

With W. Ker's Copy

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A FULL REPORT

OF

A MEETING HELD IN NEWRY,

ON

Monday, the 24th January, 1848,

TO

CELEBRATE THE LAYING THE FIRST STONE

OF THE

FIRST DISTRICT NATIONAL MODEL SCHOOL

IN THAT TOWN.

PUBLISHED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF

THE REV. DANIEL BAGOT, B.D.,

VICAR-GENERAL OF NEWRY AND MORNE, AND VICAR OF NEWRY.

DUBLIN:

HODGES AND SMITH, GRAFTON-STREET.

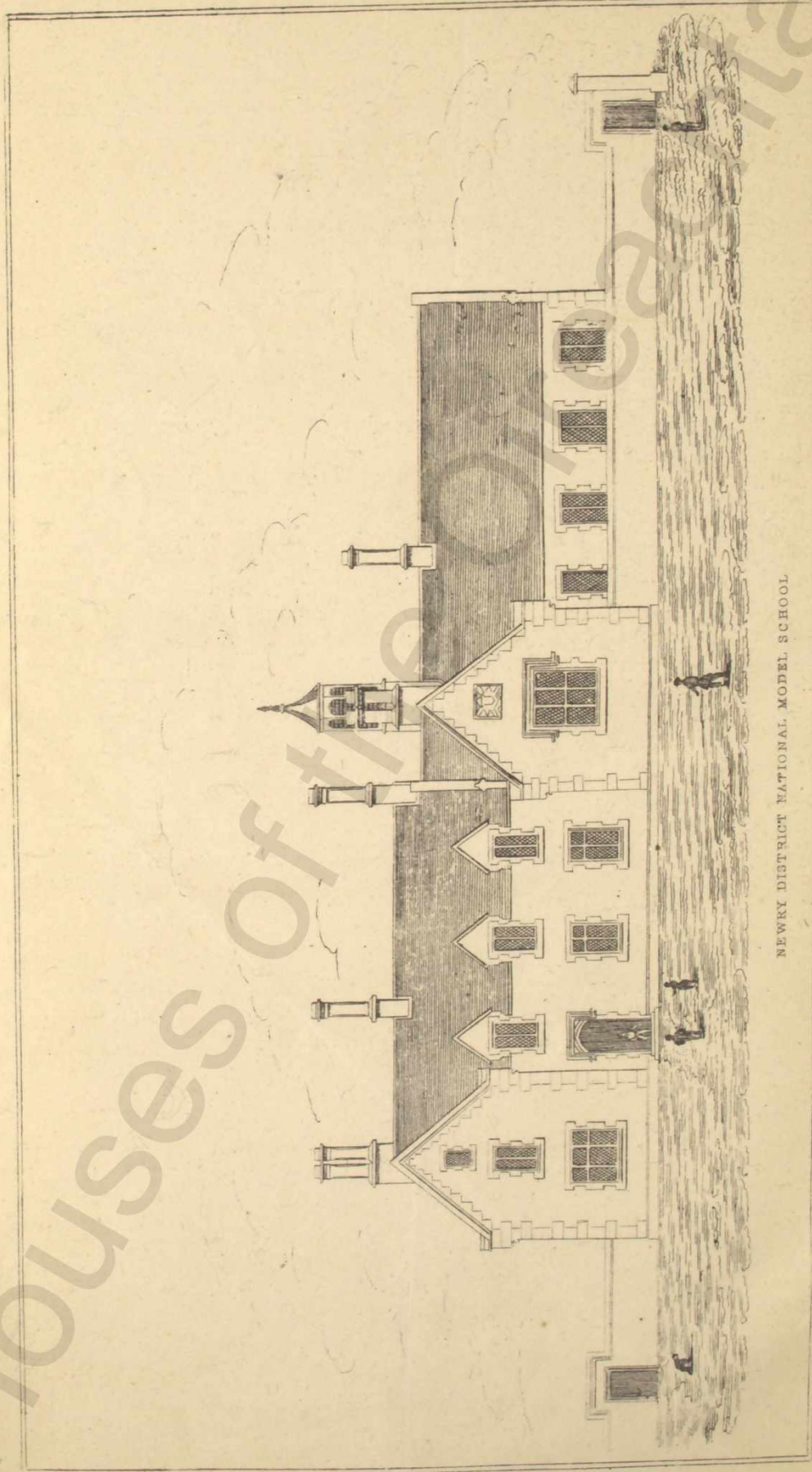
NEWRY: ROBERT GREER.

LONDON: JOHN W. PARKER, WEST STRAND.

MDCCCXLVIII.

Houses of the Oireachtas

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PRINTED AT THE UNIVERSITY PRESS,

BY M. H. GILL.

R E P O R T,

&c. &c.

ONE of the most important meetings ever held in the North of Ireland was convened on Monday, the 24th January, 1848, in the ball-room of the Savings Bank, in the town of Newry, to celebrate the laying of the first District National Model School. The room was crowded with persons of every rank and religious denomination from the town and neighbourhood; and the most enthusiastic unanimity pervaded the entire assembly in favour of the principles of the National System of Education.

Amongst those who were present were: the Right Hon. the Earl of Gosford; Thomas Fortescue, Esq., D. L., Ravensdale; Chichester Fortescue, Esq., M. P.; Lieut. Col. Close, of Drum-banagher; Constantine Maguire, Esq., J. P.; John Boyd, Esq., J. P., Seneschal of Newry; D. C. Brady, Esq., J. P.; Captain Seaver, Heath Hall; Denis Maguire, Esq.; Denis Caulfield Heron, Esq., Barrister-at-Law; John White, Esq., J. P.; the Rev. Daniel Bagot, Vicar of Newry; the Right Rev. Dr. Blake, R. C. Bishop of Dromore; Rev. Dr. Butler, R. C. C.; Rev. P. Murphy, P. P.; the Rev. Henry Alexander, Presbyterian Minister; the Rev. John Moran, Presbyterian Minister; the Rev. John Dodd, Presbyterian Minister; &c. &c.

On the motion of John Boyd, Esq., J. P., seconded by Constantine Maguire, Esq., J. P., the Chair was taken by the EARL OF GOSFORD.

