roman Catholics; but the same returns shew that there are 17,086 Protestants in Schools exclusively Protestant, and 298,033 Roman Catholics in Schools exclusively Roman Catholic. At first sight we think that the measure of the success of United Education is the ratio of the number in mixed Schools to the total number under instruction, which would be in this case $\frac{343}{315 + 343}$, or 52 per cent. So that even on this shewing the partial success, is more than half-way to perfection.

But it is clear that this mode of estimating the success is fallacious. We must necessarily have many Schools in which there *cannot* be Protestants; for there are no Protestants in the School district, and also some Schools in which there cannot be Roman Catholics, as there are none in the district. Again, in Convent Schools we do not look for mixed

Education; but when we take the total number of children under instruction, as above, for our denominator, we undertake to look for mixed Education in a great number of Schools where we know from the nature of the District and of the School, that it *cannot* exist, that it is physically impossible.

But there is a much fairer way of looking at this question, and testing the success of United Education: that is by considering the result on each party. The Protestant is benefitted by mixing with Roman Catholic children, we will suppose; and we will add, that this result is perfectly obtained if every Protestant child was at a School at which there were Roman Catholics. But there are 120,679 Protestant children in National Schools *of all kinds*. If this was the number found above, as the number attending mixed Schools, then we should have attained the greatest possible success; but it is 103,593; and reducing this we find our "partial and limited success" to be 86 per cent*!

"The appendix to the Charge" questions the propriety of including Schools in which the minority is represented by one, two, three, &c., as mixed Schools. The question should first be asked, have these minorities of one, two, or three, &c., any influence on the majorities? To this, I believe, under the National System, honestly carried out, the answer is a decided affirmative; and that being the case, in collecting our Statistics we must not strike out little or much, or consider this or that exceptional, or such as *ought* not to figure in the annual reports. But besides what else are we to expect in the particular case that is referred to in the

* Even with all the scope of supposing it to be possible that Protestants were to be found in every Roman Catholic School district, we find the measure of the success in the most unfavourable case to be 40·8 per cent.

appendix: if in the Diocese of Cork there are no less than 29 parishes in which the Church population does not exceed 25, these are the parishes in which we will find certainly National Schools; and how can we expect to find more than one or two Protestant children attending them. Will the time ever come in which the case of these minorities will be understood? Can the Church Education Society do anything for them? I know their zeal, and I honor their good-will, and I respect their benevolent intentions; but the fact is simply this, they can do nothing; they might build School-houses; but the small minorities of two and three, and four, will not form a School. What is to become of them if the Denominational System is to reign over the land. Alas! for the few sheep that we have left in the wilderness. What is to protect these ones, and twos, and threes, but that rule which is the fundamental principle of National Education.

Houses of the