

A FALSE ALARM!

A BRIEF EXAMINATION
OF
DEAN DICKINSON'S RECENT PAMPHLET

On "The Present Crisis"

(IN PRIMARY EDUCATION);

TOGETHER WITH

A CRITICISM OF THE NEW RULES PROPOSED
BY THE NATIONAL BOARD.

BY

J. W. TRISTRAM, D.D.

DUBLIN:

HODGES, FIGGIS, & CO., LTD., GRAFTON STREET.

WILLIAM MCGEE, 18 NASSAU STREET.

1896.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

A FALSE ALARM!

A BRIEF EXAMINATION
OF
DEAN DICKINSON'S RECENT PAMPHLET

On "The Present Crisis"

(IN PRIMARY EDUCATION);

TOGETHER WITH

A CRITICISM OF THE NEW RULES PROPOSED
BY THE NATIONAL BOARD.

BY

J. W. TRISTRAM, D.D.

DUBLIN:

HODGES, FIGGIS, & CO., LTD., GRAFTON STREET.

WILLIAM MCGEE, 18 NASSAU STREET.

1896.

A FALSE ALARM!

PART I.

A BRIEF EXAMINATION OF DEAN DICKINSON'S PAMPHLET ON "THE PRESENT CRISIS."*

Exaggeration—A National Failing.

ABOUT twenty-five years ago, during the progress of an Irish debate in the House of Commons, an Irish Member concluded an impassioned speech by announcing, with solemn and portentous emphasis, that "affairs in Ireland had at last arrived at a Crisis." Mr. Disraeli, then the leader of the Opposition, amused the House by replying, with incisive cynicism, "Sir, I have been for a long time a not inattentive observer of Irish politics; and I am bound to say that I cannot call to mind any period in which there has *not* been 'a Crisis in the affairs of Ireland.'"

The remark was as true as it was happy. We unfortunately suffer from a barrenness of manufactures in many shapes; but we are fertile in the manufacture of "Crises."

So much has the habit obtained in Ireland of viewing ordinary affairs through a haze of exaggeration, that people of the most prosaic temperament are ready to invite "the civilized world" to become spectators of occurrences in themselves petty and parochial.

* *Primary Education, Ireland. The Present Crisis considered in connection with the New Rules proposed by the Commissioners of National Education.* By H. H. Dickinson, D.D. Dublin: Hodges, Figgis, & Co., Ltd., Grafton Street; and William McGee, Nassau Street.

A Recent Example.

In a pamphlet lately published by the Dean of the Chapel Royal, and which is marked by all that intensity of purpose and clearness of style which distinguish the writer, he evolves yet another "Crisis"—this time in primary education—from the materials furnished by the proposed New Rules of the National Board.

We have read the Dean's pamphlet with some care, and, we trust, with an open mind. No critic, however biassed, could refuse a tribute of admiration to the able and temperate manner in which he has made and sustained his objections; but we confess to some difficulty in gathering from his long indictment of those Rules a clear conception of what the trouble is.

He charges the Rules with embodying "a reversal of the policy and fundamental principle" of the National System—"a surrender"—and he asks how this "surrender" originated.

The Presbyterians began it.

The proposed changes in the Rules of the National Board are, no doubt, a step onward in the direction of denominationalism. The very first important move in this direction was made by the Presbyterians. Up to 1840 the Synod of Ulster, which largely represented the Presbyterians of Ireland, had refused to become connected with the National Board. Why? For the five following reasons, amongst others, as stated by Dr. Henry before the Lords' Committee in 1854:—

(1.) Because the Presbyterians objected to the exclusion of the Bible during ordinary school hours.

(2.) Because the Presbyterians protested against being associated with clergymen or laymen of other religious persuasions in making applications for aid for their schools.

(3.) Because the Presbyterians entertained and expressed scruples against permitting a clergyman of a different religious persuasion from the patrons, to give religious instruction to his own children in the school-room.

(4.) Because the Presbyterians objected to restrictions respecting the use of the school-rooms on Sundays, or after school hours on other days.

(5.) Because, in some instances, the Presbyterians objected to put up the inscription "National School," and, in a few cases, insisted that if put up, it should be accompanied by adjuncts of a denominational character.

It was only on the modification of (1) and (4), and the concession of (2) and (3), that the Presbyterian Synod of Ulster finally accepted the Board's system.

So much for the boasted attachment of the Presbyterians to the "mixed" system!

The Methodists continued it.

Wherever either the Presbyterians or Methodists have been able to establish a school under strictly denominational or sectarian management, even to the detriment of Model Schools conducted on the most rigid mixed principles, they have gladly availed themselves of such opportunities.

Every clergyman of the Church of Ireland who reads these lines will find within the limits of his own experience ample grounds for the statement that schools under their own management and supervision have been established by Presbyterians and Methodists where the most ample provision already existed for efficient united education in mixed schools. We shall adduce one flagrant instance of such a desire to injure the mixed system within our own immediate knowledge.

Inchicore.

We have at Inchicore a very efficient Model School—and such as Dean Dickinson desires every town school to be—attended by children of all denominations; and yet we have, within a stone's-throw of this institution, another National School, mainly established and controlled by Methodists, in full operation! It would be invidious to speculate as to the motives, or comment on the action, of the Methodists in thus interfering with the mixed system in a locality where a very small number of their own body exists. We merely state a fact, and leave the explanation to others. We have given this case because it supplies a most flagrant instance of the insincerity of the professed attachment to the mixed system of many who are now associated with Dean Dickinson and other Churchmen in defending it. Reading the present action of Presbyterians and Methodists in the light of their transparent desire to injure existing mixed schools, *we should be slow to boast of their association with us as an element of strength in our position.* “*Timeo Danaos et dona ferentes.*”

Has the National System succeeded?

We are not concerned to contest the Dean's argument in p. 4 of his pamphlet in favour of the maintenance of the National System (on its present basis) on the grounds of its success. There are few, however, who are acquainted with Ireland who will be disposed to deny that the system has achieved a measure of success, not because it was the best system, but because it was the only one which was available. The Irish are eminently a literary people; but notwithstanding this—and in spite of the fact that what was virtually free and accessible education has been available for over two generations—Ireland has almost as large a percentage of illiterates as any other country in Europe. The Dean himself allows (page 3) that it has been largely

due to "the pressure of financial necessity" that many of our own Church people have availed themselves of the mixed system. And, even at the present time, thousands of children are receiving an education, confessedly inferior, rather than submit to the restrictions which the National System imposes on religious teaching. The fact is that the original rules of the National Board were drawn up by

Educational Doctrinaires

sitting round green baize, and as such they suffered from all the disadvantages incident to paper constitutions. Almost every decade which has elapsed since the foundation of the system, has witnessed some important modification of the Rules, not only in detail, but in essence. The true embodiment of the principles of the National system is to be found in

The Model Schools,

which are so much appreciated by the Dean. He says (page 32):—"Personally I regret, and have always regretted, that the Government did not establish in every town one or more Model Schools." Well, as a matter of fact, the Government did establish a very large number of these schools; but, somehow, they never succeeded. They were out of harmony with the traditions and convictions of the great mass of the people, and were and are maintained by those who doggedly persevere in squandering public money on costly buildings and elaborate machinery. They forcibly remind one of the unfinished ruins called "Follies" which one meets in various parts of the country.

A Costly Luxury.

Let us examine these sacrificial victims to Secularism in the light of expenditure for work done.