His Lordship, on taking the Chair, spoke as follows:—

LADIES AND GENTLEMEN,—I beg to return you my most sincere thanks for the high honour you have done me, by placing me in the situation which I now fill. I have ever

been a warm and zealous friend to the National System of Education, and the more I have seen of its working, and the beneficial effect it has produced upon the social character and habits of the people, the more it has encouraged me to persevere in its promotion, convinced that the welfare and permanent interests of this country must be advanced by the extension of a system of Education based upon fair, just, and liberal principles. I see so many gentlemen around me, whom you must all anxiously wish to hear, and who can give such valuable and interesting information on the important subjects which will be brought before us, that it would be unpardonable in me to occupy your time at any length. I shall, therefore, as briefly as possible, state the objects for which we are assembled upon the present occasion. In the first place, we are here to express our thanks and acknowledgments to the Commissioners of National Education, for the favour they have conferred on this town and neighbourhood, by fixing on it as the site for the *first District National Model School* in Ireland. I foresee that the greatest good will arise from such establishments, and I hope the *one* whose foundation we are met this day to celebrate may succeed to an extent that its most ardent supporters could desire ; and I trust also to see other parts of this country blessed with similar institutions. The next object is to express our gratification at the success which has attended the labours of those able and patriotic men who compose the National Education Board, and at the progress the National System has made throughout the country by their efforts and exertions. We have some of the most convincing proofs that can be offered of that success. For, what has occurred? We see some of the most learned and enlightened men in the country, who were formerly the opposers of the System, with a manly and generous feeling that does them the greatest credit, now that they have discovered their error, coming forward, and giving their warmest advocacy to the cause. At the same time, I admit there are some still opposed to it, and who make very extraordinary assertions with

respect to the rules and regulations of the Board. For instance, there are some who assert that the Board is opposed to the free use of the Scriptures, and to religious education. I only hope that those persons who entertain such opinions will have the courage to think for themselves,—will imitate the example of those to whom I have alluded a few minutes ago; and I am sure, if they do, they will come to the conclusion that such assertions are false and unfounded. Having stated the objects for which this meeting was called, I shall not detain you further than merely to request a patient hearing for those gentlemen you must all be so anxious to listen to.

The Rev. Daniel Bagot, as Secretary to the meeting, read the following letters of apology from the Hon. Henry Caulfield, of Hockley; the Very Rev. the Dean of Down; and the Rev. P. S. Henry, President of Queen's College, Belfast.

"Hockley, January 20, 1848.

"SIR,—In reply to your letter received to forward to my son, the Member for this county, I regret that his temporary absence at Paris must prevent his attendance on the occasion of laying the first stone of the Newry District Model School, and thereby giving public testimony to the interest which I know he feels in the cause of National Education. Unfortunately, health does not permit me to be his substitute, but I avail myself of the occasion to express my satisfaction at this evidence in the North of Ireland of the extension of a system which recognises the same right in the poor parent which has never been denied to the rich, to direct the religious education of *his* child,—which affords the Scriptures to all whilst it forces them on none,—and which respects differences of religious doctrines, whilst it unites all denominations of Christians in exertions to promote the moral and intellectual advancement of the community.

"With my best wishes for the prosperity of the Newry Model School, which, I am sure, will owe much to your interest and zeal,

"I have the honour to remain, Sir,

"Your faithful and obedient Servant,

"HENRY CAULFIELD.

"The Rev. D. Bagot, Newry."

"January 22, 1848.

"REVEREND AND DEAR SIR,—I have to lament that, still suffering under a slow recovery from illness, I am prevented from being present at the interesting ceremony of laying the foundation of a National Model School at Newry. I rely on your kindness to assure the right reverend, reverend, and all those engaged in that labour of Christian love and moral and social order, that I am present with them in the unity of

spirit and the bond of peace ; and that I respond to their resolutions with all the sincerity of sympathetic approbation.

“ I venture respectfully to assure the meeting that, not presuming to trust solely to my own deliberate judgment, and being favoured by long intimacy of more than one eminent for piety, learning, and judgment, I formed my opinion, in coincidence with them, in favour of the National System of Education since its commencement.

“ It would be an infringement of the time, without adding to the information, of your respected meeting, to enter into a detail of the progress of the National Education, in its present advancement towards an unfailling and permanent success.

“ Without any intention of expressing a doubt of that success, yet, incited by the injurious nature of some immediately passing events, I venture to select some passages from one of my letters to an eminent person in the late administration, which may not be considered as inapplicable to the present time :

“ “ When I had the honour, some time since, of addressing you, I vainly imagined that no effort of party could revive the subject of the National Board as one of political controversy. On that occasion I stated those injurious consequences which appeared to me as inevitable on the grant for a separate Board. Since that time the determined refusal of the Minister to favour such a measure has enhanced its utility ; the people were persuaded that no device, however plausible or insidious, would be permitted to obstruct or neutralize its operations. Under this view the late attempt can be considered in no other light than the introduction of a wedge to split the National Education to dissolution. As to myself, I have no suspicion of the sincerity of the Government, either in defence of the National Board or the furtherance of those wise and conciliatory projects under consideration, and the grateful recollection of many which have already been effected ; but most respectfully do I presume to direct your attention to the magnitude of those projects,—to consider the difficulty of effecting so perplexing a theory as the most reasonable improvement of Ireland,—to contemplate the intensity of popular expectation, and the distressing consequences of failure. That those expectations can be carried into effect to their extent is beyond the power of man ; but to submit *in limine* to a stratagem which cannot conceal its real object, the discomfiture of the first real and substantial boon to Ireland, could not fail to expose the Government to a suspicion of insincerity.

“ “ It may appear to many that I attach too much consequence to the National Education of Ireland ; yet when I, and all others whose opinion I have ever esteemed as the greatest security against error, have considered it as the pervading and cementing quality of the religious, moral, and social order of the general population of Ireland, I am certain I have not overrated its value.

“ “ From a dread of violating your feelings I have abstained from many arguments which must have supported the reasoning I have advanced ; but, my Lord, when I inform you that I have lived so long as to have witnessed the progress of hope excited, the “ sickness of hope deferred,” and the distraction of hope extinguished, and all this in a country so long neglected, and harassed, the dread of any obstruction to its moral

convalescence will account for the earnestness with which I have addressed you.'—April, 1845.

"I cannot conclude without expressing my unqualified approbation of your letter of the 16th inst., and your efficient services in the same important cause. But inasmuch as the arguments of that letter must be known to all those who were engaged in preparing the petition which will be presented to Parliament, its chief value consists in disabusing the minds of the people of the injurious prejudices so vehemently urged against the National Board.

"To entertain any doubt as to the result of that petition would be an offensive condemnation of the many deliberate debates on the same subject, in each of which all distinctions of party were utterly abandoned in support of the National Education of Ireland.

"It remains with me to offer my fervent prayer, that the National Board may continue its peaceful course in training up the rising generation in the way they should go, so that in mature life they will pursue that course which the Lord their God doth require of them, 'In doing justly, loving mercy, and walking humbly with their God.'

"I am, dear and Rev. Sir,

"Your faithful Servant and Brother in Christ,

"THEOPHILUS BLAKELY,

"Dean of Down.

"To the Rev. D. Bagot, Vicar-General of Newry and Morne, and Vicar of Newry, &c., &c."

"Monkstown, 22nd January, 1848.

