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Education  
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THE  
NEW GOVERNMENT SCHEME  
OF  
ACADEMICAL EDUCATION FOR IRELAND

CONSIDERED,  
IN A  
LETTER TO A FRIEND.

BY  
ALEXANDER J. BERESFORD HOPE,  
M.A. M.P.

Tua res agitur cùm proximus ardet  
Ucalegon.

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Houses of the Oireachtas

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L E T T E R,  
&c.

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MY DEAR SIR,

The friendship which has for so many years existed between us points you out as the most fitting person to whom I can address the remarks which I now propose to offer upon the new Government scheme of Academical Education for Ireland.

You are, I presume, acquainted with the details of Sir J. Graham's Bill, and I shall not, therefore, repeat them; but, simply, call your attention to the three distinguishing features of the measure, which are—ungodness (I submit to the disadvantage entailed by coining a new word, on purpose not to appear to convey any offensive meaning, by the use of the common terms expressive of this idea), undiscipline, and state-subserviency. That

these are its characteristics, none can deny; its opponents think it very reprehensible on these accounts, and it is on the same grounds that its advocates defend it: some, as a necessary concession to the "spirit of the age," and the disorganized condition of Ireland; others, from their esteeming these features to be, in themselves, simply and radically good. We have, therefore, what, in all controverted questions, is of great advantage—a clear, intelligible, undisputed point of difference; whether or not it be necessary for the well-being of academic bodies, that they recognize The Deity, enforce discipline as of equal importance with the imparting of knowledge, and possess power of self-government. Our ancient Universities are based upon the affirmative of these three propositions; the "new Colleges for the Advancement of Learning in Ireland," on the negative.

I am, I believe, safe in asserting, that in the whole history of the Christian world so complete a development, as the present one, has hardly ever been given of these negative principles. University College, London, hardly recognizes religion, and it does not enforce discipline; but it is independent of the State. L'Université in France is irreligious, and it is the slave of the State; but the discipline of its dependent colleges is even minutely tedious. The German Universities are unruly, and turbulent, and undisciplined; and

their unruliness, and turbulence, and lack of discipline, are checked, not by wise and firm self-government, but by the iron hand of State control: they are not, however, godless; there is not one that does not contain a theological faculty, sometimes faculties. It remained for a Conservative Government of England to mature a scheme of Academical Education, which should be as godless as the University of France, undisciplined as Jena, dependent as Berlin upon the minister of the day; it remained for a Conservative Government to propose this measure as the remedy to heal the troubles of a long-distracted and unhappy country.

The bill now before Parliament does not profess to be the complete development of the Government scheme. For this we have the words of the minister who introduced it. It merely provides for the foundation of three "Colleges." The manner in which these "Colleges" are to be combined into an University, (for the idea of raising each to that character, though not distinctly and for ever disavowed, was yet strongly condemned by Sir J. Graham,) is still left open;—whether the minister will tie them on to Trinity College, Dublin, and of the two compose a new University of Dublin; or open to them, (which Sir J. Graham did not allude to, but yet is possible,) the unresisting portals of the University of London; or, which he gave us to think was the most probable course, form them,

uncontaminated by foreign alliance, into a new central University of Ireland. Whichever alternative be adopted, I have no hesitation in raising my voice against the proposed measure, as a proceeding alike dangerous in its working and unsound in principle; dangerous and unsound in itself, and still more so as the prelude to future innovations of an extent and a nature which no one, no, not the introducers of the bill now before the House of Commons, can either anticipate or prevent.

The religion and the laws of Scotland are different from those of the remainder of the British empire<sup>1</sup>; and we may, therefore, without any unfairness, leave the condition of that country entirely out of the question in our present inquiry, merely observing by the way, that we believe our cause would be far from weakened in a practical point of view by an examination of the state of the Universities of that land.