The total average number of pupils on the rolls of National Schools (excluding Model Schools) for 1894 was 822,332. To educate that number the expenditure was £1,051,180—an average of £1 5s. per pupil. The total average number of pupils on the rolls of the thirty Model Schools was, for the same period, 10,489. To educate that number the expenditure was £34,307—an average of £3 5s. per pupil. If those 822,000 children at present educated in schools largely denominational could be transferred to the Dean's favourite Model Schools, the primary education of Ireland—instead of costing, as at present, £1,051,180—would cost £2,733,058—rather a serious increase with which to burden a poor country for the purpose of supporting an abstract “fundamental principle”!

The Christian Brothers.

The Dean (page 6) makes two points against the recognition of the Christian Brothers' Schools, viz.—(1) That their admission to the National System would enable them to earn double fees—some for Primary, and some for Intermediate Education. Well, why not? The separate fees could only be earned by separate pupils. And if the Christian Brothers have such a well-organized and efficient system as to permit them to thoroughly graduate their education, that is their affair, not ours. Surely we do not advocate the vicious principle of penalizing others for an efficiency which it would better become us to imitate than to punish! (2) The Dean objects to a probable salary of, say, £80 to each member of the Order, on the ground that the excess of this sum over the £30 which each Brother receives for personal purposes would go to extend the system. Again we reply, What have we to do with that, or why should we deny men the right of earning money because they might expend it in a way we disapprove of? The unlimited extension of the Christian

Brothers' system is by no means invited—if we read indications aright—by many of the Roman Catholic clergy; and if it were, their schools, even under the present form of the New Rules, could only be recognised and admitted to State support in localities where Protestants would be sufficiently numerous to permit them to have an efficient school of their own.

Arguments founded on Hypotheses.

It is, of course, urged that if we once concede the *principle* of the New Rules, sufficient pretexts will soon be found for applying exclusive denominationalism. This, to our mind, is a position unworthy of reasonable men. It is precisely the same ground as was for centuries occupied by those who justified intolerance and persecution. "Deny any claim, however just and reasonable, which would place those whose opinions we dislike, and whose motives we suspect, in a more favourable position for furthering their views." Let me ask those who, perhaps unconsciously, are more influenced by these suspicions than by argument

Two Questions!

(1) In what respect would the concession of the principle involved in the New Rules give a more powerful leverage to the advocates of a universal denominationalism than they possess at present? They are met at every point, under those proposed Rules, by conditions which they are powerless to alter or control.

(2) If the conditions embodied in the New Rules can be evaded or avoided by the disingenuous or dishonest, what is to prevent such avoidance or evasion of the present Rules in schools now virtually denominational?

No matter how much Governments or Boards may defer to Protestant *views* and *interests*, it would be in the last

degree unreasonable to expect them to legislate with a due regard to Protestant *suspensions*.

Unionism not a mere "Non Possumus."

The Dean (page 8) justifies the refusal to recognise denominationalism in principle (as it already exists in fact) by the analogy of the late successful resistance to Home Rule. He says that in maintaining the Union we "never felt called upon to suggest any counter-policy except resistance." Had he said "*to define*" any counter-policy, he would have been nearer to, though still far from, the mark. Home Rule was successfully resisted, not only because its opponents succeeded in proving it to be destructive to the interests of the Empire, but because the Unionist party put forward a distinctive alternative policy, viz. :—a fair and just consideration of every real Irish grievance, and a single-minded desire to help the country along the road of material progress.

Parental Rights—their Abuse.

In pages 10 and 11 the Dean, with much power, deals with the question of parental right. In the first place he proves—what hardly needed proof—that *exclusive* denominationalism goes beyond the present practical denominationalism. He lays it down as axiomatic that "*every elementary day school* receiving State aid must be open to children of all communions." We confess we fail to grasp this proposition as an *elementary and necessary truth*. We maintain that so long as the State provides *efficient* education for children in schools managed by the communion to which a child belongs, and within reasonable and accessible distance of that child, *there is no grievance*.

Secondly, he takes exception to our quoting the Compulsory Education Act, as an interference with parental right, on the ground that no parent should be

permitted to deprive his child of education, and, therefore, here the State should intervene. Well, we do not wish to use any special pleading, or to urge that many a parent might justifiably object to State interference with his "right" to educate his child himself; but let us admit, once for all, that we *do* see a difference between a parent's right as affected by the Compulsory Education Act and his right to choose a school for his child. But the difference is entirely one of degree and not of kind. As we have said above and elsewhere, parents have a right to demand efficient education up to a certain standard as defined by the State. Should this standard be attained, a parent has no right to claim anything beyond it, particularly if by so doing he interferes with the liberty of others. If the self-denying zeal of teachers provide education *in excess* of what the State supplies or the parent pays for, the parent has no grievance in being deprived of it. There is no more mischievous member of any community than the man who is perpetually "standing on his rights." A wide difference exists between a John Hampden and a litigious and irascible "crank," though both may be asserting a "right."

Should Teachers be Local Politicians?

In page 13 the Dean places special emphasis on the implied licence to "attend political meetings of every kind" given to teachers under the New Rules, by the omission of the prohibition to their doing so in the existing Rules (145 iii). But it must be borne in mind that this sub-section embodies the following:—"To do nothing either in or out of school which might have a tendency to confine it to any denomination of children." This would be clearly inapplicable to schools recognised under the New Rules; and that the omission of this portion of the sub-section is specially aimed at, is clearly proved in page 39, section iv., of the Parliamentary Paper, where Mr. John Morley

accepts the omission of the Rule. We must remember that Mr. Morley only intended the New Rules to have reference to existing non-National Schools, and surely he would hardly license ex-Church Education Society teachers and Christian Brothers to become "prominent local leaders of the National League." Rule VIII., which would be still in force, enjoins "the inculcation of the principles of truth and honesty, respect to superiors, and obedience to all persons placed in authority over them"—obligations not generally carried out in the spirit by "leaders of the National League."

Dean Dickinson's Objections further considered.

(1) The Dean adopts the objection of the "dissentient Commissioners," viz.—that the justification of the exhibition of emblems, &c., by the clause excluding children of other denominations, is a surrender of the "fundamental principle." We reply that the *frequent reiteration* of this assertion (the Dean either uses or quotes it as axiomatic no less than six times in fourteen pages) is in itself no *argument* whatever. It is simply a "*delenda est Carthago*" inverted.*

(2) The Dean disbelieves in the possibility in practice of realizing the condition laid down in New Rule 3—that the Commissioners must be satisfied of the efficiency of both the applicant and—as we shall call it—the alternative school. What, he says, if the alternative school be non-National, and should not permit inspection? Our reply is two-fold. (1) If the Inspector be refused access to the alternative school, the applicant school cannot be recognised as exclusive; and (2) this will be, in practice, most improbable, as should the applicant school be successful, the alternative school will secure tangible benefits, and will thus be all the more anxious to further such

* See page 35 as to the manner in which the "fundamental principle" of the National System is defined in its own Rules.

application. (3) The Dean then goes on to urge (page 16) what we are forced to say proves that he rather

misapprehends the point here at issue—

namely, "It is quite evident that . . . parents who wish their children to receive the secular advantages of the larger and better-equipped school, will report that the school which the children would be thenceforward obliged to attend—having no choice—is *inadequate and insufficient.*" Surely the Dean cannot but be aware that so long as even *one* child of another denomination is in attendance at any school, that school will not only be refused recognition, but it cannot even become an applicant school at all under the conditions in the New Rules! We fear that not only the Dean himself—whose acuteness of perception is unsurpassed—but hundreds of others who are now opposing any change whatever, are entirely oblivious of this fact. *Under the proposed Rules no Protestant children can be driven out of Roman Catholic National Schools, which those who oppose those Rules seem to be so vehemently anxious that they should continue to attend.* It must also be borne in mind that the Commissioners of Education have no machinery by which to collect or appraise the views of the parents at all. No responsible Board would act on opinions gathered, as it were, by "rule of thumb." Any action taken in the case of either an applicant or alternative school must be the result of a systematic inspection and report by qualified experts.