"MY DEAR SIR,—I greatly regret that my engagements will not permit me to be present at the ceremony of laying the foundation of the Newry District Model School, to which you have done me the favour to invite me. A variety of considerations would make your meeting of Monday one of no ordinary interest to me. The presidency, at the ceremony, of our noble and valued friend, Lord Gosford, whose efforts to promote social harmony and combined action are far above my humble praise,—the salutary example of the leaders of the different denominations in Newry, uniting to advance the good of our common country, and the prosperity of their own neighbourhood,—your own influential support, so heartily and practically given to the cause of National Education, to which you declared to me your attachment so far back as the year 1841, when I met you in Edinburgh,—the beneficial effects likely to be extended to other countries which may catch the spirit of the same union and energy,—my undiminished regard for my native province, and my many valued friends within it;—all would make me rejoice in being able to accept an invitation which pressing duties of a kindred nature force me to decline.

"Wishing you all success in this, and every laudable undertaking, and, with regard to your labours of Monday, praying that God may 'establish the work of your hands' for the benefit of this and of future generations,

"I am, my dear Sir, most sincerely your's,

"The Rev. D. Bagot."

"P. SHULDHAM HENRY.

The Right Rev. Dr. Blake, R. C. Bishop of Dromore, then rose to move the first Resolution, as follows:

MY LORD,—I feel very highly honoured in having been invited to move the first Resolution, because, in the first place, the subject of that Resolution is one which, after the most mature deliberation, I cordially approve of, conceiving it to be of vast importance in itself, and productive of the best effects to society,—effects which, previous to the introduction of the National System of Education, had never, at least for many ages, been experienced in this country; and secondly, because this meeting has been convened under the auspices of your Lordship, under whom everything prospers,—whose character I have always revered,—whose exertions for the amelioration of the human family I have always held in the highest estimation,—and whose influence and protection afford a sure guarantee for the success of the intended institution. I will now read the Resolution, and afterwards will offer a few observations upon it.

RESOLVED,—That we feel deeply grateful to the Commissioners of National Education for having resolved on building their First District Model School in Newry; and we hail the cordial unanimity with which ministers and members of every religious denomination have this day met to celebrate this event, as in itself one of the best results of the establishment of the National System, and as affording the best proof that it is the only one which has been as yet devised calculated to prove acceptable to persons of all parties and denominations in Ireland."

I should be very uneasy, my Lord, were the recommendation of such an institution to rest on what I will here say; but I am relieved from all apprehension on that score, when I consider that there are gentlemen here who have had more time than I could spare to put their thoughts in order, and are fully capable to do justice to it, in such a manner as it is not in my power to do. I will, however, lay down certain principles by which I myself am governed, and I think that those principles, when considered, will be a sufficient justification for the movement in which we are engaged. The first principle is, that education,—good moral education,—is essentially

necessary to the welfare of society. All sensible persons admit that principle; they all allow that education is to human nature what culture is to the garden, and what the sculptor's work is to the statue. Without good moral education for the community, society cannot go on well in its various conditions and various sections; but, enlightened and directed by that, the most formidable difficulties may be made subsidiary to the attainment of greater improvement and greater happiness. The second principle is, that education should be communicated to the young. Youth, the spring of human life, is the proper season for attending to the great work of instruction, and, unless education be applied while the subject is young, obstacles from neglected nature, and inveterate evil habits, are apt to be fatal to subsequent efforts. This is what every day's experience teaches, and the more we see of human life the more reason have we to be convinced of it. The third principle is, that education, to be truly valuable, must be founded upon religion. I mean by religion, first, those solid principles which are derived from the eternal natural law, which constitutes, as it were, a part of our being,—which are discernible to the sincere and thoughtful mind by the mere light of natural reason,—which are felt and acknowledged, more or less, by every portion of the entire family of mankind, pagan as well as Christian, and which, indeed, we find admirably developed in the writings of men who were not Christians at all, as in those of Epictetus, Marcus Antoninus, Seneca, Pliny the elder, and in those of the great Roman orator and philosopher, especially in his work entitled “De Officiis.” In all these we cannot but admire their clear conceptions, not only of the great cardinal virtues of prudence, justice, fortitude, and temperance, but even of many subordinate ones, such as self-denial and patience, expressed in those significant terms, “bear and forbear, *abstine, contine, sustine;*” also of the virtues of generosity and forgiveness of injuries; and, in short, of all those principles which, were not their influence marred by the extreme corruption of human passions, would of themselves be

sufficient for regulating our conduct towards each other, and for governing ourselves, as far as the interests of this world are concerned. I mean by religion, secondly, what is understood by the words "Divine Revelation," that is, the knowledge of those divine truths, which, while they furnish the most powerful motives for recalling mankind to a faithful observance of the principles and virtues inculcated by the eternal natural law, raises their minds above this world, throws open to their intellectual vision the infinite joys of heaven to which God invites them, and instructs them in whatever is necessary for the government of their minds and hearts, during the short journey of human life, in order to arrive at that blissful and eternal state of existence. I have already observed, that the principles of the law of nature may be discerned by the mere light of human reason; and if men have gone astray, and have acted unkindly and unjustly towards their fellow-creatures, it was not because they could not be aware of their aberrations, for their conscience, the "*sensus intimus*," had they rightly consulted it, would have reproved them,—but partly because they were enslaved to cupidity and human passions, and partly because they wanted those powerful checks and motives which natural religion faintly suggested, but which revealed religion abundantly and almost irresistibly supplies. They understood that "they should do to others as they would wish to be done by;" but they did not understand clearly what the consequence to them would be, if they were guilty of violating that eternal principle. They had not those checks which the Christian religion opposes to vice, and unless these checks are kept in mind, the laws of nature are not found to be a sufficient bar to the commission of sin by fallen man. Much less did they understand the nature of those rewards which are destined for the just in a future state, and which, when well-considered, render every duty light and agreeable. Revelation is the great supplement to, or rather is the perfection of natural religion. It not only brings it into full operation,—it not only clears up, and places it in full and strong light, and confirms

and enforces all its precepts and maxims,—but it also again fixes the stamp of divine authority upon them. It does more, it connects the social duties of man in this world with his eternal interests, and makes known to him that, in fulfilling the former, he augments and secures the latter. Such are its services for our social welfare upon this earth.

As to the mysterious doctrines of revealed religion, it is not necessary on this occasion that I should advert to them more than merely to observe that our natural reason does not enable us to comprehend, or even to know them, by its own lights. Our belief of them does not rest on the evidence of our *intimate sense*, but on the evidence of authority exterior to ourselves; and with regard to them, the great questions to be considered by human reason are,—what authority have we for believing them as divinely revealed truths?—is the authority to which we refer sufficient to satisfy a sincere and rational mind?—and, if sufficient, are the principles or tenets which we believe, clearly traceable to that authority? On these points it is lamentable to notice how much we are divided. But as such divisions do exist, and as conscience should not be forced, nor should any one be obliged to profess, or appear to profess, what he does not sincerely believe, it is plain that, even for the sake of genuine religion, which is incompatible with hypocrisy, and for the sake of pure morality, which must be founded on sincere sentiments of religion, in all schools intended for the education of children of all denominations of professing Christians, in which children of various religious principles do attend, the duty of teaching them the peculiar tenets of their parents or co-religionists should be left to their parents or guardians, or pastors, or to other individuals selected by their parents for that purpose; and whatever religious instruction is communicated in those schools should be exclusively such as the parents and religious teachers of all would approve of, and such as may be *correctly* inculcated by every teacher without detriment to his conscientious principles, and should be practised by every rational being.