Supposing this measure to become the law of the land, and a royal charter, (for this is all that is requisite, and this is all that was employed to create the University of London,) to confer upon some board of examiners the power of granting degrees to such persons as the "Colleges" shall present for the necessary examination, we shall have a National

<sup>1</sup> In every other part of the empire the Church of England and English law are *the rule* for the *home-born*, though, as in India, there be a vast population amenable to neither.

University of Ireland, embodying the principle of ungodness, undiscipline, and state-subserviency. The expression of the same principles, though *in a modified form*, will be found in England in the Whig-founded University of London. Here, then, we have a national system of university education, founded upon very distinct and unmistakeable principles. Parallel to this, we find another system of university education; not professing, indeed, to be "national," but for the nation; not merely recognizing the existence of The Deity, but of the Christian Faith and of the Church of God; not merely doling out secular instruction only, but as a wise nursing-mother caring for the discipline of its alumni; no sudden creation and bond-slave of the state, but the slow growth of many centuries, the fair product of royal and episcopal and private munificence; owing, indeed, the obedience of good subjects to the ruling powers, but wisely endowed with sufficient means of self-government, in our ancient Universities of Cambridge and Oxford, and their younger sister of Durham, and in the College University of The Holy Trinity at Dublin.

How can, and wherefore should, these two systems exist together? Is it possible that one should not absorb the other? What is it that makes the modern University system necessary, that the old could not already afford? Does the Dissenter or the Jew complain of exclusion? Why

should he? He can shine in all the benefits of instruction given at Cambridge; and if he wants besides a degree, he can either then emigrate to Dublin, or pass through the whole curriculum of that University, and he may then add any letters to his name he chooses, excepting B.D. and D.D. (we are now stating facts, not giving opinions). The question of his exclusion from fellowships and scholarships need not now be treated of; it is quite foreign to our present discussion. The new "Colleges" have none to offer; and therefore supposing (which I do not admit) that this is a hardship, the proposed measure does nothing towards its remedy. On the other hand, the Churchman may, if he chooses, share in the distinctions of the novel establishments. Therefore, the old and the new Universities, in their several ways, cover, and are meant to cover, the same ground. Is it then likely that two such discordant instruments towards effecting the same end can long work harmoniously together? Is it possible that, in course of time, one will not, if not in form at least in substance, absorb the other? What have the old Universities on their side to assure them of success?—Public opinion, tried principle, and the experience of ages,—invaluable defences in a healthy state of things; in a time however of confusion, but precarious bulwarks. What adamant strength can they put forth, when crushed between the mill-

stones of Whig and of Conservative bureaucracy? both equally jealous of independent action, both equally anxious for the accomplishment of state centralization; equally lavish of biddings for mob popularity, equally eager for the friendship of revolutionary France, and the realization of its state-despotism. Be not deceived: let this measure pass, and our old Universities of England are doomed; if not by the present Secretary of the Home Department,—for I will give him the credit of being honestly undesirous of meddling with the time-honoured academical institutions of this side of the Channel—at all events, by some successor or opponent treading in his footsteps. And what so strange in this? Have we not seen Whigs and Conservatives join in the suppression and mutilation of bishoprics and cathedral chapters? And if these fall, what so sacred a prestige is there to preserve our Universities? The same specious plea of present expediency will serve in the one case, which were found so useful in the other. We *know* that both the present great parties crave after the state centralization of education, as a mighty engine of power; that they have forcibly carried their point in Ireland, as far as elementary instruction is concerned; that as far as superior academies are concerned, they have already adroitly introduced the point of the wedge in England, by the foundation of the University of London; and that they at-

tempted the same for elementary instruction two years ago.

If, therefore, they can advance so much further, make sure of so important a position, as the compassing superior, as they have already done elementary education in Ireland, what guarantee do we possess, that they will be withheld from the further and complete realization of their darling projects, but the confidence we may entertain of the moderation, and the calmness, and the consistency, and the single-mindedness, and the veneration for tried antiquity, of Whig and of Conservative Governments? How well grounded such a confidence may be is to be tested by the last twenty years of our political history.