The Dean does not appear to have fully grasped the force and bearing of Rule III. It says plainly that "before the Commissioners decide upon the application, they will require a report from the Inspector of the district, and . . . may also require a special report from one of their Head Inspectors; and the Manager must in every

case give all facilities for inspection, and supply all information which may be required of him." In spite of this categorical statement, the Dean creates

Fictitious Difficulties,

and says: "The information received from the Manager may be in contradiction to the report of the Inspector." Surely anyone intelligently reading the Rule would apprehend that the report of the Inspector is the only factor which the Commissioners could act upon. That "report" would have to do with the "efficiency" of the school, of which the Inspector alone would be the judge. The "information" given by the Manager would refer to the local circumstances and surroundings; and for such "information" the Inspector—if he knew his duty—would have recourse to other and more independent sources. Such information would deal with—*e.g.*, the position and circumstances of parents, the distance of other suitable schools, the proportion of various religious denominations in the school district, and other similar matters. Again, the Dean asks: "Is it certain that the Manager, Patron, and Inspector would agree in reporting a certain school as '*inadequate*'?" We reply that it is neither certain nor necessary. The report will come from the Inspector or *Inspectors* (as we trust) alone; the part of the Manager or Patron will be to invite and assist inspection, and abide the issue.

(4) We have another "difficulty" of the same nebulous description in the next query: "Will they [the Christian Brothers] be likely to acquiesce in such a report of the neighbouring school as would deprive them of the privileges they covet?" We shall pass over the contention made by some opponents of the Rules—*viz.*, that the Christian Brothers do not covet admission at all—and simply ask what power the Christian Brothers or any

outsiders will have in forcing up to even a minimum of efficiency any Protestant school? People generally learn to bear with equanimity what they are powerless to remedy or prevent. If the Christian Brothers or anyone else can—even by a display of hostility—give effectual help in bringing up our schools to the necessary degree of efficiency, we shall welcome, rather than deprecate, any such result. Any system of intolerance on the part of local Roman Catholics will simply have the effect of injuring their own case, by helping to banish Protestants from the locality, and rendering still less the chance of their having an “efficient” school.

(5) The next objection made by the Dean is one which contemplates the possibility of a

School ceasing to be efficient.

Here there are three alternatives suggested—(1) Withdraw the grant from the larger school. (2) Restore the ordinary Rules for a mixed school; or (3) continue an efficient staff to the smaller school. We have discussed these alternatives very briefly in the second portion of this pamphlet (page 42), and suggested a perfectly feasible and satisfactory solution of the difficulty—namely, the continuance, in a case of this kind, of a first-class salary to teachers on an average attendance smaller than that for which such a salary is given at present. The Dean allows that a concession of this kind would be fairly satisfactory. He admits that a school, with an average attendance of twenty-five or less, may have its pupils “even more efficiently taught than those in a larger school,” “in some cases, provided the teacher be efficient.” No doubt, in most instances, the school with larger numbers is usually more efficiently taught than a smaller school; but this is mainly because the latter is only entitled to a low-classed teacher. Re-

move this requirement (as we have no doubt all parties concerned would be glad to do), and Protestants have no grievance whatever. Amongst the very best schools we have ever inspected were those with a small attendance, but with an efficient teacher. We at once admit that should this concession *not* be made by the Commissioners, Protestants would have a just cause of complaint.

Religious Indifference of Parents.

(6) The Dean (pages 19 and 20) next suggests two difficulties, one of which exists in National Schools *as they are*, and the other is either purely fictitious, or, if not fictitious, incapable of being dealt with by any legislation whatever. The first is :—“ In the case of mixed marriages, which parent’s certificate will be received?” Well, the Dean is an enthusiastic supporter of the National System as it is ; and he makes no difficulty about the existing Rule 89 :—“ The religious denomination is to be ascertained from the parent (the *father*, if possible).” Surely if this be good enough to meet present contingencies, it will be good enough to meet future ones. A child who at present, being the child of Protestant parents, is entered as a Roman Catholic, is treated as such and instructed in that faith. The creation and suggestion of almost impossible contingencies as a bar to change would be justifiable if the same contingencies be urged against existing arrangements, where they are equally likely to occur. If the *father’s* certificate of religion be accepted as sufficient at present, why is it made a possible ground of objection in the future ?

Again, the Dean urges the case of a Protestant parent who, for the sake of the superior efficiency of the education in the Roman Catholic school, enters his child as a Roman Catholic. The answer to this is simple enough. Either this is a purely imaginary danger, or it is one which no

possible legislation can obviate. There may be, no doubt, somewhere in Ireland one or two parents, or two score of them, for that matter, who will barter the faith of their children for a present advantage; but we think the Dean will hardly get many of the clergy, at all events, to go with him on this point. If there are such, however, their possible existence should be disregarded as an appreciable factor in obstructing legislation. We cannot make laws to provide for exceptions of this rare kind.

The Use of Books.

(7) The next objection formulated against the proposed Rules is one of which we confess we can hardly appreciate the force or meaning. It refers to the use of books in the newly recognised schools, and deprecates the permission to use any books other than those prepared and supplied by the Commissioners. But it cannot be supposed for one moment that the Dean is unaware that the choice of books is largely an open one in the *present* National Schools. In order to exhibit the entire fallacy of this objection, we shall compare the existing Rule governing the use of books with the one against which the Dean protests:—

EXISTING RULE 91.

(a) The use of the books specified on the Board's list, whether published or sanctioned by the Commissioners, is not compulsory; but (b) the titles of all other books which the Patrons or Managers of schools intend for the ordinary school business must be notified to the Commissioners before they are introduced into the school, and none are to be used to which they object.

PROPOSED RULE IV. (b).

Books and educational appliances intended for ordinary school business other than those sanctioned by the Commissioners for use in ordinary National Schools may be used; but all such books and appliances shall be submitted to the Commissioners; and the Commissioners shall satisfy themselves that such books and appliances are suitable for the use of the pupils attending the particular school. And no book or appliance shall be used to which the Commissioners object.

To any ordinary reader these two Rules would seem almost equally stringent—an additional element of stringency being added in the new one, inasmuch as it not only refers to books, but to “appliances,” and also insists on the books themselves, and not merely their titles, being submitted to the Commissioners. No doubt, in the schools denominationalized under the New Rules History may be taught; but it will be as much outside the Board’s curriculum as it is at present. There is nothing to prevent Roman Catholics teaching to their children any History which they please under existing Rules; but neither now nor in the future can they secure “passes” for it, any more than they can for their Catechism. And if the way be open to *them* under the new arrangements to teach History, so will it be to *us*. The ignorance of the simplest facts of History displayed by our children who attend National Schools is a standing reproach, and the Dean would, we are sure, welcome any mode of removing it.

Possible Extension of the New Rules.

(8) It is charged against the New Rules that their application will not be confined to the 118 places to which they were originally designed to apply—in fact, that the Commissioners have already recommended their extension to other localities. One fails to see the logical force of the contention that they *should* be confined to the original 118 places. There is no talismanic virtue attached to the number “118.” The *unconditioned* extension of exclusive denominationalism was never in contemplation, nor ever can be.