I will now, my Lord, with your permission, apply what I have said to the National System of Education. That system, my Lord, provides,—1st, the great desideratum, a good moral education for the whole community, supplying excellent class-books, excellent teachers, and excellent inspectors; 2ndly, it invites all the youth of the whole country into its schools; 3rdly, it takes care that the great principles of morality and religion, which are suggested by the law of Nature, and are admitted by all Christians of every denomination in Ireland, shall be diligently inculcated in its books and by its teachers; and, 4thly, it insists on having perfect liberty of conscience established in its schools as to those particular tenets on which a difference of opinion is found to exist. The National System does not enter upon that ground. It obliges no child to receive instruction on such points from a teacher differing in religion from that which the child professes; it encourages the teachers of the different religious denominations to give instructions to those of their communion committed to their care; and, recognising parental authority as the first which the child should obey, it allows no undue interference with that authority; and when the parent himself is unable to instruct, his right is acknowledged and insisted upon to have his child instructed by those in whom he can place most confidence. These principles the Commissioners of the National System of Education profess, and, I believe, they endeavour to enforce a strict observance of them in all their schools, with candour, fairness, honesty, and justice; I therefore regard it as a great benefit to our common humanity that the National System has been introduced into the North of Ireland, and is spreading extensively in every direction; and it delights my heart to see it encouraged by all the ministers of religion here. Yes, my Lord, on this day, when we hail the ceremony of laying the first stone of the first District National Model School, it gives me inexpressible satisfaction to see that it is accompanied with the blessings of all the clergy of this town, and with them, I hope, of all the friends of Education. These are all auspicious

omens; and when to them I add, that this great undertaking is commenced under the auspices of your Lordship, who, both at home and abroad, have always succeeded in whatever you have put your hand to, I cannot doubt of its complete and speedy success. I feel great pleasure in moving the first Resolution.

The Rev. Henry Alexander, Presbyterian Minister of the Remonstrant Synod, next came forward and said:—I have the honour, my Lord, of seconding this Resolution. I trust that the Commissioners of Education may take this vote of thanks not as a merely formal one, but as a pledge that, in whatever degree the success of this institution may depend on the co-operation of all parties and denominations in this town, they shall have it honestly and heartily. We also owe Mr. Bagot, the truly spirited Vicar of this town, our thanks for maintaining, in his correspondence with the Board, the claims of Newry in this matter.

We have every reason, my Lord, to congratulate ourselves, as the friends of Education, on the prospect of having such an institution amongst us. Our educational resources are neither in quantity nor quality what they ought to be. A want is very generally felt of such a thoroughly good school as we may confidently anticipate this will be.

It may be well if I explain what I understand will be its peculiar advantages. Its name leads us to expect something very superior. It is to be a Model School, a pattern and example to all schools in the district,—the best, so far as the resources of the Board of Education can make it such. To insure this there will be sent to this and other Model Schools (of which there are to be thirty-two in Ireland) teachers selected by examination, and having such a liberal salary as, together with the local fees, will secure the services of the very best at the disposal of the Board. The schools will be large and commodious, amply supplied with books, maps, and other apparatus of instruction; and no one who is acquainted with what is at

the Board's command but must know how infinitely superior in this respect its resources are.

The local efficiency of this school will be also much promoted by another part of its very comprehensive plan ; it is to be a school for the education and training of teachers. It is the desire and aim of the Commissioners that the profession of teaching shall cease to be one which a man may take up when he shall have proved himself unfit for anything else, and become one which shall be entered on deliberately at an early age, and looked forward to as the future business of life. This will be of immense national importance. There can hardly be wished for a better educational machinery than that of this National Board ; but it is sad to think how often it stands idle, not from want of will or of natural ability in the teacher, but simply from his not having been taught how to set it and keep it in motion. Why erect power-looms with steam ready to be turned on, if for lack of due training you condemn your operative to weave by hand ? The Commissioners of Education have done and are doing much to remedy this evil, and here is good promise of more. In the mean time, while the future teachers are being trained, they will greatly promote the efficiency of the Model School, being, as assistants, much superior to the ordinary class of monitors. From all this I conceive we may anticipate something very superior,—a school not for the poor only, who can afford but their penny a week, but also for the tradesman's and small shopkeeper's children, who will be able to pay for that higher instruction which these teachers will be well qualified to supply. These advantages carried out in a male, female, and infant school, I am much mistaken if there will not result great benefit to the working-classes of our town ; and I confidently anticipate that we shall be able to trace the good effects in the growing intelligence of the people ; and not that only, but that there will be given such a stimulus to education as will lead to a demand for great improvements in the schools for the richer classes also. I rejoice

to observe an intimation that a school for the middle class is contemplated in connexion with this institution. Such a thing would be gratefully received, is much wanted, and would be very generally supported.

The Resolution next refers to the presence here of ministers of all denominations as in itself gratifying, and as a good result of this system. I think so. I think it is good for men of different associations and views, who look at society and its wants from such different standing-points, to come thus together for the promotion of that which, from *all* standing points, declares itself to be a social want. There are those who are scandalized at such a sight as this platform presents to day. They have, I know not what fears. The only probable result, my Lord, from men of such diverse sentiments meeting as we do to-day is, that the conviction shall be strengthened that where there are willing minds, the common field of usefulness, in which, without any compromise of their peculiar principles, all may labour, is larger, wider, clearer, than they had thought. If the National System of Education cherishes this feeling, it is one fraught with many blessings to our country, too long distracted by mutual enmities and misunderstandings.

One would say it was a very Irish way of looking at things, if unfortunately it were not the same more or less everywhere, that men will not consent to act together in what they do agree, because, forsooth, they do not agree in what no one wishes them to act together in,—in what, in fact, can be done better apart. How absurd, if the conductors of our soup-kitchen had determined not to issue a ration until the Protestant vicar and this venerable Roman Catholic bishop had come to an agreement as to the Douay and James's versions. How absurd if the ladies of the Benevolent Society, who have so admirably, and on such small means, so long sustained that useful institution, had determined that not a stitch should be put in until it was quite a settled matter among them as to the comparative merits of the Augsburg Confession and the Council of Trent! Hardly less absurd is it that the people shall not

receive even the rudiments of education by the united action of society, because society is not of one mind as to certain high mysteries of religion.