These observations are made upon the hypothesis of the three "Colleges" being consolidated into an University of Ireland. Supposing them to be aggregated to the University of London, the case will in no way be altered. There is, however, another alternative, which, as I have before said, from the speech of the Home Secretary, may not impossibly be resorted to, that of joining them to the University of Dublin, now conterminous with Trinity College. If such a fatal course be finally resolved upon, my prophecy will already in a great measure prove true; the first blow will have been struck. The integrity of one of our old Universities, before now not untampered with,

will already have been destroyed,—I repeat it, destroyed. It may be asserted that Trinity College is in no ways interfered with ; that she is by charter but Mater Universitatis, that therefore the first founders of that institution anticipated the aggregation of other colleges : this is perfectly true ; but one thing more is true, that they anticipated the aggregation of colleges of the same character as that which they had founded ; not of colleges whose three distinctive characteristics should be ungodness, undiscipline, and state-subserviency. Such is not the character of Trinity College ; therefore the forcible annexation to her in the University of Dublin of other institutions of such a stamp, is a virtual extinction of that University in its present character. It is true that the distinctive features of an old University are dimly to be traced at Dublin ; that the Jew and the infidel, thanks to the legislative interference of the last century, can share in her degrees ; that academical discipline is dispensed with to a limitless degree : but such are exceptions to the rule,—the framework, the nucleus, is still the same as that of Cambridge or of Oxford ; she never has admitted, nay, in constitution, has rather repudiated ungodness, undiscipline, and state-subserviency. Her laxity makes her an easier prey to these destructive doctrines ; but she is not the less on this account to be defended. This will be but a first step, and

few first steps will have been so daring. The principle of our old Universities will be at stake; Dublin will but be the battle-field, which our adversaries, like wise generals, will have selected as the best suited to their operations. If we sit by, with folded hands, and let her fall, all that will be left for us will be either quietly to set our houses in order, in anticipation of the call which will assuredly next year, or the year after, be made upon us; or else, as desperate men, in a desperate struggle, try to retrieve some little credit by an intrepid end.

So much for the principle of the Government "Colleges," considered with a view to their relation to our ancient Universities. I now proceed to a few considerations on their practical operation.

Their ungodness is attempted to be glossed over by their constitution including a permission to religious teachers to make use of the College lecture-rooms. This is about as tangible an admission of religion, as the fact that Mr. Cooke's having the power of fixing his circus at Cork or at Belfast, would be an admission of rope-dancing as a branch of academic study. But, not to appear unserious, what at the best does this amount to? The permission to use the lecture-Rooms of the "College" by "such religious teachers as shall be recognized by such" (before defined) "governing body." No mention what-

ever is made of Christianity. What is there therefore to prevent, what, on the contrary, not to allure the teachers of the doctrines of Spinoza, Owen, and Joseph Smith to these "Colleges," to diffuse the poison of their false systems? Should such be refused the permission, it would tell, I must confess, more strongly in favour of the conscientiousness of such governing body, than of their appreciation of the system, which they are called upon to work.

Teachers of Socinianism and of Judaism cannot, we apprehend, be refused the permission; and, such being the case, by what rule could a learned Mufti be denied leave to teach the tenets of Mohammed? What is to be the exclusion point of error? Supposing a large Indian trade were to centre at Cork, and Indian merchants to settle at that port, (a not impossible event,) would it not be the height of unfairness, to allow the Jew and the Socinian professor the benefit of accommodation, and to deny to the sons of these merchants (very respectable men, and standing high on 'Change) the requisite facilities for attaining instruction in the doctrines and moral precepts of Brahma and Buddh, of Mohammed and Zoroaster?