The Standing Committee in its “Protest”

says:—“It is evident that the new system, though at first confined to populous places, would, sooner or later, be in force everywhere.” With very great respect to the

Standing Committee, there is evidence of nothing of the kind. Their assumption is entirely unjustified ; and they do not condescend to adduce one shred of proof for their statement. Had they said that the New Rules would be "in force everywhere *the conditions obtained*," they would have been more accurate ; but one can hardly attach much weight to a "Protest" which asks the public to accept as an axiom what is purely and simply a postulate.

The Archbishop's Counter-Protest.

We shall not presume to enter on the points urged by the Dean in reply to the Counter-Protest of His Grace the Archbishop of Dublin. Many of them have been dealt with or touched upon elsewhere by us ; but, in any event, His Grace will doubtless have an opportunity of dealing with them in such a manner as his intimate knowledge of the question in all its bearings amply qualifies him to do. We shall proceed, in the very brief space left to us, to consider the Dean's strictures on some of

Our Amendments.

(1) The first amendment proposed by us, in one of our communications to the Press, suggested that no school should be recognised as denominational unless its application were supported by a majority of the Commissioners, containing at least one-third of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Commissioners present and voting. This the Dean regards as insufficient, inasmuch as the proposed New Rules to which he objects were supported by more than one-third of the entire number of Protestant Commissioners. This objection, in the first place, entirely begs the whole question at issue, in assuming that the New Rules *are* inimical to Protestant interests. But admitting for a moment that a small minority of the Protestant Commissioners would be found permanently voting against us, we

should have the collateral and ample security afforded by the conditions laid down in the other Rules. It is quite conceivable and possible that adequate protection might not be afforded to us by any one safeguard; but it is inconceivable that in a particular case there could be a failure of *all* the safeguards. It may be conceded that in a matter of such complication as the alteration of the Board's Rules, involving so many debatable points, one or two Commissioners might (of course, by an error of judgment) be found voting against the interests of their co-religionists; but it is hardly believable that any Protestant Commissioners would, consciously and wittingly, so far ignore the interests of their fellow-Protestants as to act in opposition to their own co-religionists in the locality affected.

We see no reason for charging the representatives of Protestant interests on the National Board with either a deficiency of mental capacity or an absence of *bona fides*.

(2) The Second Amendment

of the writer, to the effect that the applicant school should have been for a specified time denominational, is dismissed by the Dean with a witty, but, we submit, entirely irrelevant, reference to his "sarcastic friend." He fails even to attempt to prove his statement that "the amendment, even if adopted, would make no difference." We maintain that the amendment would afford a most valuable and ample security that, in placing the schools of the locality affected under the New Rules, Protestants would suffer no wrong whatever.

(3) The Inspectors should be unanimous.

The amendment suggested by the writer to Rule 3 viz., That there should be two Inspectors (and not one only) to report upon either the applicant or alternative

school, is objected to by the Dean, inasmuch as the reports of the Inspectors might differ. We are sorry that we did not make provision for this in our amendment, as we had fully intended to do, by suggesting that before an application could be granted, the Inspectors should agree in reporting both schools as efficient. The Dean's acuteness has enabled him to suggest a very valuable addition to the safeguards, for which we thank him.

We have now endeavoured to deal with some of the points discussed by the Dean in so far as they affect the position detailed in the succeeding portion of this pamphlet. Our task, we submit, has not been an easy one, inasmuch as we have been placed in the position of having to *defend*—a much more difficult matter than to *attack*—especially when the defence is against so able an antagonist as the Dean of the Chapel Royal.

In what we have written we desire it to be clearly understood that we are

not attacking the National System.

That system has succeeded just so far as it is virtually denominational. As a *mixed* system the only places in which it has received a fair trial are the Model Schools, and in these it has been a conspicuous failure. It can hardly be called a truly "National" system when over 50,000 of the school-going population are precluded by conscientious—however unreasonable—motives from entering its schools, and when a large proportion of the people of Ireland are in a position of permanent protest against many of its rules. We must remember that the majority is deserving of consideration to at least an equal extent with the minority. The latter are entitled to claim what the former should not be permitted to refuse—namely, equal rights in the provision of efficient secular education,

and protection for their faith. Provided these are granted, we who are the minority should remember that we ought not to presume to dictate.

We succeeded in our defence of the Union because we convinced the people of Great Britain that by the concession of a separate Parliament for Ireland our rights and their interests would be placed in grave peril. The Education question is one which, no doubt, the Government will consider in the light of the reasonable wishes of the majority. They now occupy a commanding position, and will deal with the whole subject solely on the merits. Our Presbyterian brethren joined us in the defence of the Union because their interests were concerned equally with ours, and to say that any exercise of

Independent Opinion on our part

would imperil the Union by detaching them from our alliance, is to charge them either with puerile peevishness or purblind infatuation.

The fact is that the outcry against the New Rules derives most of its strength from the oft-repeated charge, that in sparsely populated districts Protestant interests would be imperilled. *Not one scintilla of evidence has been adduced to prove that in such districts the New Rules could come into force at all.* Before the proposed Rules can come into operation, two vital and essential conditions are necessary, viz. :—(1) where the Roman Catholic school is the applicant, there must not be one single Protestant attending it; and (2) the alternative Protestant school must be efficient. It is in the districts in which Protestants are fewest that

such conditions are entirely absent.

The appreciation of these facts would moderate the inconsiderate outcry of those who appeal to the natural

and righteous sympathies which the condition of their brethren in Roman Catholic districts naturally excites.

The Rules would principally operate in places where Protestants either form the majority or a respectable minority of the population. In such cases Protestants would be stimulated to do two things—namely, to increase the efficiency of their own schools, and to keep their children under Protestant influence. To read some of the “Protests” which emanate from the abnormally developed faculty for hostile criticism which has been recently evoked, one would imagine that the framers of such “Protests” were

more concerned for **Secular** than for **Religious**
Education,

and that it had become a matter of conscience to keep Protestant pupils in Roman Catholic schools.

We should be sorry to deny that many of those whose high position, conspicuous ability, and earnest piety, deserve and receive respect and recognition from every member of the Church have spoken against these proposed Rules. But we confidently and respectfully submit that more intimate knowledge, resulting from further consideration and discussion of the whole question, will materially modify their views. To do anything, however little, in furtherance of this—so desirable a consummation—is, to our mind, to render a real service to the highest and truest interests of the Church of Ireland.

PART II.

A CRITICISM OF THE PROPOSED NEW RULES.*

IN the eclipse or effacement of questions involving grave constitutional changes, public attention is now, and will be for some time to come, directed to matters which, in their practical utility, affect intimately the future peace and prosperity of the country.

One of the first questions which presses for solution is that of primary education. By the action of the National Board Commissioners with regard to religious instruction in primary schools, this phase of the subject has recently been forced to the front. Although we may not witness *immediate* changes in the existing rules of the National Board, previous experience warns us to look for modifications as the ultimate outcome of the present demand.

The complexity of the subject and the nature of the issues involved make it difficult for the public—with whom the final solution rests—to form a clear and dispassionate judgment, and to act on it. In the absence of definite knowledge the way is more open for appeals to passion and prejudice, and for charges and counter-charges of insincerity and want of faith.

In order to follow more easily the nature and bearing of the proposed changes in the National Board rules, we

* A large part of this "Criticism" has already appeared in a series of letters to the press. It is republished at the request of many who are interested in the subject of which it treats.

shall first consider some points in the history of National Education, and the alterations which time and experience rendered necessary in its working.

Origin and Early History.