The National System of Education really meets, I submit, all the conditions of one suitable for a country circumstanced as ours, providing, as it does, the literary appliances of a very effective education, and, at the same time, treating with due respect the religious feelings of the different denominations. If, in despite of all that can be said,—if, in the face of that knowledge of the actual working of the system which any one by a morning's walk may acquire,—it be still affirmed that the Bible is excluded from these schools, and that no religious instruction is given to the children within their walls,—we can only meet the assertion by a denial as positive, there being this very essential difference, however, that the denial is founded on fact, while the assertion rests on misconception, and not seldom on prejudice.

I believe, my Lord, it is not often that truth and justice have been more freely sacrificed to the demands of party feeling, than in the warfare that has been waged against the National System of Education; nor often that the triumphs have been more signal, or that the final and complete triumph can be more safely predicted. I confess it is to me inconceivable how good men, religious men, lovers of their country, can be found to maintain their opposition, unless it be that they are still hankering after a supremacy in the direction of the educational resources of the country which has happily passed away for ever, and that they have not yet reconciled themselves to the necessity of abandoning the idea of finding in secular education a means of religious proselytism.

But they “cannot in conscience as Christian men sanction the principle of this system.” When men plead conscience they are entitled to respectful consideration; but really, my Lord, our respect for such a plea is severely tried when it is preferred, as it seems here to be, on behalf of those who virtually maintain that it is a violation of their conscience to

suffer other people to be guided by their own; for what else is it in the case before us. In the exercise of their own religious liberty, the Roman Catholics object to reading the Protestant translation of the Holy Scriptures; and it is a violation of Protestant conscience, is it, that they should not, on pain of losing the literary advantages of these schools, be compelled to do so? I cannot understand this kind of conscience. I should have thought that the more truly conscientious a man was, he would be the more tender towards the consciences of others, and that the more Christian he was he would be the less oblivious of that divine rule of right, "Do unto others as you would that others should do unto you."

This much I will say, that, while no man is to be blamed who, from a truly conscientious feeling, withholds his approval from the cause in support of which we are here assembled, he should be well satisfied that it is indeed conscience which influences him, and not party spirit, pride of sect, or, at best, an unworthy resolve to preserve consistency. Education is so great a social want, and a National Education is so clearly the only means of supplying it,—and to be National it is so notorious that it must conciliate by even-handed impartiality our national diversities of religious opinion,—that they incur a very serious responsibility, indeed, who throw the obstacle of their personal influence in the way of its progress. The sooner they abandon such a false and hopeless position,—the sooner society, as one man, unites to carry the light of education into the darkest corner of our land,—the sooner will our country cease to be the blot of modern civilization, the disgrace and weakness of this great empire.

Statesmen now tell us that they can do but little for us,—that any true resurrection must be from a quickening of our own spirits,—and that our own right hands must win for us the victory over our social evils. It appears to be discovered that, however quickly and effectually bad laws can worsen and degrade a people, it is by very slow degrees, and to a very limited

extent, that good laws can raise and ennoble them ; and that the remedy must be found, where the disease is, even in the character and habits of the people.

Now, so far as morality in the relation of the sexes, patience under unparalleled physical privation, warmth and generosity of feeling, and natural intellectual capabilities, we are not one whit behind the very chiefest of nations; but if it be true, as it is said of us,—and I for one deem it so,—that as a people we are sadly deficient in self-restraint, self-respect, and self-reliance,—then what human instrumentality can be brought to bear upon us so hopefully as an education intellectual, moral, and industrial, of the rising generation, so thorough as will store their minds with knowledge, so universal as to reach every cottage of the land? Give this National System fair play,—give it increased means as its noble plans develop themselves, and to be lavish here is true economy,—give it a really efficient staff of well qualified hands to keep its admirable machinery in full play, and for this end, and to ensure this, let the schoolmasters' salaries and social position be much raised,—and, above all, give it what, in the name of God and humanity, it has a just right to demand, the hearty co-operation of all good men, all true patriots, all real friends of the poor. Let Catholic archbishops, and Protestant primates, and landed gentry, lay aside their unfortunate opposition, and give instead a true helping hand; and from these National Schools, as from so many thousand centres of influence, shall go forth a power that will effect more in ten years towards the growth of that independent, self-relying spirit so much needed, and so loudly called for, than a century of political and sectarian agitation.

There are, God knows, natural obstacles enough to the spread of education without such as these; its friends must look for such, and be prepared to meet them. There is the incapacity of parents to value rightly for their children a good which they have in themselves so partially, if at all, ever known,—there is their inability to procure clothing,—there is the

temptation of their indolence,—of their poverty oftener,—to make their children's labour productive as early as possible ; these are inevitable obstacles ; but that, in our condition as a country, far greater difficulties (the chief difficulties in the way of our full realization of this great social good), should arise from the want of harmonious action on the part of the natural friends and guardians of the poor, is very lamentable and very unnatural indeed. Are the people not to be allowed to pick up even the crumbs that fall from the table of knowledge until the wise men that sit at it are quite agreed as to the spices and condiments that make it most wholesome? Is it too much to ask that, whatever differences there may be as to what constitutes a complete education,—and who says that without religion Education can be complete,—there should at least be united action to insure its common rudiments? Is it too much to say, let us unite to teach them to read, whether afterwards they are to read the Douay or James's version? Let us teach them to write, whether they afterwards write Papacy, Prelacy, or Presbytery: let their faculties be exercised and developed into strength and energy; let their moral sympathies be quickened; let us make them, as far as may be, intelligent, self-relying men and women; let us open up as far as practicable the great book of knowledge ; and I feel satisfied that in every case we shall have done something towards the promotion of order and prosperity among the people, and shall have done good service to religion and our country, under whatever section of the Christian Church they may hereafter range themselves. And it may be that, thus drawn together in their early years, they may carry with them into after life the memory of their boyish fellowship; it may be that the rancorous feeling which too much exists between Protestants and Roman Catholics, poisoning the vitals of social good, shall be thereby weakened, and the charities of life and good neighbourhood strengthened ; it may be, indeed, that thus they shall become less willing and efficient tools of party ; but not, on that account, less worthy citizens, or, I humbly think, worse Christians either.

The Rev. Daniel Bagot, Vicar of Newry, then rose and said:—

MY LORD,—The office of moving the second Resolution has devolved upon me: I shall read it for the information of the Meeting:

“RESOLVED,—That the objections so frequently advanced against the National System of Education, that it overlooks the importance and necessity of giving religious instruction, and that it interdicts the free use of the sacred Scriptures in its schools, are totally without foundation; inasmuch as it makes full provision for religious education,—leaving each denomination perfectly free to act upon its own principles with reference to the use of the Bible,—paying due respect to the religious liberty of each, and only taking care that no one denomination shall assume a power to compel the members of any other to adopt their views, upon this point, contrary to their own conscientious convictions.”

