

PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS
WITH A VIEW TO THE
REMOVAL OF OBJECTIONS
ON THE PART OF THE
PROTESTANT CLERGY AND LAITY
TO THE
ACTUAL WORKING OF THE
NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION
IN
IRELAND.

BY
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BACILLARY SUGGESTIONS

WITH A VIEW TO THE

REMOVAL OF OBSTRUCTIONS

TO THE FREE FLOW OF

PROTESTANT ALLIANCE AND FAITH

NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION

DUBLIN:

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PRACTICAL SUGGESTIONS,

&c., &c.

It must be deeply felt by all who take an interest in the great cause of National Education, that we have arrived at an important crisis in reference to this question in Ireland. While the Parliamentary Grant in support of the National System, now established for upwards of twenty years in Ireland, has been augmented every year, and while the schools in connexion with the National Board have been steadily increasing in number, and advancing in efficiency, and while all parties in the State have sanctioned the principle of the system, each successively bearing testimony to the great benefits which have resulted from its operations, as far as its influence has extended—the advocates of the National System of Education in Ireland have not only to mourn over the recent secession from the Board of some of its most distinguished members, but they have still to lament the continuance of the opposition to the system, on

the part of the great majority of the clergy of the Established Church, which has, from the commencement, proved the greatest hindrance to the extension of its operations, and the greatest difficulty in the way of its usefulness and efficiency.

Independently of the injurious influence of this continued opposition—leading the laity of our Church to stand aloof from the system, preventing the poorer classes of Protestants from partaking of their full share of the benefit intended by the State to be conveyed to them by its establishment, and depriving a great National Institution of the advantages to be derived from the co-operation of the clergy of the National Church—independently of all these very serious considerations, this opposition to the system is to be deplored, as tending to place the clergy of the Church in antagonism to the State by which it is supported, and with which it is so intimately connected ; and, moreover, as constituting a source of discord in the Church, occasioned by difference in sentiment and variance in practice, amongst her members and ministers, on a question of too great interest and importance to be viewed with indifference by any friend of the Church, or by any lover of his country.

It is, at the same time, a subject of congratulation, that the opposition referred to has lost much of its bitterness ; partaking less of a personal character, and assuming less of a political

complexion than it was wont to exhibit, some years ago. Many causes may have contributed to this happy change. It may be believed that the numerous expositions and defences of the principles of the system, which have been put forth from time to time by its advocates, as well as the practical evidence derived from an observation of the beneficial results of its operations, wherever it has had a fair trial, have not been without effect in leading many candid minds to take a just and dispassionate view of the question in its varied bearings ; while the striking fact of every successive Administration, which has come into power, during the two-and-twenty years of the existence of the system, having seen cause to uphold the principles on which it is founded, cannot but have produced a powerful influence on the minds of those who are disposed, as all generous minds are, to give credit to others, even to political opponents, for honesty, truth, and candour. We trust that we may also attribute much to the improved tone and temper of political parties, of which, we think, we see many evidences, even in Ireland, at the present time.

Whatever may have been the cause, it cannot be doubted, that many who had been ardent opponents to the Board, may now be considered simply as non-supporters of the system ; and that the obstacles which present themselves in their way, to prevent

their co-operation with the friends of National Education, in carrying out the benevolent intentions of the Legislature, partake more of a *practical* character than of a theoretical nature; arising rather from difficulties in detail than from objections to the principle of the system. Thus we now find many objecting to "the actual working" of the National System, rather than to the principles upon which it is founded.* They say—The rules and regulations of the Commissioners may be very fair, and the course of education prescribed by the Board may be very good, and the books recommended by them most admirable, and the plan of inspection of the schools excellent, as far as it goes; but, they insist, all depends upon the manager and upon the master of each individual school; and, they add, where the manager is a Roman Catholic priest, and the master is, as will generally be the case in such instances, a member of the Roman Catholic Church, we can have no confidence in such schools; there can be no security that the Rules of the Board, however well intended, or the supervision of the Inspector, however honestly carried into practice, will

* See, for example, the Address of the Committee of the National Club, January 10th, 1853, on "*the actual working of the Irish National System of Education*," in which they protest against being drawn into "puzzling discussions about principles and rules," and seek to fix the attention of "the Protestants of the United Kingdom," whom they address, exclusively upon alleged evils in the "working" of the system.

be efficacious to guard Protestant children, in a school under such patronage and tuition, against interference with their religious principles, from hearing Romish doctrines taught, and, perhaps, witnessing the performance of Roman Catholic ceremonies and worship in the school; nor can adequate provision be made in such schools for the religious instruction of the children of Protestant parents, in the principles of their own Church. It is urged, that in a school under such management, and numerous attended by Roman Catholics, with a small number of Protestant pupils, there is the greatest danger of these few Protestants being persecuted, or proselytized, in spite of the most stringent Rules which the Commissioners may frame, and notwithstanding the strictest surveillance of a local Inspector, visiting the school three or four times in the year, more especially when that Inspector may himself be also a Roman Catholic.