The National System of education owes its origin to the Ministry of Earl Grey. In October, 1831, the Right Hon. E. G. Stanley, Chief Secretary for Ireland, in a letter to the Marquis of Anglesey, then Lord Lieutenant, outlined in some detail a plan for a system of primary education, and suggested as the first Commissioners the Duke of Leinster, Archbishop Whately, and Dr. Sadleir, representing the Established Church; Archbishop Murray and Mr. Blake, the Roman Catholic Church; and Messrs. Carlile and Holmes, the non-Episcopal Protestants. The original plan which Mr. Stanley suggested for the working of the system was that of "combined literary, and separate religious, education, each department altogether to exclude the other." When Mr. Stanley submitted this basis to the Commissioners, some of them strongly objected to anything which would entirely exclude religious teaching from combined education. The plan above mentioned was then altered, so as to make the system one of "combined literary and moral, and separate religious, education."

Differences.

It might naturally have been expected that in a country with such a history and such traditions as Ireland, differences would soon arise in the working of the system. As a matter of fact, such differences frequently made themselves apparent; but these were amicably settled by mutual concessions. A more serious controversy, however, arose in 1852.

A Cleavage.

Under the sanction of Mr. Stanley and the original founders of the Board, three books of combined literary and moral instruction were introduced for reading during

hours not devoted to separate religious teaching—viz. *Scripture Extracts, Sacred Poetry, and Lessons on the Truth of Christianity*, by Archbishop Whately. From the latter certain expressions stated to be offensive to Roman Catholics had been removed. The use of these books was strongly objected to by many Roman Catholics; and in 1852, by resolution of the Board, the books referred to were withdrawn from use during ordinary school hours. On the passing of this rule, Archbishop Whately, the Right Hon. Baron Greene, and the Right Hon. F. Blackburne seceded from the Board, being replaced by the Bishop of Limerick, Right Hon. J. Hatchell, and Mr. Mountifort Longfield.

Growth of the System.

During this time the National System had been annually securing a wider acceptance. In four years after the establishment of the Board—that is, in 1835—there were in connection with it 789 schools, attended by 107,142 children. In 1841 these numbers had risen to 1,978 and 235,566 respectively; and in 1853 the system controlled no less than 5,023 schools, with 550,631 children. This increase was more remarkable in face of the serious diminution which had taken place in the population during the famine years.

Presbyterian Opposition.

All this, however, was not achieved without opposition, as well on the part of the Presbyterians as on that of the members of the Establishment. The opposition of both turned largely on the question of the exclusion of the Bible from use as a class-book during the ordinary school hours. The Synod of Derry, in June, 1834, agreed, by a majority of eighty-one to seventy-four, to adopt a protest against the National System as dishonouring God's Word in deference to Roman Catholic pretensions. This protest was largely supported by the rank and file of

Ulster Presbyterians. The magnetic personality of the famous Dr. Cooke was in itself a strong factor in the opposition; and in December, 1834, the majority determined to separate from the Board, and establish a system of their own. The voice of moderate men was either unheard or discounted as the utterance of those who, for selfish ends, were willing to compromise truth and principle.

Roman Catholic Opposition.

In 1854 the Board had to face the formidable opposition of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy. The following is a summary of the Roman Catholic objections, viz. :—

1. That no spiritual exercise was permitted to suspend school business.
2. That teachers were not required to exclude any children from any religious instruction.
3. That all sacraments and rites were prohibited.
4. That religious emblems and denominational names were excluded.
5. That recognition as teachers was refused to lay members of male religious associations.
6. That special regulations were introduced for convent schools.

This opposition crystallized itself in a memorial to the Government from the Roman Catholic Bishops, praying for a separate grant for the instruction of Roman Catholic children. Although the Government did not accede to the prayer of the memorial, they made two important and far-reaching concessions—namely, that newly appointed masters should be required to give notice to the parent when a child attends religious instruction different from his own, and that by a new charter the number of Commissioners should be increased to twenty, giving the Roman Catholics half that number. This latter change was made in 1861, when the Roman Catholic pupils comprised no less than 84 per cent. of the whole.

We come now to the year 1866, when the Roman Catholic Bishops presented a statement of the changes which they desired. This statement embodies the demand which is now made, that in schools attended exclusively

by one denomination all restrictions on religious instruction should be removed, and that full liberty should be given at all hours for the performance of religious exercises, and the use of religious emblems. The Bishops insisted that rules designed and suited only for mixed schools were vexatious and absurd when enforced in purely denominational ones.

To this memorial the Commissioners replied, refusing its prayer, and declining, as a purely administrative body, to enter into any controversy on the questions involved.

Modifications.

In 1866 the conscience clause was again modified, throwing on the Manager the obligation of excluding children from religious instruction given by a teacher not of their own denomination, unless when a parent had signed a written consent for his child to receive such instruction. It is worthy of note that the three Presbyterian Commissioners protested against the amended clause. This change left the conscience clause as we now have it, and as it is likely to remain.

The Powis Commission.

In the very imperfect sketch which we have presented of some noteworthy features in the formation and early development of the National System, we have brought the position of the Board down to 1867. In that year we find that the number of schools had increased to 6,520, and the total number on the rolls for the last quarter to 685,009. Mr. Gladstone was then incubating his campaign against the Irish Church, and included in his bill of indictment the questions of land tenure and education. Although not in office, he was really in power; and in order to take the sting out of his attack upon one branch of the "upas tree," the party then in office granted an inquiry, which was intended to be, and in fact was, exhaustive, on the general

state of primary education in Ireland. The inquiry was conducted by fourteen Commissioners, under the presidency of Earl Powis. It included in the scope of its investigations not only the National System, but that of the Church Education Society, the Board of Erasmus Smith, the Christian Brothers' and Convent Schools, as well as those of several smaller organizations. For two years a careful, impartial, and exhaustive inquiry was held into the working of each educational organization. After the most careful consideration a report was adopted, which, for elaborateness of details and clearness of arrangement, left nothing to be desired. The report is of the greater importance, inasmuch as the changes embodied in the proposed New Rules of the Board are based largely, as far as they refer to religious instruction, on the recommendations of that Commission. We give those recommendations as far as they relate to such instruction :—

That in places where there is only one school religious instruction shall be confined to fixed hours. (a) No child registered as a Protestant shall be present when religious instruction is given by a Roman Catholic. (b) No child registered as a Roman Catholic shall be present when religious instruction is given by a person who is not a Roman Catholic. (c) No child shall be allowed to join in or be present at any religious observances to which the child's parents or guardians may object. (d) The school books shall be such as have been allowed by the Commissioners of National Education for use in a mixed school. (e) No religious emblems shall be exhibited during school hours.

These rules, it will be seen, were intended to apply only to places where there is but one school.

It was then recommended that :—

When there have been in operation for three years in any school district, or within any city or town, two or more schools, of which one is under Protestant and the other under Roman Catholic management, having an average attendance of not less than twenty-five children, the National Board may, upon application from the Patron or Manager, adopt any such school, and award aid without requiring any regulation as to religion other than the following :—Such schools recognised as separate schools for a particular religious denomination shall be subject to the prohibitions (a, b, and c) aforesaid, and the recognition shall be terminable upon a twelve months' notice.

Although this Commission effected no immediate change in the rules under which religious instruction was regulated in National schools, it succeeded in eliciting and collating much valuable information on every matter connected with primary education. Its report has proved a veritable mine from which subsequent educational reformers have quarried their information, and its recommendations on many departments of the National System have been embodied in legislation.

How far did the Mixed System obtain ?

Before proceeding to consider the force and bearing of these recommendations, it may be worth while to enquire how far the National System has ever succeeded in realizing its object of affording "combined literary and moral, and separate religious, instruction to children of all persuasions." Such success is reflected in the extent to which the "mixed" system was adopted, as well as by the desire manifested either to extend or restrict its working.