And in proceeding to speak for a short time to this most important Resolution, I cannot avoid expressing my conviction that it ought to be a matter of the deepest gratification to all the friends of National Education in Ireland, that we are this day met to celebrate the laying the first stone of the first District Model School in this country. It is the first public meeting ever held in Ireland, at which we can have an opportunity of calmly and candidly investigating, and of openly expressing our opinions upon the true principles of the National System. The occasion is peculiar, deserving, I may say, of “a Special Commission,” though I rejoice to know that this Special Commission is of a different kind from what is at present taking place in the South of Ireland; instituted, not for the purpose of punishing crime, but for the purpose of promoting the diffusion of that moral and religious education which is calculated to repress and prevent crime. In the name of this large meeting, I have to present our sincere thanks to your Lordship, for having so kindly and so courteously consented to preside this day,—a more pleasing office, no doubt, than that in which those eminent Judges, at present presiding in the South of Ireland, are engaged. My Lord, in speaking to the Resolution which I hold in my hand, it is scarcely needful, before an intelligent assembly like the present, to discuss first principles,—to demonstrate the necessity of

National Education,—to prove that it is the duty of the State, in the manifestation of its parental character, to make provision for National Education,—to shew that Education, in order to be useful, must be, not merely literary, but moral and religious,—that it must consist not only in conveying scientific and general knowledge, but also in the inculcation of sound principles to form the character, and to regulate the conduct ;—for I rejoice to say, that there is not a country in the world in which it would be so superfluous as to prove this. In Ireland we have no controversy on this point. It is universally acknowledged by every Church and denomination in our land, that education ought to be religious ; whatever difference of opinion there may be as to the instrument to be employed in giving that religious education, yet all, whether Roman Catholics, Protestants of the Established Church, or Presbyterians, agree in maintaining, that religious instruction is indispensable. My Lord, that well-known maxim, “that knowledge is power,” is, in itself, too vague and abstract ; like many other maxims of philosophy, it must be extended and corrected by religion. Knowledge is power ; but it is a power either for evil or for good : a power for evil if religious principle be wanting, and only as it is guided by religious principle is it a power for good. There is no doubt, my Lord, that intellectual information imparts strength, and solidity, and vigour, to the mind. But we want to do more than this,—we want to do more than merely to strengthen the mental faculties,—we want to supply the judgment with principles by which it should ever be guided in the practical exercise of that power,—and it is only by a good system of moral and religious instruction that these principles can be supplied. Now, my Lord, the resolution intrusted to my care refers to two leading objections frequently made against the National System of Education for Ireland. The first of these is, that it disregards and overlooks the importance and necessity of giving religious instruction. This charge I, at once, most confidently and emphatically deny ! It is only necessary to look to the Rules of the Board in order to refute it. I refer to the two following :

“2. Opportunities are to be afforded to the children of each school for receiving such religious instruction as their parents and guardians approve of.

3. “The patrons of the several schools have the right of appointing such religious instruction as they may think proper to be given therein, provided that each school be open to children of all communions; that due regard be had to parental right and authority; that, accordingly, no child be *compelled* to receive, or be present at, any religious instruction to which his parents or guardians object; and that the time for giving it be so fixed that no child shall be thereby, in effect, excluded, directly or indirectly, from the other advantages which the school affords. Subject to this, religious instruction may be given either during the fixed school hours or otherwise.”

And let us look, my Lord, to the many valuable school-books which have been published by the Board. These are, throughout, pervaded and impregnated with sound religious information. I have brought a few of them with me to this meeting; but it would occupy your time too long to refer to all the passages that bear directly or indirectly upon Christian truth. I cannot avoid, however, referring to one or two. In the FIRST that is placed in the hands of children, the following lesson, for instance, occurs :

“It was God that made me at first. It is he that still keeps me in life. It is from him that all the good things come, which are in my lot. And it was he who sent CHRIST to save me. I wish that I could love him, and fear him, and do his will, and pray to him as I ought. It is a great sin to break the Lord’s day, or to take his name in vain, or to go with those who walk in the paths of sin. He hates all such things, and in his wrath will come upon those who do them, and who will not turn from them. I pray that I may not think bad thoughts, nor speak bad words, nor do bad deeds.”

In the Second Book of Lessons there is an abridgment of Scripture History from the Book of Genesis, and some sacred poetry suited to the capacity of children, as, for instance, the following on page 56 :

“Oh ! blessed Saviour
Take my heart,
And let not me
From thee depart.

“Lord, grant that I
In faith may die,
And live with thee
Above the sky.”

The SEQUEL to the SECOND Book of Lessons is one of the most valuable of the whole, containing an immensity of information in a most pleasing form, and filled throughout with constant reference to religion. We find, for example, the institution of Christian worship on the first day of the week based upon the fact that on that day our blessed Saviour rose from the dead, on the third page; the death of Christ for our redemption, referred to in page 63; the omniscience of God, as on page 72; the wisdom of God in creation, as on page 95; and the necessity of early repentance, on page 220.

The THIRD Book contains an Epitome of Scripture History from the birth of Isaac to the giving of the Law on Mount Sinai; a beautiful poem on prayer, on page 228; and on page 148, that exquisitely sublime hymn, by Bishop Heber, on the Spread of the Gospel, which commences thus:

“ From Greenland’s icy mountains.”

The FOURTH Book resumes the subjects of Scripture History from the departure out of Egypt to the reign of Solomon. On page 195 there is an essay on the Christian Salvation: and there is some beautiful sacred poetry interspersed through the volume on the omniscience of God, page 30; on the Saviour, page 198; on Christ’s second coming, page 201: and other equally important subjects.

The SUPPLEMENT to the FOURTH Book, and also the FIFTH Book contains some of the most valuable information upon a variety of subjects, intermixed with many articles both in prose and poetry, inculcating the fundamental principles of our holy religion.

I should also refer here to the volumes of Scripture extracts which have been published by the Board, and which contain the most important portions of scriptural truth, which have been unanimously recommended by the members of the Board, as we are told in the Preface to the first part, “ not as a substitute for the sacred volume, but as an introduction to it,

and in the hope of their leading to a more general and profitable perusal of the word of God."