Now, although we do not believe that the actual evil apprehended has arisen in the National Schools, and although we know that no single case of proselytism has ever been proved to have occurred in any of those schools, yet we are ready to admit that the nature of the case affords some grounds for fear; and we think it but reasonable that provision should be made, if possible, to meet the objections founded upon such very natural apprehensions, and to provide a safeguard against the danger, however

limited the extent to which the objection and difficulty may practically exist. We feel that every reasonable objection should be fairly considered, every apprehended evil prevented, and every obstacle removed, by any means not inconsistent with the fundamental principles of the system, in order to obtain general co-operation in this great and all-important work.

With these desirable ends in view, the object of the writer, in submitting the following remarks to the attention of all who are disposed to consider the question in a practical point of view, is, to suggest a plan which appears to him calculated to remove the objections referred to, and to point out a way of providing a remedy and safeguard to meet the circumstances of the case, such as may suffice to satisfy moderate men, by allaying all reasonable apprehensions in reference to the point under consideration. Hence, in the following pages we shall not enter into a discussion of the abstract merits of the National System of Education in Ireland; having, in several previous publications, during the last sixteen years, endeavoured fully to set forth the principles of the System, and having urged all the arguments which we could adduce in support of those principles, and in reply to the objections which have been brought forward in opposition to the System. We shall now confine our observations to matters of practical detail, in reference

to the actual working of the System, under the most disadvantageous circumstances, as it respects the Protestant children.

The suggestions which shall now be made are intended, as well for the consideration of those who are satisfied with the principles of the National System, but who may entertain fears in reference to the points adverted to, as of those who, not thoroughly approving of the System, may yet feel disposed to accept what they would not themselves have devised, to make the best of what they cannot succeed in attempting to alter, and to lend their aid in carrying into effect the details in the working of a great National Institution, so as to secure, at all events, a faithful observance of regulations, admittedly good as far as they go, intended to guard against interference with the religious principles of members of their own communion attending the schools, and, moreover, to avail themselves of the facilities afforded under the Rules of the Board for communicating Scriptural and Church education to those pupils whose parents desire such instruction for their children. And, lastly, we desire respectfully to submit the following suggestions to the consideration of the Government, and of the Commissioners of National Education, as also to the attention of all those who, cordially approving of the principles of the System, and fully satisfied with its working, and en-

tertain no fears of the dangers apprehended by some, will notwithstanding, it may be hoped, be ready to respect the feelings of others, and be willing to adopt any practicable arrangement, not inconsistent with the great principles of toleration and non-interference with the rights of any class, which may be suggested, with a view to remove the objections and to allay the apprehensions of those who may be disposed to co-operate in the good work of promoting the general education of the people, on broad and liberal principles, notwithstanding their not fully approving of the system, provided they be satisfied that those principles are fairly and honestly carried out in practice.

With reference to the particular subject under consideration, namely, the alleged danger of interference with the religious principles of Protestant children attending, in small numbers, schools under Roman Catholic management and tuition, and with a large preponderance of Roman Catholic pupils, we know that many would meet the difficulty of the case by an appeal to the Protestant parochial clergy, reminding them, that, as the evil, if it exist, has arisen by reason of their having neglected to take the initiative by establishing National Schools before the field was occupied by others, so it may be remedied by their even now availing themselves of the opportunity offered to them, in the case of the *Vested* Schools, of personally, or by fit deputy,

administering religious instruction, at stated times, to the children of their own communion, and of exercising a supervision, as it respects religious exercises, with a view to provide a safeguard against an infraction of the Rules of the Board, by any interference with the principles of the children belonging to the Church.

We are bound to admit that there is too much reason to call for such remarks. We painfully feel the injury which has been done, both to the Church and to the cause of education, by the circumstance of the clergy having, to so great an extent, stood aloof from the system ; not having, in the first instance, established schools in connexion with the Board, the management of which, and the appointment of the masters, would have been in their own hands ; and, when schools were established by others, not visiting them for the purpose of giving religious instruction to those who might be willing to receive it from them. But, inasmuch as the past cannot be recalled, and it is now too late to correct the first error, except in parishes where an opening may present itself of establishing an additional school ; and, as a weekly visit to each school under a Roman Catholic patron and master, if the clergymen were so disposed, or as even a daily visit, if that were possible, would not suffice fully to meet the case, and to prevent the possibility of the occurrence of the apprehended evil, it becomes necessary

to devise an arrangement which may be at the same time practicable, likely to be adopted, and adequate to meet the difficulty.