In the year 1867 we find that, of the 6,382 schools in operation, 2,562 were attended exclusively by children of one denomination, or 40.1 per cent. of the entire number.

Of these 2,562 no less than 2,365 were exclusively Roman Catholic schools under Roman Catholic teachers, and only 197 were exclusively Protestant schools under Protestant teachers. The Roman Catholics on the rolls of the unmixed schools numbered 360,887, and the Protestants only 19,867. In the same year (1867) 41.7 per cent. of the entire number of pupils were attending schools composed of one religious denomination. Of the 912,745 children on the rolls 737,267 were Roman Catholics, and 175,478 Protestants. Of these 49 per cent. and 11.3 per cent. respectively were in attendance at unmixed schools.

Let us now see how these figures stand for 1894—twenty-seven years later. In that year we find that, of the 8,458 schools in full connection with the Board, 4,689 were at-

tended exclusively by children of one denomination only, or 55.4 of the entire number. Of these 4,689 there were 3,531 taught exclusively by Roman Catholic, and 1,158 by Protestant, teachers of all denominations. The Roman Catholics on the rolls of the unmixed schools numbered 460,232, and the Protestants 122,959. In the same year (1894) 56.8 per cent. of the entire number of pupils were attending unmixed schools, and only 43.2 were in attendance in mixed schools. Of the 1,028,281 children on the rolls 774,221 were Roman Catholics, and 254,060 were Protestants. Of these 59.4 and 48.4 per cent. respectively were in attendance at unmixed schools.

The following tables will afford means of comparison as to these figures between the years 1867 and 1894 :—

SCHOOLS.							
YEAR.	Total Number.	Mixed.	Unmixed.	Percentage of Mixed.	Percentage of Unmixed.	Unmixed, with R. C. Teachers.	Unmixed, with Protestant Teachers.
1867 ...	6,382	3,820	2,562	59.9	40.1	2,365	197
1894 ...	8,458	3,769	4,689	44.6	55.4	3,531	1,158
PUPILS.							
YEAR.	Total.	Attending Mixed Schools.	Attending Unmixed Schools.	Percentage at Mixed Schools.	Percentage at Unmixed Schools.	Roman Catholics at Unmixed Schools	Protestants at Unmixed Schools.
1867 ...	912,745	531,991	380,754	58.3	41.7	360,887	19,857
1894 ...	1,028,281	445,090	583,191	43.2	56.8	460,232	122,959

What is the Conclusion ?

The most cursory examination of the above figures establishes—(1) That at no period within the past thirty years did two-thirds of the total number of pupils attend mixed schools; and (2)—still more conclusively—that the unvarying tendency exhibited is towards an increase of denominationalism both as to schools and pupils.

Just to illustrate (2) by a comparison. We have an increase of only 115,536 pupils as between 1867 and 1894, whilst in the same period we have an increase of 202,447 in attendance at purely unmixed schools. But this tendency is still more apparent in exclusively Protestant schools, in which the 19,867 attending in 1867 had increased to 122,959 in 1894; those schools themselves having meantime increased from 197 to 1,158! No doubt, some of this increase is explained by the admission in the interval of many hundreds of Church Education Society and other schools; but the residual fact stands that, in the first place, the representatives of each religious denomination have shown a decided preference for schools managed by themselves and attended by their own pupils. And not only so, but the Commissioners of National Education, from the first moment they consented to establish two schools in the same town or village, when one would have provided adequate accommodation for all the children, violated the so-called "fundamental principle" of the National Board, and those at whose request the second school was established were accessories to such violation.*

We are not to be taken as desiring to say one word against the *system* of united education, where it can be applied on fairly equal terms, as doubtless it can in many parts of the Province of Ulster. At the same time it is quite evident from facts and figures that the great majority of all denominations in Ireland, even where such denominations are fairly equally balanced, prefer to have schools of their own.

* As a matter of fact, the "mixed school" test is entirely fallacious. If a single child, for one single day appearing on the roll of a National School, be of a different denomination from the rest, that school is entered as *mixed* for that year: e.g., Athy Model School was a "mixed school" in 1892 (though not for years before, nor in 1893, nor 1894), because in that year *one Roman Catholic infant* was taken there and entered on the roll, and appears on page 17 of the Report, though she never went there again, having only been removed from the Convent School that same day, and having returned to it immediately afterwards. We could multiply specimens of this fallacious nomenclature if it served any purpose; but the foregoing is a significant instance.

To descend from generals to particulars tending to establish this fact, it will hardly be credited that in the Diocese of Dublin, in 41 schools, having 16,532 pupils, under Roman Catholic teachers, there is not one single Protestant ; and in 68 schools, having 6,980 pupils, under Protestant teachers, there is not one single Roman Catholic.

Origin of the present Controversy.

Having now discussed (1) the establishment and growth of the National System ; and (2) its claim to be called a mixed system, we shall proceed to consider the origin of the present attitude of the Commissioners in respect to religious instruction.

In 1892 an Act was passed by the Conservative Government, allocating to the purposes of free education certain sums available from probate duties and other sources, and establishing compulsory education in 118 townships scheduled under the Towns Commissioners Act. In the drafting of this measure no definite provision was made for levying the expenses incurred in putting the principle of compulsory education in force. This omission, though it made the application of compulsion difficult, was remediable, and, in fact, has been entirely remedied in certain townships. At the same time, it affords a pretext for the representatives of the Roman Catholic Church on the National Board, as well as for the Roman Catholic Town Commissioners in the scheduled townships, to oppose the application of the compulsory principle until such time as the working of the National System shall be brought into harmony with the aim of those who desired the full recognition of the denominational principle. About two years ago a movement in furtherance of this object became perceptible—first, in the advocacy of the admission of the Christian Brothers,

under exceptional terms, into that system from which they had seceded in 1836, and afterwards in the action of the Commissioners which extended the principle to *all schools* within the 118 townships in which the specified conditions obtained.

Those who have had any practical experience of such matters will not fail to see that it would soon become practically impossible to limit the operation of the denominational principle to those 118 townships. They possess no characteristics in themselves which would entitle them to special treatment, and the specified conditions frequently apply with much more completeness to other towns. Accordingly, it is understood that at their meeting in August last the Commissioners determined by a majority to recommend that the admission of strictly denominational schools to State aid should be granted to *all schools* possessing the requirements specified in their New Rules of April 17th.

We shall, therefore, discuss those rules in the light of their extended, rather than of their restricted, application. The principle underlying the New Rules may be somewhat roughly stated as follows :—

That in any locality where a school attended by pupils of one denomination only exists, such school shall be admitted to or continued in all the emoluments and privileges of National Schools, and shall be reserved exclusively for the benefit of that religious denomination, provided only—(a) Adequate provision exists in the locality for the education of pupils of the several denominations, either in National Schools already existing or admitted under the New Rules ; and (b) that the applicant school is an efficient one. A school when recognised as denominational shall be relieved of all restrictions as to the time or manner of giving religious instruction, provided the imparting of such instruction is sanctioned by the parent of each pupil receiving it.

Objections.

Let us now consider the objections which are usually made to the admission of the principle of the New Rules, as we have given it above. They are generally as follows :—

(1) They violate the fundamental principle of the National System. (2) They constitute an interference with parental right. (3) They would serve the purposes of proselytism. (4) They would place the education of the Roman Catholic people in the hands of the priesthood; and (5) They would ultimately extend denominationalism to every town, village, and townland in Ireland.