But, in addition to all these, the Board have published a volume of sacred poetry which includes some of the most beautiful popular hymns. I shall here mention the first lines of some of them, by which they will be easily recognised:

	PAGE.
ADVANTAGES OF EARLY RELIGION.	
"Happy the child whose tender years,"	1
A HYMN OF PRAISE.	
"How glorious is our Heavenly King,"	2
FROM PSALM 90.	
"Oh God, our help in ages past,"	8
"OUR FATHER, WHO ART IN HEAVEN."	
"Great God, and wilt thou condescend?"	13
TRUST IN PROVIDENCE.	
"Though troubles assail,"	15
FROM JOHN 3.	
"As when the Hebrew Prophet raised,"	16
EXAMPLES OF EARLY PIETY.	
"Jesus, who reigns above the sky,"	24
ON PRAYER.	
"What various hindrances we meet,"	28
LORD'S DAY MORNING.	
"How sweet is the morning, the Lord's day of rest,"	38
FROM THESS. 4.	
"The time draws nigh when from the clouds,"	58
THE BEATITUDES, MATT. 5.	
"Blessed are the humble souls that see,"	59

In fact, my Lord, better books for the use of schools have never been published by any educational society. If the National System had done no more than supersede the vile publications which were formerly used in the Irish hedge-schools, by the books which they have provided, they would deserve the warmest thanks of every friend of religion, of morality, of loyalty, and of social order. My Lord, I feel that I have said

enough upon this point to warrant me in superadding that the Commissioners are fully justified in describing the books which they have provided for their schools, and to be used by children of every denomination, in the manner in which they have spoken of them on the fourteenth page of their Ninth Report, as follows :

“ We must add, that although, according to the National System, we cannot allow any religious instruction to be forced on children contrary to the will of their parents, yet the books we have published for the use of the National Schools, and which, though not forced, are adopted universally in them, contain several lessons upon the subject of religion. They give an epitome of sacred history ; they dwell on the original sin of our first parents, and on the promise then made, that in time One would come by whom sin should be overcome ; they show how that promise was renewed, particularly in the covenant with Abraham, and they point out the fulfilment of it in the coming and suffering of our Lord ; they dwell also on the giving of the Law to Moses ; they state that it is commonly divided into three parts, the moral, the civil, and the ceremonial, and that the moral is of perpetual obligation, ‘ because the duties which the creatures of God owe to him and to one another can never have an end.’ The duty of Christian charity is set forth as enjoined by the precepts and example of our Lord himself ; and a lesson by which it is thus inculcated is hung up in every National School. All this is taught as *revealed truth*.”

And now, my Lord, I feel myself fully warranted to maintain that even the general education which is imparted in National Schools is based upon religious truth,—upon that religious truth which we all hold in common,—whilst full opportunity is afforded and secured, for the respective patrons of the children to give that instruction, in the peculiar tenets of each denomination, which it is their duty to give. I say, my Lord, their proper duty ; for I feel sure that we commit an egregious mistake, when we entirely hand over to the common schoolmaster the office of religious teacher. Religious truth is, in a great degree, like medicine, which must be administered by the experienced and trained physician,—though, as far as it is food, which it is just so to the extent of all the Christian truth and moral principle, which all who profess Christianity hold in common, it may be administered by the ordinary schoolmaster. And this, my Lord, is the very principle of the National System,—to give general and literary education, based upon the

moral and religious truths which we all respect, to all children in common ; and to allow full opportunity for each to receive, separately, that peculiar instruction in the tenets of their respective denominations, which their parents and guardians approve. So that, in fact, the grand fundamental principle of this system is,—that perfect liberty of conscience must be secured for all persons receiving the benefits of that education which it supplies,—that ample toleration must be conceded to all,—that the right of private judgment must be guaranteed,—that parental authority must not be disregarded,—and that there must be no interference with the peculiar religious opinions of any class, so as to exclude them from the educational advantages which the National System affords.

And, my Lord, I have the very best possible proof to advance, that if it is a NATIONAL, and not a sectarian, system of education which is to be maintained in this country, it must be one founded upon the principles to which I have just alluded. There are many persons who are so ignorant upon this subject as to imagine that the present National System was the sudden creation of the political party who were in power in the year 1831 ; whereas it was the necessary fruit and result of the deliberations of Commissioners appointed by former Governments, amongst whom were some of the highest dignitaries of the Established Church, with the then Lord Primate at their head.

In their Fourteenth Report we find these Commissioners speaking as follows :

“ We have applied our efforts to the framing of a system which, whilst it shall afford the opportunities of education to every description of the lower classes of the people, may, at the same time, BY KEEPING CLEAR OF ALL INTERFERENCE WITH THE PARTICULAR RELIGIOUS TENETS OF ANY, induce the whole to receive its benefits, *as one* undivided body, under one and the same system and in the same establishments.”

After which they declare it to be their *unanimous* opinion :

“ That no such plan, however wisely and unexceptionably constituted in other respects, can be carried into effectual execution in this country, unless it be *explicitly avowed, and clearly understood*, as its leading prin-

principle, that no attempt shall be made *to influence or disturb the peculiar religious tenets of any sect or description of Christians.*"

And having thus declared that their object was to suggest a general system for the united education of the poor of all denominations, on the fundamental principle of non-interference with religious differences, they suggest in detail the proper steps to be taken ; they recommend the appointment of a Board of Commissioners such as would insure general confidence. They recommend a book of Scripture extracts for the use of all : whilst they expressly take for granted that separate religious instruction would be given by their respective clergymen, at proper times, and in other places, to the children of the several religious denominations in the country. I refer to the Reports of the Commissioners of Education of 1825 and 1827 for a fuller detail of their recommendations.

Now observe, my Lord, the concessions which were recommended by these Commissioners. They advised that schools for united Education should be established, from which the Bible was to be excluded. They advised that days should be set apart for separate religious instruction, when the Roman Catholic clergyman, as well as the Protestant, should have free access to the school-room. They advised that a book of extracts from the Gospels and from the history of the Old Testament should be prepared. And, my Lord, it is important to observe, that these Commissioners acted under a Government composed of persons who would have been considered the highest Conservatives of the day. Lord Liverpool, the Duke of Wellington, Lord Eldon, Sir Robert Peel, and Mr. Goulburn, were then in power ; and I maintain that, had the same political party been in the administration of the Government in 1831, it would have devolved upon them to have instituted and established the system which had been, as it were, a child of their own creation, and which had been brought into shape in that very year as the result of the deliberations of Commissioners who had been appointed or recognised by themselves. My Lord, I have often been disposed to think that much of the opposition

which has emanated from the Conservative party against the National System of Education has originated in a sort of amiable and patriotic jealousy that others should have entered into the fruit of their labours; and that, after having brought the system into shape, they felt that they had a prescriptive and inalienable right to be the persons who were to have the honour of conferring such an inestimable boon upon the country.