With a view to provide for the religious instruction of the Protestant children attending schools circumstanced as we have described, the writer proposed a plan, upwards of eight years ago, which, although it was favourably viewed by many influential persons eminently qualified to judge of its merits, while no solid objection has ever been raised against it, yet, it is to be regretted, that no attempt has been made to carry it into effect. Being, however, fully convinced that the plan referred to would prove highly beneficial, and would be found to be perfectly feasible, if proposed by competent authority, in any diocese in Ireland ; and being, moreover, persuaded that the more the plan is considered, the more its applicability to the circumstances of the case will appear, we shall venture again to submit it for consideration in these pages, before proceeding to suggest a new arrangement, which, if the first should not be adopted, would go far to supply its absence, while there would be room for both plans, each providing for what might be wanting in the other, and, both united, affording all that could be reasonably desired, as it respects protection from attempts at proselytism, and the fullest opportunities for the religious instruction of the Protestant children

attending the National Schools, even under the most disadvantageous circumstances, with reference to the patronage of the school, the religion of the master, and the paucity of the Protestant children, as compared with the Roman Catholics, receiving therein a combined secular and moral education.

The plan referred to, as first put forward in the year 1845,* repeated in 1848,† and again in 1853,‡ is very simple—namely, that the clergy of our Church should avail themselves of the opportunity offered to them, under one of the Rules of the Board, (which provides that the use of the school-room, and all reasonable facilities, shall be afforded to “such pastors *or other persons* as shall be approved by the parents and guardians of the children respectively,” for the purpose of communicating religious instruction to the pupils of their respective persuasions) by appointing proper persons to act as Catechists under their direction. It was proposed that a Society should be established for providing and remunerating lay Cate-

* Letters on National Education in Ireland, containing suggestions with a view to obtaining the co-operation of the Clergy of the Established Church with the incorporated National Board.

† A Letter to a Member of Parliament on the Question of a separate Grant.

‡ Appendix to a Sermon preached in the Cathedral of Waterford, on the occasion of an Ordination held in that Church by the Lord Bishop of Cashel.

chists, whose duty it should be, under the direction and control of the parochial clergy, to attend, on certain appointed days, at each National School, within prescribed districts, for the purpose of giving instruction to the Protestant children, in the Holy Scriptures and the Church Catechism ; and thus to supply the deficiency as to particular religious instruction, which must necessarily be attached to any general system of education in this country, intended for all religious persuasions.

To carry this scheme into effect, it was further proposed, that Associations should be established in each diocese, under the designation of *Diocesan Religious Instruction Associations*, at the head of which should be the Bishop as president, with the Dean and Archdeacon as vice-presidents, and a Committee of Clergymen of the diocese to carry out the details. Such associations, to be supported by the voluntary contributions of the clergy and laity, to provide Bibles, Testaments, Prayer Books, Catechisms, and other approved religious works for the use of the Protestant pupils ; the Committee, with the President and Vice-Presidents, to appoint the Catechists, and to receive their reports, through the clergymen of the parishes in which the schools to be visited might be respectively situated. It should also form a part of the arrangement to establish a regular system of periodical examinations of the pupils, and an annual distribution of

premiums, under the regulations of the Church "Association for discountenancing Vice, and promoting the Knowledge and Practice of the Christian Religion."

By the establishment of such associations, all that the friends of Scriptural and Church education could reasonably desire, as it respects the Protestant children, would be fully attained ; and this is all that the leading members of the Church Education Society have of late years demanded, as was distinctly set forth in the notice of motion by one of the representatives of the University of Dublin in Parliament, in the year 1848.*

If the Church Education Society would direct its energies and apply its funds to carrying out such a measure as this, we should no longer have a Society calling itself "Church," and yet not communicating a *Church* education ; nor an institution,

* The notice of motion, made in 1848, by Mr. George Hamilton, M.P., was as follows :—"Before going into Committee on the Educational Estimates, to move, that an humble address be presented to her Majesty, praying that her Majesty will be graciously pleased to direct that such a modification of the present system of National Education in Ireland may be made, *as regards the children of the Established Church*, as may remove the conscientious objections which many of the clergy and laity entertain to that system as at present carried into operation ; or, otherwise, that means may be taken to enable those of the clergy and laity of the Established Church, who entertain such conscientious objections, to extend the blessings of Scriptural Education to *the children of the Established Church*."

professedly connected with the National Church, supported by the State and acknowledging the Queen as its temporal head, and yet assuming an attitude of antagonism to the National System as established by the State, and confirmed by Royal Charter. Instead of these anomalies, we should then have an Association supplemental and auxiliary to the National Board, and supplying those omissions which all Churchmen must consider as deficiencies, which, however, in an united system, the Legislature, comprising members of all religious persuasions, and disposing of the funds raised from her Majesty's subjects of all classes and creeds, cannot possibly supply; but which, in a free country, it is competent for all denominations to provide for the members of their own communions respectively.