We shall briefly discuss those objections in order:—

Fundamental Principle.

(1) We hear overmuch of this “fundamental principle.” It is spoken of as if it were some sacred and inviolable treasure, discovered by a happy educational inspiration, not to be approached without irreverence, nor touched without impiety. Let us at once allay the susceptibilities of those who deify this principle by assuring them that the new rules, if carried out with the amendments which we shall indicate, not only recognise, but confirm it. What is the principle? It is this:—“That no attempt shall be made to interfere with the peculiar religious tenets of any description of Christian pupils.” How is this condition fulfilled in the new rules? As follows, viz.—“The manager of a school in which the pupils are all Protestants shall not be at liberty to admit a Roman Catholic pupil, and the manager of a school in which the pupils are all Roman Catholics shall not be at liberty to admit a Protestant pupil.” We fail to see how the carrying out of this rule can violate the “fundamental principle.” How can any “attempt to interfere” with the religion of a child be made by a teacher or manager if that child be excluded from his control?

The “Parental Right” Theory.

(2) In this objection we have another invocation of a right, which all will recognise as sacred (within certain limits), brought forward to serve the purposes of a theory.

What right of a parent do the New Rules abrogate? Simply the "right" to select any particular school for the education of his child which his own fancy or prejudice may indicate—even though the attendance of that child in such school may curtail what the parents of 300 other children may look upon as equally their rights—namely, that they should indicate the lines upon which the religious instruction of their children should proceed. We shall be prepared to allow the right of every parent to secure efficient instruction for his child, and where that parent pays for it he has a right to demand it. At the same time, where the exercise of a fancied right by one person interferes with the liberty of 300, and where the denial of such fancied right secures the liberty of 300, one must be cautious in applying it. The Compulsory Education Act and the Industrial Schools Act interfere with parental "rights," yet no one thinks the worse of them for it.

Where is the "Proselytism"?

(3) Here we have a general assertion which needs both definite statement and adequate proof. How the exclusion of both Protestants and Roman Catholics from schools not conducted by teachers of their own faith would foster proselytism is for those who make the charge to prove. And yet the charge is made, and the opposition of many, who have neither time nor opportunity to examine the validity of such a charge, is secured solely on the strength of it.

Gratuitous Interference Unwelcome.

(4) As to placing their education in the hands of their priesthood, we think the Roman Catholic people are pretty well able to take care of themselves, without being wet-nursed by their Protestant fellow-countrymen. If the Roman Catholic priesthood, apprehensive of the advance

of a spirit of cosmopolitan socialism and religious indifference, believe in the necessity of more thoroughly saturating education with what they have a perfect right to consider religion, and if their people show no disposition to oppose themselves to the action of their clergy, we have no right to step between them. Much is made of the fact that occasionally in social life—or mayhap in a tramcar—one sometimes meets Roman Catholics of the better class, who ask for what they call “protection” against their clergy. But of what representative value are such conversations? Let those gentlemen who, many of them, desire to make themselves appear as “liberal-minded” as possible in the estimation of Protestants, form an organization to carry out their views. We have simply to accept the fact that no representative value is to be attached to such views unless they crystallize themselves in action. When they do, the objection which we are dealing with may have force ; until then it is academic and intangible.

A Pure Hypothesis!

(5) It is a most difficult matter to answer an objection made on the basis of a pure hypothesis. Its whole strength consists in the warning against making a concession, which, properly safeguarded, is just and harmless, lest it might be extended in its scope, and become injurious in its action. The same objection has been made, and too often successfully, against every beneficial change in every institution in ancient and modern times. The New Rules lay down certain limitations, and prescribe certain definite bounds to their application and working, and any attempt to enlarge their scope would be not only a gross breach of faith, but would be strenuously and successfully resisted by all who now, on the ground of their being reasonable and innocuous, are willing to make certain concessions.

The Proposed Rules should be Amended.

We shall now endeavour to show that the proposed New Rules, though *in principle* unobjectionable, afford, as they stand, insufficient guarantees for the protection of minorities, and in their working, if left unaltered, would place Protestants in an invidious, if not a dangerous, position.

A Mere Majority Insufficient.

1. In Rule I. it is stated : " The application [to recognise a school as denominational] shall be considered at a meeting of the Board, at which a major part of the Commissioners shall be present." This rule, as it stands, is open to grave objection. In a matter involving serious religious issues, the absence of even one Protestant Commissioner would jeopardize the interests of his co-religionists, by placing in the hands of the Roman Catholic Commissioners the power of continuously excluding Protestant children from efficient schools.

We suggest the amendment of the rule as follows :—
"The application shall be considered at a meeting of the Board, at which a major part of the Commissioners shall be present, and such application, before being acceded to, must be supported by a majority, containing at least one-third of the Roman Catholic and Protestant Commissioners respectively present and voting." This would re-assure even the most suspicious Protestant, and prevent any snatch vote being taken.

What constitutes "Efficiency" ?

2. It is stated in Rule II. (a) that " the Commissioners, before granting the application, must be satisfied that adequate provision exists in the locality for the elementary instruction of pupils of the several religious denomina-

tions ;” and in Rule IV. : “ A school shall not be recognised under these regulations unless its pupils are at the time of such recognition either all Protestants or all Roman Catholics.”

In order to show how entirely these provisions, in their present form, have been changed, as compared with those which appear in the report of the Powis Commission, we give them side by side :—

NEW RULES II. (a) AND IV.

The Commissioners, before granting the application, must be satisfied that *adequate provision exists in the locality* for the elementary instruction of pupils of the several religious denominations, either in National schools conducted under the ordinary rules of the Commissioners, or else in schools receiving aid under these regulations; and a school shall not be recognised under these regulations unless its pupils *are, at the time of such recognition*, either all Protestants or all Roman Catholics.

POWIS COMMISSION REPORT, 44.

That when there have been in operation in any school district, or within any city or town, *for three years*, two or more schools, of which one is under Protestant and one under Roman Catholic management, *having an average attendance of not less than twenty-five children*, the National Board may, upon application from the Patron or Manager, adopt any such school, and award aid, without requiring any regulation as to religion except (here follows a reference to the Conscience Clause).

We have italicized those portions of each recommendation which refer to corresponding exclusive provisions. By comparing the portions thus indicated, it will be seen that two safeguards, recognised as necessary by the Powis Commission, are entirely dispensed with by the proposed New Rules.

The first of these relates to what is called “adequate provision,” and the New Rules leave entirely to the decision of a bare majority of the Commissioners the duty of defining what constitutes “adequate provision” for education. We may take it that in order to make “adequate provision” there must be what is called elsewhere in the Rules an “efficient school, according to the meaning of the Irish Education Act, 1892 ;” but as this

Act never attempts to define the term "efficient," the reference is quite unmeaning. Much as the minority might desire to keep their own children under proper religious instruction and constant supervision, it would be unreasonable to expect them to forego the advantages of an efficient secular education in a large school, protected as such a school now is from possible proselytism, in order to breathe the languid atmosphere of a school whose numbers perilously approach the irreducible minimum of ten. The report of the Powis Commission affords some protection in prescribing, as necessary to constitute "efficiency," an average attendance of not less than twenty-five; but this limitation is absent from Rule II. Even twenty-five is too small. The minority is entitled to a first-class primary education, and the National Board will not pay a first-class salary to any teacher with an average of less than thirty-five. If Rule II. be amended, by making the thirty-five minimum average a necessary element in efficiency, we should in this respect be amply safeguarded. No doubt, this limitation would seriously diminish the area in which the change would operate; but, after all, that is not our consideration. All fair-minded people must see to it that a minority should not suffer from any disability in respect to education because they are a minority. We do not maintain that a school is *necessarily* efficient with a first-class teacher, or with an average attendance of thirty-five; but no educationist will refuse to allow that these things usually constitute an element of efficiency. The applicant school should have been

for a definite previous period unmixed.