I had already written this, when I find the following announcement copied in the "Times" of May 20th. "Four Brahmins of high caste have arrived in this country for the purpose of studying

medicine at University College. They are intended to take degrees, with a view of placing them on the same footing with the faculty of India, and, at the same time, enabling them, as natives, to spread in the interior the knowledge they have acquired in our institutions. Two of these students are sent over by Sir Henry Hardinge, at the expense of the East Indian Government, one by public subscription amongst the citizens of Calcutta, and the fourth by Dwarkanauth Tagore, an Eastern philanthropist<sup>2</sup>." So that what I just quoted as an improbable case has already come to pass. Supposing (the bill having passed) the "College" at Cork or at Belfast to have been selected or still to be selected, and, which is not either impossible, Dwarkanauth Tagore, or any other philanthropist to give them the benefit of the instruction of a teacher of their religion, and the precise case I have given would be realized.

But this is not all the religion of these new "Colleges." Sir Robert Peel has no doubt that the religion and the morals of the students will be adequately cared for by their parents or guardians, supposing them to come from a distance, that is, of course, in many cases, their lodging-house keepers, or the tradesmen, at whose houses they board. I am not, I confess, so confident as the

<sup>2</sup> Medical Times.

Premier. Besides which, if there be any thing in the argument, it does neither more nor less than kill the Government scheme altogether, and, indeed, all other schemes of academical education. If all parents and guardians in the upper and middle ranks of life (the classes for whose benefit these "Colleges" are intended), have private means, abilities, and inclination sufficient to give their sons and wards sufficient religious education, including, of course, besides mere morals, an amount of systematic theology corresponding to their secular acquirements, *à fortiori* they will possess means, abilities, and inclination to give them the requisite modicum of secular instruction for their advancement in life; and, therefore, if Sir Robert Peel's doctrine be as universally true as he attempted the other night to prove its being, all Universities are useless.

To turn, now, to the undiscipline which is to characterize these institutions: we have a very practical proof of the working of such a system in the German Universities, planted, for the most part<sup>1</sup>, in small country towns, under a most strict police, for the service of a people more prone to extravagant theory than uproarious action, and especially disinclined to bring polemical discussion upon the field of social inter-

<sup>1</sup> Berlin and Munich are exceptions.

course. I need hardly say in how wretchedly demoralized and decomposed a state they are; the fact must be notorious to every one who barely knows of their existence. If such be their condition, how tenfold worse must be the state of similar institutions planted in the large provincial towns of Ireland, with no efficient state-police; in the midst of a population proverbially hot-tempered and violent in their excitement; dealing in assertions and in blows, not in dreams and theories; and whose natural faults of character are ever kept upon the stretch by a wretched and unhealthy social condition, by the long rankling of deep and deadly political and religious differences! The Saxon student at Jena is insufferable: what can we expect from the Irish student at Cork, Galway, or Belfast? This consideration alone, waiving all higher motives, should have been reason enough to have induced the ministry to pause before introducing such a measure. This is an objection of a nature which can only be met by such alterations of the whole scheme, either in legislation or in practice, as would, in fact, amount to a perfect change of principle; alterations which will convert each of the new "Colleges" into a cumbersome and roundabout development of the old system of collegiate discipline.

To address myself to the third prominent feature of these institutions, their state-subserviency, it is

only needful to refer to the Act of Parliament to perceive how merciless a thralldom it is that these seminaries are to be bound by ; how omnipotent the ministry of the day is to be in the training of the intellect of the Irish people.

The tenth and eleventh clauses of the bill run thus :—

“ Provided always, and be it enacted, That no College shall be entitled to the benefit of this Act, or deemed to be within the provisions thereof, unless it be declared and provided, in and by the letters patent constituting such College, that Her Majesty, her heirs and successors, shall have the sole power of appointing and removing the president, vice-president, professors, bursar, registrar, librarian, and other office-bearers in the said College, and shall be the sole visitor and visitors thereof, and shall have full power and authority to do all things which pertain to the office of visitor, as fully and effectually as is used in other Colleges and Universities of the said United Kingdom of which Her Majesty is visitor ; and that all the statutes, rules, and ordinances concerning the government and discipline of such Colleges shall be made or approved by Her Majesty, her heirs and successors.