The appointment of such Catechists as we suggest would not fairly be liable to the objections which might be urged against unauthorized lay interference with the office of the clergy, any more than that of lay assistants under the Pastoral Aid Society, and similar Institutions. Nor could it justly be objected, that their employment would necessarily cause the clergy to neglect the duty of catechising. The Catechist would be under the immediate direction and control of the parochial minister; and the instruction which it would be his duty to impart would be confined to hearing the children read the

Holy Scriptures according to an appointed course, and teaching the Church Catechism, with an approved commentary, together with any other books authorized and selected by the clergyman of the parish ; and all this work of the Catechist would be preparatory to the instruction to be given in the Sunday school under the clergyman's own superintendence. The parochial minister should also himself personally visit the several schools, periodically, during the hours of separate religious instruction ; and, in many parishes, to visit each National School monthly would give him such employment one day in every week, supposing four schools in his parish. Under such arrangements as these, there can be no doubt that the duty of catechising would be better attended to than it now is in the greater number of the Church Education Society schools, where this important part of clerical duty is too often left entirely to the schoolmaster, and is not unfrequently altogether neglected.

Such is the simple and feasible plan proposed, by which "to extend the blessings of Scriptural Education to the members of the Established Church," according to the requirement of the representative of the Church Education party in Parliament, and this without any alteration of the existing system of National Education in Ireland. It will thus be seen that the remedy for the defect complained of rests, not with the Legislature or

the Executive Government of the country, but with the Prelates and Clergy of the Established Church themselves, who so generally complain of the deficiency which they alone can supply. It would be inconsistent with the principle of united education, for the State to make provision for the payment of such Catechists as we propose, for the benefit of any particular Church, or of the various religious denominations in the country. Moreover, it is to be borne in mind, that the duty of "instructing the youth in the Catechism" is specially attached to the office of the clergyman, as set forth in the Ordination Service of our Church ; and it is, therefore, but reasonable, that if, under particular circumstances, the clergy desire assistance in the discharge of that important duty, they should themselves provide for the salary of the lay Catechists, without looking to the State for aid.

But we feel and acknowledge that there are difficulties in the way of the speedy adoption of the proposed arrangement ; and, in the meanwhile, much valuable time is lost, and with it many important advantages to the children of our poorer Protestant brethren. It cannot but be a matter of no small difficulty to induce a large and influential party to change their tactics, and to abandon a popular and exciting agitation for a very sober and plain matter-of-fact procedure ; it must, at the best, be the result of much and protracted delibe-

ration. Hence, while we trust that some such plan will eventually be adopted by the clergy, the most sanguine advocate of the measure cannot expect to see it speedily carried into effect. In the meanwhile all friends of united and general education, all real patriots, and all good Christians must be desirous for the introduction of some plan which may be adopted without delay, and generally carried into effect, which shall conduce to the settlement of this long-vexed question, and secure the united efforts of all sincere advocates for the education of the people in the same great and good work, and by the instrumentality of the same means.

Such a plan we now proceed to suggest, for the consideration, more especially, of those who feel, as we know that many moderate and thoughtful men do feel and acknowledge, that the grand objection to the Irish National System of Education is, not the measure of toleration accorded to the Roman Catholics, but the danger which they apprehend, as it respects Protestant children, in the cases to which we have above referred, where these constitute a small minority of the pupils, and where the priest is patron of the school, and the master a Roman Catholic, and, it may be, the school-house built upon chapel ground, or in the immediate vicinity, and, perhaps, under the same roof with the Roman Catholic chapel, the monastery, or the nunnery.

To meet this objection, and to provide a safeguard against the apprehended danger, where the remedy of setting up another school in the neighbourhood cannot be resorted to, we propose that a Protestant paid Monitor shall be appointed, in all such cases, to assist the master in carrying on the general business of the school. This Monitor or assistant teacher should be always present during the stated school hours ; and his presence would afford a sufficient guarantee for the due observance of the Rules of the Board, as it respects non-interference with the religious principles of the pupils, and the exclusion, during the school hours, of Roman Catholic instruction, and the prohibition, at the time of united education, of the religious services of any particular Church. An effectual safeguard would thus be provided for the protection of half-a-dozen Protestant children in the midst of a hundred Roman Catholics.