The condition laid down in Rule IV. for the recognition as denominational of an applicant school is, that "its pupils, at the time of such recognition, are either all Protestants or all Roman Catholics."

Let us see how this would work out in practice. Take the case of a locality in which the superior education given induces, say, one or two Protestant policemen or coast-guards to send their children to a school under Roman Catholic management. The removal of these few families would leave the school for the moment strictly denominational. The application is made with this circumstance in view—the condition is thus fulfilled, and the school comes under the new rule. Meanwhile, the two or three Protestant policemen, &c., are replaced by others, and the school is closed to them. The mere fact of a school being temporarily or momentarily denominational is no proof that it will continue so. Unless the school has been thus for some definite interval—say, twelve months*—there is no proof that such denominationalism represents the normal educational position in the locality. From the very nature of the case, the attendance of Protestants must be intermittent, and the abolition of the protection afforded by the present National Board Rules would constitute a permanent menace to the faith of Protestants.

Let the rule be amended as follows, and the minority will be protected:—"A school shall not be recognised unless its pupils shall have been entirely Protestant or entirely Roman Catholic for twelve months previous to the application being made."

One Inspector insufficient.

3. There is another important safeguard which should be inserted in the New Rules, amending that in Rule III., which now reads as follows:—"Before the Commissioners decide upon the application they will require a report from the Inspector of the district upon all the circumstances of

* The Rev. Principal Moore suggests *three years*, and in this we should hesitate to differ from him. The substance of this amendment is due to his suggestion.

the particular case, and upon the provision for elementary education in the locality generally."

In a question involving denominational issues more or less acute, *one* Inspector would be placed in a most invidious and delicate position, by having to decide on a matter on which his co-religionists of one side or the other held strong views. We suggest therefore the amendment of this rule as follows:—"Before the Commissioners decide upon such application they will require a report from a Commission, consisting of two of their Inspectors—one a Protestant and the other a Roman Catholic."* Such a condition would, doubtless, be welcomed by the Inspectors themselves, and would inspire much greater confidence in the report made to the Board.

How if the alternative School should cease to be efficient ?

There is another provision absent from the New Rules, which might well be considered in the interest of the minority. It rests on what we consider the very strongest plank in the platform of those who object to any change whatever in the present arrangement of the National Board. We may put it as a query—"What should be done when a school which is efficient in the sense defined, ceases to be efficient by the diminution of its average?"

There are just three ways out of this difficulty—(a) withdraw the grant from the school of the majority ; (b) restore such school to the position of an ordinary National school as at present ; or (c) continue to pay the salary of a first-class teacher to the minority school. To our mind (a) would be unjust, and (b) would be invidious and impracticable. The third, then, would be really the only way out of the difficulty.

If the services of a first-class teacher were secured for

* See page 21.

an average of, say, twenty, it would leave so large a margin to cover diminution that the possibility of any injustice being wrought would be almost inappreciable.

What do we gain?

We venture to submit, that the alteration and amendment of the proposed rules in some such manner as we have pointed out, would give the Protestants of Ireland the most ample safeguards against either proselytism or inefficient education. There are, we fear, some who will persist in viewing the motives of those who advocate the change as so disingenuous, and those who, thus safeguarded, assent to such change as so criminally credulous, that no reason will influence them. Their objections derive much force from the question which, no doubt, they reasonably ask, namely—Why should we advocate any changes in the present rules, and of what advantage would such changes be to us?

We shall briefly summarize these advantages under three heads:—(1) The immediate enforcement of the Compulsory Education Act in the 118 scheduled townships, and its ultimate extension to the entire country. (2) The exclusion of scattered Protestants from the schools of the Christian Brothers, where they have no protection for their faith at present, as well as from schools in which they form an insignificant minority, and their inclusion in efficient schools of their own faith; and (3) the recognition and support of a very large number of schools and teachers by the National Board, which are at present languishing for want of such support.

Save the Children!

We shall say little with regard to (1). It needs no advocacy. Simply to state the fact that thousands of

children are running virtually wild over hill and bog, or infesting our streets as undergraduates in vice or crime—the candidate *alumni* of the slums—who would be subjected to the wholesome discipline of school-life by our acceptance of concessions practically innocuous to ourselves, is to commend these concessions to all reasonable men.

The Clergy should guard the Faith.

As to (2), it should not need very much reasoning to commend it to those who should be, above everything, anxious for the maintenance of their faith in respect to the young members of their flocks.

We have a considerable number of Protestant children attending Christian Brothers' Schools, particularly in the South of Ireland. From the resistance which is now being offered to the proposal for bringing these Christian Brothers' Schools under State supervision and control, and keeping out of them our scattered young people, one would imagine that the first concern of those uncompromising Protestants who so resist is to keep their children in schools where their faith is in danger. We must remember, that if our Protestant youth are excluded from those schools, as they would be by the New Rules, they would add to the numbers in our own schools, and thus increase their efficiency. If we have in a village a school attended by 200 Roman Catholics and, say, fifteen Protestants, together with a second school attended by twenty-five Protestants, and if we succeed in bringing those fifteen Protestants now attending a Roman Catholic school into our own, we do much to render the small Protestant school efficient, and also to keep our children under our own charge and protection. This result should, and we have no doubt, in due time will, commend itself especially to the clergy, whose primary duty it is to guard the faith of their people.

Admission of our Schools.

We come now to advantage No. 3, to be secured to us by the New Rules : namely, the recognition of a large number of our own schools at present outside the National Board. A great deal has been made of an argument frequently urged by those who are resisting any change, viz., that by their Rules the Church Education Society could not accept a grant from the State, which would compel them to exclude any children from attendance at their schools, and from the obligation of reading the Bible, which their Rules impose on all pupils. Now, we have much individual knowledge of voluntary schools in Ireland, and we venture to say that there is but small opportunity of enforcing such an obligation. When large numbers of Roman Catholics attended these schools in times gone by, the enforcement of such Rules had meaning—now it has none, as virtually all the pupils are Protestants, and read the Bible without compulsion. Again, it must be borne in mind, that the vast majority of non-State schools are unconnected with the Church Education Society or any other outside organization, and therefore unfettered by any rules. We have, in the City of Dublin alone, over a dozen such schools, now supported entirely by Church people, which by the New Rules would be eligible for a State grant ; thus not only increasing their own efficiency, but relieving Churchmen of a burden which often proves too heavy for them, and making brighter the now dim and uncertain future for many deserving teachers who have borne the burden and heat of the day.

There are many other subsidiary but substantial advantages which would be secured to the minority by the concessions embodied in the New Rules, safeguarded as we have indicated ; therefore, not merely in justice to the claims of our Roman Catholic fellow-countrymen, but with a view to our own interests, we would venture earnestly

to impress upon our fellow-Protestants the imperative duty of being entirely guided in forming their opinions by reason and prudence. Except in regard to the defence of the Union—which affected the whole Empire—we have not been successful hitherto in our attitude towards legislative changes. A spirit of timely and wise compromise might have prolonged the existence, and certainly would have broken the fall, of many institutions which we or our fathers once vowed to stand by. Taught by the lessons of the past, let us abandon the policy of unreasoning resistance to reforms; and accepting such changes as are, at one time or another, inevitable, let us so modify them as to secure solid benefits for those who come after us.