“ And be it enacted, That all the statutes, rules, and ordinances which shall be made or approved from time to time by Her Majesty, her heirs and

successors, concerning the government and discipline of the said colleges respectively, which shall be in force at the beginning of every session of Parliament, and which shall not have been before that time laid before Parliament, shall from time to time, within six weeks after the beginning of every such session, be laid before both Houses of Parliament by one of Her Majesty's principal Secretaries of State."

A more absolute, more complete, more cleverly-adjusted piece of state despotism than this can hardly be conceived; nor one which more entirely annihilates freedom of thought or responsibility of action. It is a mere waste of words to say that such a system is, from the beginning to the end, merely and most absolutely alien and abhorrent to the whole spirit of English government, and English institutions, and English feeling. And this bare fact is a strong *prima facie* argument against the measure. We have thriven for unnumbered centuries under self-responsible, self-adjusting, independent Saxon institutions; why now, at the end of time, should they be found outworn and useless? Why is the conjunction of Whig and Conservative policy silently and stealthily to work a revolution, to which the Reform Bill is but a summer dream; the gradual, yet certain substitution for our old free English constitution, of centralized official dictation, the

bureaucracy of Austria, and the Code Napoleon? Surely this is a reason to pause before we adopt the measure. But it is objectionable on more abstract principles. All parties will agree that Professors, whether at the old or the new-fashioned Universities, should be men of honesty, and sense, and talent, acquainted with the subject matter they are called upon to teach, and not biassed by party or personal feelings in great matters or in small; in a word, that they should be scholars and gentlemen: and it is to be presumed that reasonable care will, in the first instance, be taken that men of such character should be appointed. But such a character involves the having responsibility, and responsibility necessitates, on the part of him in whom it is reposed, strong claims to being trusted. No man, that is a scholar and a gentleman, will willingly accept an office of responsibility, in which his gentlemanliness and his scholarship are to be exercised, without a due confidence being reposed in him; without his possessing a well-secured and well-defined power of acting, to a reasonable extent, on his own authority; and more than in any other department, in that of tuition, where there is an ever-present need of an ever-watchful superintendance.

Is it, then, due confidence, is it a reasonable concession of power, to appoint a scholar, and a gentleman, as president or professor of a "College" at

Galway or Belfast, subject at any moment to dismissal, with or without cause assigned, like a day-waiter, by the fiat of that political functionary, the Home Secretary in Downing-street, London? The holders of such an office, under such tenure, must feel themselves in a degraded position; and their degradation will show itself in different ways, according to their different characters. The more cowardly, and more inclined to be time-serving and supple, will be ever prone to fawn upon the existing rulers; while those of a more irritable or saturnine disposition will be sore tempted to revenge themselves for their dependence, by a constant cautious course of internal tyranny, and petty vexation; and, as far as is consistent with their non-dismissal, by a sort of sly humorous opposition to those in power. Manliness and independence, and freedom of thought, will be impossible in these liberal "Colleges." It will be a delusive hope to expect the unwontedness of the powers, given by this act to the executive, and their incompatibility with all old principles of British government, will be any guarantee for their lenient exercise. The character both of persons and of bodies develop, according to circumstances, for good or bad; and if the tide does not turn, we may not despair of seeing the complete Buonapartist type of statesman realized amongst us.

It may be urged against the foregoing pages,

that the state of undiscipline was the original one of most of the Universities of Europe. I grant this; but I further assert, that the system failed on trial; and in no very long period, though after the probation of many a bloody trial, worked its own cure, by its own internal energy, in the development of the collegiate system; for in those days the energy of the Universities was cramped by no Home Office.

In conclusion, I fully admit that the question of academical education for Ireland is one of peculiar difficulty, and one which must be met somehow. The manner in which this should be done is foreign to my present purpose, and I shall not enter into it, but content myself with emphatically asserting that the present ministerial scheme is not the way.

I remain,

My dear Sir,

Ever yours affectionately,

A. J. B. HOPE.



A LETTER,

&c.

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