In addition to these primary objects, there would be collateral advantages derivable, under this arrangement, to the Protestant pupils attending the National Schools. These monitorships would constitute a kind of scholarship or reward for diligent, intelligent, and well-conducted pupils, both male and female, from amongst whom the paid Monitors would be selected, and who would eventually become schoolmasters and mistresses of National Schools. Their appointment would also be the means of raising

up a well-educated class of Protestant parishioners, who would supply Sunday School teachers, parish clerks, and useful assistants to the parochial clergy.

These Monitors might combine the office of Catechist, under the plan above proposed, if approved of for that employment by the clergyman of the parish. But, in this case, they should have a separate salary; inasmuch as giving religious instruction after school hours forms no part of the schoolmaster's duty, although the additional work is often put upon him. The Monitors should, in all cases, produce a testimonial as to moral character and conduct from the clergyman of the parish, in addition to a certificate as to literary qualifications from the local Inspector of the Board.

This plan possesses the great advantage of being capable of immediate execution, as not depending for its adoption on a large body of clergy, who, in consequence of non-approval of the system as a whole, might feel an objection to proposing or instituting any scheme for improvements in the details, although they might be ready to acquiesce in the arrangement, if made by others, even as they do in reference to the chaplaincies of work-houses, prisons, and similar institutions. The adoption of the plan now proposed would depend upon the approval of it by the Government, and the sanction and aid of Parliament, to provide for the necessary expense. There can be little doubt that if the

plan should be approved by the Government, as likely to facilitate the accomplishment of the important object which they cannot but earnestly desire, of securing the co-operation of the Protestant clergy and laity in the great work of National Education, there would be no difficulty in obtaining the required assistance from the Imperial Parliament, which ever evinces the greatest readiness to promote the cause of education in Ireland.

Nor would the additional expense be very great, as compared with the important object in view. The necessity for the adoption of the proposed plan would not generally exist throughout the country. It would be confined almost exclusively to the two provinces of Munster and Connaught ; and even here it would not be required in large towns, where there would always be an opening for two or more schools, if the difficulty referred to were found to exist. It would be necessary only in the small villages and remote rural districts, where, in the midst of a large Roman Catholic population, a few Protestants are to be found scattered ; for whose sake it might be considered advisable to provide the additional security which would be afforded by the continual presence and assistance in the school-room of a Protestant teacher, to guard against any infraction of the Rules of the Board, which might be apprehended in consequence of their peculiar and disadvantageous position. It is not probable

that all the cases in Ireland would amount to 400 ; allowing £8 per annum for each, in addition to £2 or £4 to be contributed in the locality, which would be a check to unnecessary demands for the appointment of such Monitors, the entire cost would not probably exceed £3,000 per annum, which comparatively small amount would be, indeed, well expended, if it should happily be the means of providing a remedy for a defect, of which many moderate men complain, and which, it is certain, constitutes, in many minds, the only remaining hindrance to co-operation with the System adopted by the State, for the carrying out of which Parliament grants nearly £200,000 a-year.

With respect to the expense to be incurred by the adoption of the proposed measure, there would, we believe, be little difficulty. The only objection to be anticipated would be, that if such an arrangement were made to meet the views of the Protestant clergy, a similar claim would be put in by the Roman Catholics. Now, it must be admitted, that in this matter a "like case" should be met by a "like rule ;" nor does there appear to be any objection to the arrangement, by which, in the few exceptional cases in which there might be a small minority of Roman Catholic children attending a school containing a large number of Protestants, under the management of a Protestant patron and the tuition of a Protestant master, a grant should be

made by the Board, to provide a paid Monitor who should be a Roman Catholic, under regulations similar to those to be adopted with respect to the paid Protestant Monitors, in corresponding cases of schools under Roman Catholic management.

The writer of these remarks feels the greater confidence in recommending the scheme which has now been proposed, because it is not with him a theory or an untried experiment ; but a plan which he has himself carried into practical effect with complete success, under each of the cases where the necessity could arise. Having found, in a National school of really united education under his management, in a Roman Catholic district, that distrust arose in the minds of the Roman Catholics in consequence of the master being a Protestant, he appointed a Roman Catholic paid Monitor ; and at another time, in the school-room adjoining, finding that his Protestant parishioners apprehended danger to their children, who formed the minority, in consequence of the schoolmistress being a Roman Catholic, he appointed a Protestant paid Monitress. In each instance, the experiment proved completely successful in restoring confidence to the minds of the parents of the children ; nor did any evil consequences arise as the result of the arrangement.

This, too, formed part of the plan upon which the late Mr. Lovell Edgeworth conducted the school.

at Edgeworthstown, with the management of which the writer became intimately acquainted, as officiating minister of the parish, and which was, in all other respects, analogous to the present System of National Education, though established for several years previous to the adoption by the State of that System.

It is also within the recollection of the writer, that a somewhat similar suggestion to that which he has now put forward was at one time under the consideration of the Commissioners of Education Inquiry of 1824-7, with whom he was officially connected. There was, however, this important difference—that the appointment of paid Monitors, receiving a small remuneration, and occupying a secondary place to the master of the school, did not occur to those Commissioners ; and the appointment of a second teacher, with equal salary and authority with the first, in each school requiring the application of the measure, was justly considered objectionable, not only on the ground of expense, but also as being likely to prove detrimental to the proper discipline and order of the school, which could not fail to experience the evils which must ever arise from the co-ordinate and equal authority of two masters.

Such is the plan which the writer of these pages has considered it advisable to submit to the public at the present crisis, and at the commencement of

a session of Parliament, in the course of which, notwithstanding the absorbing interest attached to foreign and warlike affairs, there can be no doubt that the domestic and peaceful subject of Irish National Education will engage, under the existing circumstances of the question, no small share of public attention.

And now, having submitted the plans which he considers practicable, and calculated to meet the objections founded on a particular point in connexion with National Education in Ireland, the writer would desire earnestly to impress upon his clerical readers, more especially, the importance of the subject. We have not in these pages entered into a discussion of the merits of the question. This would be but to repeat what has been over and over again urged by the advocates of the National System. The present effort is to lead the minds of the readers to a consideration of the state of the question in a *practical* point of view. The National Board of Education may surely be now considered one of the established institutions of the country. This system has now been upwards of twenty years in operation. It has been for the last seven years confirmed by Royal Charter, incorporating the Board appointed for its administration. It has received the support of every leading statesman who has successively administered the affairs of the country since its first establishment, this being, perhaps,

the only Irish question upon which they have all agreed, embracing every shade of political party, from Lords Melbourne and Normanby to Lords Derby and Eglinton, and including the two foremost men of their age, Wellington and Peel. It receives an annually increasing grant from Parliament, now approaching £200,000. It supports nearly 5,000 schools, attended by upwards of 500,000 scholars. Can any reasonable and reflecting mind contemplate as a matter of possibility, the abandonment by the State of a system so proved, so sanctioned, so established? And if it be irrevocably fixed as one of the institutions of this great country, is it not time that the national clergy should inquire how they may, without compromise of principle, or without even changing their opinion, submit to circumstances over which they have no control, and seek to render such an institution more useful, or, if they will so have it, less injurious than they consider it to be? Is not this the course which all of us continually pursue, in reference to other measures adopted by the representatives of the nation, although it may have been without our approval, nay, against our repeated petitions, and notwithstanding our reiterated protests and remonstrances? We might not all agree if we should attempt to enumerate particular instances, otherwise it would not be difficult to cite cases in point familiar to us all, in which we have thus acted, without any sacrifice of consistency, or

abandonment of our individual opinions. In the case of the National Board this course is even less difficult, than in many others which might be adduced ; because the system comes annually under review, the grant being not a fixed endowment, but depending upon the adoption of a yearly estimate, so that there is opportunity for proposing modifications as to details, even if an alteration in the principle cannot be effected.

But it may be alleged, that the efforts of the opponents of the National Board no longer aim at the destruction of the system, but have for their object only the obtaining of a separate grant for the Church Education Society ; and it is stated that this is merely asking for Irish Protestants and Churchmen what has been conceded to English Roman Catholics and Dissenters.

This proposition of a separate grant being the point most pressed at the present moment, it may not be amiss to advert to it, notwithstanding that it will lead to the extension of these remarks beyond the limit which had been at first intended, and although it will involve the repetition of some facts and arguments which have been adduced by the writer on former occasions.

In the first place, as to the matter of fact, we deny the analogy which is alleged to exist between the cases of England and Ireland, as it respects the question of separate grants for education. The

circumstances under which separate grants were conceded to Roman Catholics and Protestant Dissenters in England were totally different from those existing in Ireland. The National Society in England requires the reading of the Scriptures and the learning of the Church Catechism, by all the pupils in their schools. Hence there was no way of extending the benefits of education to children whose parents objected to such religious instruction being communicated to them, so long as the system was unchanged, except by giving separate grants to those whose conscientious objections would not allow them to receive education for their children on the terms prescribed by the National Society. Until it can be shown that Protestant children attending the National Schools in Ireland are compelled, as the condition of receiving any education, to read and learn that which their Church and their parents disapprove, no analogy can be established between the two cases. In England, the Dissenters from the Established Church sought for and obtained a separate grant, in order that the children of their own communions might not be compelled to receive a system of religious instruction which their parents did not approve; and this boon was justly conceded to them. In Ireland, members of the Established Church call for a separate grant, in order that they may be enabled to compel children of other persuasions to re-

ceive, as the condition of enjoying the advantages of their schools, a system of religious instruction opposed to the will of their parents ; and this demand has been with justice refused. The same principle of toleration which led to the concession of a separate grant in the one country, leads to the refusal of it in the other. The two cases are diametrically opposed, and, as a necessary consequence, an opposite course must be pursued, if a similar principle be acted upon.

If an united and general plan of National Education had existed in England, there would have been no occasion for a system of separate grants. Had there been 15,000 schools, attended by 1,500,000 pupils (such being the proportion for England as compared with what actually do exist in Ireland under the National Board), in full operation, and open to all persuasions, without requiring the inculcation of the particular religious doctrines of one Church upon the children of all denominations ; if, in short, the case had been in England similar to that in this country, does any one believe that the system of separate grants would ever have been heard of ? Still less, does any one imagine that if, under such circumstances, the Roman Catholics, constituting the minority, had demanded power to enforce their tenets on the children of Protestants, or, that being denied to them, had urged a claim for a separate grant, in order that they might, in Roman

Catholic schools, teach the peculiar doctrines of their Church to the children of their own communion, and to as many Protestants as they could induce to attend their schools,—if, in a word, while an united system had been in operation, the Roman Catholics and Dissenters in England had put in the claims which are now urged by the members of the Church Education Society in Ireland, does any one imagine that such an unreasonable demand for separate denominational grants would have been for one moment entertained by the Parliament and the people of England?

The answer to the petitioners would have been, in the supposed case, what it may reasonably be expected to be in the actually existing case in Ireland:—You have no just grounds upon which to rest your claim. As it concerns the children of your own communion, while there is no compulsion to enforce the inculcation of principles opposed to those of your Church, there is no restriction to prevent your adding the fullest course of instruction in your own doctrines to those whose parents do not object to receive it. A separate grant will add nothing to this protection of the children of your own communion, or to this liberty of teaching in the case of all willing to be recipients of your instruction. But if you ask for the power to enforce your own doctrines on those who do not approve of them, and to make the grant for educa-

tion available for the purpose of proselytism, the State, dealing with the public money, cannot entertain such a proposition. While, in this free country, all are at liberty to promote the propagation of their own religious opinions, the Legislature, composed of members of all religious persuasions, and desirous to promote united education, cannot apply the funds derived from the professors of different creeds to assist any party in carrying out their views in this respect, and that under the pretext of providing education for the children of all denominations.

It is clear that, as long as the National System in Ireland is left to be available to all persuasions, by not enforcing that to which any body of professing Christians object, there can be no just occasion for denominational grants. If the system were so altered, that all were required to receive Protestant instruction, the Roman Catholics would have a just claim for a separate grant; and if it were so changed that all were compelled to learn Roman Catholic doctrines, then the Protestants might reasonably prefer a similar claim. We trust that one of these alterations is as unlikely to be carried into effect as the other; and, until then, there is no ground for the adoption of the principle of separate grants—a scheme devised in England to meet the exigencies of a case not existing in Ireland.

Independently of this difference in the case between this country and England, as to the grounds for demanding a separate-grant system, a great difference would also be found to result to the interests of Protestantism in Ireland from the operation of such a system, compared with its consequences to the Church in England. As it respects a large portion of Ireland, a more injurious course for the progress of education, and especially for the welfare of the Established Church in this country, could scarcely be devised, than the system of separate grants. Those who advocate this measure appear not to perceive that the immediate and necessary consequence of the adoption of the plan would be, that the far greater part of the Parliamentary grants for education would be delivered up into the exclusive management of the Church of Rome, for the education of the Roman Catholics, and of such Protestant children as might attend their schools, in which there would no longer be any hindrance to the inculcation of the doctrines of that Church, at all times, and in the case of all the pupils. Moreover, of the portion of the grant reserved under the proposed plan for the Protestants, a moiety must be given to the Presbyterians, leaving a very limited amount for the Established Church.

It cannot be supposed that the people of England will ever acquiesce in the adoption of a scheme

which would be tantamount to the establishment of some thousands of schools on the principle of Maynooth College, with this addition, that it would be applied not only to the instruction of Roman Catholics in the doctrines of their Church, but also to the inculcation of the same principles on all such Protestants as could be induced to attend the schools ; and this at a cost five-fold greater than the amount granted to Maynooth. It would be virtually a grant of upwards of £150,000 a-year for the dissemination of the doctrines of the Church of Rome (and not always of principles of attachment to England), with no more than, perhaps, £50,000 for Protestants in general, or £20,000 for Church of England education in particular.

Under the separate-grant system nothing could be gained to the Church, in the Protestant districts in Ireland, except the power to coerce such Roman Catholics as could be induced to attend to receive a Protestant education ; inasmuch as in the National Schools, as at present constituted, there is no restriction as to religious instruction, with respect to the Protestant children, or as it regards any whose parents or guardians do not object to the particular course prescribed. But while nothing would be gained by this measure, in the Protestant districts, everything would be lost to the majority of the poor Protestants in the Roman Catholic provinces. In many instances, the number of the members of our

Church is too small to justify the establishment of a separate school for their exclusive benefit. There are many parishes in the South and West, in which there are not more than twenty Protestant children of an age to attend school, and these may be so scattered that they cannot go to the same school. Could it be expected that the State would sanction the building and endowing of two or perhaps three schools, for the use of twenty children? And, if not, what is to become of them? They may now attend the National Schools, and it is for such that we propose the safeguard of a paid Monitor of their own communion in the schools which they frequent. But, under the separate-grant system, these would be converted into thoroughly Roman Catholic schools, in which, as well as in the Protestant schools under the same plan, proselytism would be the avowed and the principal object in view, both with patrons and teachers.

But if, on the other hand, we suppose the Government to sanction the establishment of a school for the benefit of each knot of twelve or twenty Protestant children, to be found grouped within reasonable distances throughout the country, let it be considered of what character such schools would necessarily be.

A little consideration will serve to show that they could never compete with the Roman Catholic schools in the neighbourhood. For, first, as to

the masters, the supply would be limited, inasmuch as in a country where the great majority of the class from which schoolmasters must be chosen are Roman Catholics, a Protestant would be selected, although he might be less qualified than the Roman Catholic candidate. This was so strongly felt before the establishment of the National Board, that the Kildare-place Society, the London Hibernian Society, the Irish Society, and other associations for promoting the education of the poor in Ireland, were often compelled to appoint Roman Catholic masters, although insisting on the use of the Scriptures by all the children attending their schools. Again, for the Protestant schools in the districts now referred to, there would be a lower premium to offer as an inducement to engage good teachers, inasmuch as part of the emoluments of the master arises from the payments of the scholars, and hence the larger the school the higher will be the pay; and the best qualified in this, as well as in other professions, will aspire to the higher prizes. Then, again, there cannot be the same life and energy in a miserable school of a dozen or twenty children, as in a well-regulated school of eighty or a hundred pupils. There will neither be the legitimate stimulus of emulation to excite the scholars, nor the encouragement of success to animate the teacher; neither can there be the means of proper classification, nor room for the employment of Monitors;

nor, in short, for any of the machinery or materials of a well-ordered and efficient school.

In addition to all these disadvantages and evils connected with the proposed scheme of separate grants, is the serious objection to such a measure, that by its adoption there would be an end to all hope of united education, the attainment of which was one of the primary objects of the establishment of the National System. It is true, that this important object has not been attained to the extent which could be desired ; but, by the adoption of the proposed plan, that would be rendered impossible, which it is now unhappily a matter of difficulty to accomplish. The first endeavour of all sincere Christians, and of all true patriots, should be to promote peace and charity, brotherly-kindness, and mutual forbearance amongst the members of the various religious communions. It behoves us, therefore, to take special care to bring up the rising generation in mutual peace and harmony ; and we may then indulge the hope that the spirit of concord, imbibed in their early years, will not be banished from their hearts in after life ; while the effect of separation, in the spring-time of life, an inevitable result of separate grants, will be to perpetuate the disunion and party spirit which have heretofore wrought so much mischief in ~~our unhappy~~ *this* country.

And now, having set forth a plan by which we

believe that all the practical objections of moderate men may be met, and having pointed out the impracticability of any attempts to subvert the existing system of National Education, and having shown the inapplicability of the plan of separate grants, proposed as a modification of that system, we desire to submit the whole subject to the calm consideration of all who are really anxious to put an end to the divisions in reference to this question which have so long disturbed the Church, and who desire to promote the cause of education and improvement amongst the poorer classes of our fellow-countrymen.

We trust that these suggestions, put forward with a sincere desire for the general good, may be received in the same spirit by which they have been dictated, and that, laying aside prejudice and suspicion of motives and party spirit, many may be led to bestow upon the subject that calm and dispassionate consideration which a question of such deep and momentous interest and importance demands. Nor can we doubt that the result of candid consideration and inquiry, conducted in such a spirit, will lead to the adoption of measures calculated to create a cordial sympathy of interest, and to promote an united course of action, in furthering a cause so intimately connected with the prosperity of our common country, and the welfare of our fellow-subjects, as is the great and vital question of the

united and general education of the poorer classes, of all religious denominations, on the broad Protestant principles of civil and religious liberty, carried out in accordance with the Divine precept, TO DO UNTO ALL MEN AS WE WOULD THAT THEY SHOULD DO UNTO US.

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