But, my Lord, if we compare the plan which was recommended in 1827 with the present system, we shall find, that if the highest dignitaries of the Established Church not only approved of, but joined in recommending and sanctioning the former, they have much less reason to withhold their countenance from the latter; for by the plan of 1827 the Bible was to be excluded from schools in which Protestants and Roman Catholics were receiving a united education, so that the Protestant clergyman could not have the children under his pastoral care instructed in the holy Scriptures except on the days set apart for religious instruction. By the present National System the Bible may be read on every day of the week during the ordinary school hours or otherwise, on this condition,—a condition which emanates legitimately and directly as a corollary from the Protestant principle of the right of private judgment,—that no child shall be *compelled* to read the Scriptures whose parents or guardians object to his doing so.*

But now, my Lord, it is time that I should advert to the *verata quæstio* to which the remainder of my Resolution refers,—the objection so frequently advanced against the National System, that it interdicts the free use of the sacred Scriptures

* I would beg to refer here to a valuable pamphlet by the present Dean of Ferns, entitled, "Brief Observations on the past and present Condition of the Education of the Poor of Ireland," in which the point to which I have been alluding is fully discussed, and in which the Dean shows that the present distinguished Primate and the late Archbishop of Dublin concurred with the recommendations of the Commissioners, and consented to assist in preparing the book of extracts.

in its schools. My Lord, I care not by whom or on what authority this statement is made, I know too much of the principles of the National System to assent to its truth. My Lord, if the National System propounded or promulgated a single rule prohibiting the free use of the sacred Scriptures, I, for one, could not be an advocate of that system; and I believe, my Lord, that such a prohibition, issuing from a mixed Board, created and appointed by the State, would be as much opposed to the principles of the Church of Rome, for the use or the non-use of the sacred Scriptures, on the part of the laity, is a matter of ecclesiastical discipline in that Church, on which a Board thus constituted could not be allowed to legislate. But, speaking for myself, I repeat it, I could not sanction any educational institution that prohibited or excluded the free use of the Bible. I stand here this day, as a decided and determined Protestant, to declare, that if the National System contained a single rule prohibiting the free use of the Bible, I, for one, could not sanction or defend it. I hold that the Bible is the common gift of our common Father to all His creatures on earth,—that it is every man's birthright to have free access to its contents. I know that, under the National System, the Scriptures are neither, on the one hand, excluded, nor, on the other hand, enforced, but left perfectly free. Any patron of a National School who desires it, may have Scripture classes in his school, and have every child in those classes whose parents or guardians do not object to their joining them. And here, my Lord, I would beg to refer to a very important pamphlet which has been recently published by the Rev. Thomas Woodward, who was for some time Secretary to the Church Education Society. In this pamphlet Mr. Woodward informs us that it devolved upon him to prepare the First Report of that Society, with respect to which he writes as follows:

“In that Report I advocated opposition to the National Board of Education upon two main grounds: first, that the rules of the Commissioners ‘forbade the Church to instruct her children in her own most

holy faith,' and secondly, that they 'withheld the word of God from a class of our countrymen.' I believed these to be *facts*, and I argued, from these *supposed* facts, that it was the duty of Churchmen to resist such an ungodly system. 'The Church Education Society,' to cite my own words, 'broad without compromise, comprehensive without laxity, has united upon the common basis of the Church every order of her members, and has consolidated their sentiments into one combined and fixed resolve to further no system of education which *forbids* us to instruct our children in our most holy faith, or withholds the word of God from any class of our fellow-countrymen.'"

And now, my Lord, let us notice the manly and truly candid manner in which Mr. Woodward retracts these charges. On page 7 of the same pamphlet he proceeds as follows:

"Plain truth compels me to declare that I regard these two main objections as having been founded on assumptions utterly unsupported by facts. Personal observation of scriptural and Church instruction, actually given in schools connected with the Board, showed me that there was a discrepancy between my pre-conceived notions and the reality of the case. I was led to examine for myself. I found that I had wholly misconceived the truth. It seemed to me, as it now does, clearer than the day that the Board is wholly *guiltless of either of the charges upon which I founded my original opposition*.

"First, as regards the 'instruction of the children of the Church in her own most holy faith.' I found when I had taken the pains to examine, that the Board, so far from *forbidding* such instruction, furnishes the utmost facilities for its impartation. Unlike the Kildare-place and London Hibernian Societies, the National Board permits the use of the Catechism, the formularies, and standard text-books of our Church. In vested schools the clergy are legally entitled to attend, and afford to the children of their flocks the fullest doctrinal instruction. Where schools are non-vested, but under Church patronage, the same power is conceded, with the additional privilege, if such it be esteemed, of prohibiting any religious teaching, except what is conformable to the tenets of the United Church.

"Equally irreconcilable with what I now believe the real facts of the case, do I esteem the second allegation upon which I grounded the duty of non-co-operation with the Board,—the allegation that it '*withholds* the word of God from a class of our countrymen.' I have long felt astonishment how any one who has read its rules, which I had never done, when, by following a tradition, I was led into such an erroneous supposition, can maintain that they are obnoxious to such a charge. So far, indeed, from '*withholding*,' the word of God from any class, I contend that, with the fullest sanction of the Board, every patron of every school in Ireland *might* offer instruction in the whole Scripture to *every child* in attendance, and that every child *might* accept the offer. The obstacles to scriptural instruction are presented by *other parties than the Board, by the patrons of schools, or by the parents of the children*. But I

repeat it, that no let or hindrance whatsoever is given by the Board. It '*withholds*' the Scripture from no class, from no individual child. Every pupil in every school in this island may, without any collision against the *rules of the Board*, be taught the sacred volume from Genesis to Revelations.

"These rules do not, indeed, *compel* a patron, who, on Roman Catholic principles, objects to the indiscriminate reading of the Scripture, to introduce into his school such instruction as his Church inhibits. They do not *compel* the children to commit an act forbidden by their parents, and infringe the obligations of the religion to which they profess adherence. But in every instance where the Scriptures are not read, they are left unread, not in consequence of any prohibition *from the Board*, but because the children, or their parents, decline their use, or because the patron's theological views are opposed to their introduction."

My Lord, this is most important testimony, and, taken in connexion with the rules of the Board with reference to religious instruction, it will fully bear out the statement of the Resolution that the Scriptures are not excluded from National Schools(a). If it were necessary I could advance further proof of this. Who can understand the National System better than the present Archbishop of Dublin. In a note to a sermon preached by his Grace a few years ago, for the benefit of the National School of Clondalkin, he says:

"The notion that the Scriptures are excluded from the schools in connexion with the National Board, and that the children brought up in them have no means of acquiring any knowledge of what pertains to the Christian religion, has prevailed to a degree which is really wonderful, considering that it never had any foundation in fact, and that correct information on the subject is so easily accessible."

But I have said enough to prove this point, and to support my statement, that the National System does not exclude the Scriptures, but leaves the members of every religious denomination perfectly free to act for themselves upon their own principles with reference to the use of the Scriptures. No,

(a) In 1843 there was a return made to the House of Commons which showed, that out of 2614 National Schools, the Holy Scriptures were read in 944 schools, and the Scripture lessons were read in 1307 schools. I have no return to refer to for the present time, but I am much mistaken if there is not a *much larger* proportion of the present 4128 schools in which the Bible is read.

my Lord, it does not exclude the Scriptures, but I shall tell you what it does exclude: it excludes the assumption of a right, upon the part of any patron of its schools, to *enforce* the reading of the word of God, contrary to the conscientious convictions of those who think that religious instruction should be imparted principally, or in the first instance, by the living voice of the minister, or by the Catechisms of their Church. It excludes the assumption of a right to enact a penal and compulsory regulation by which the sacred volume should be degraded into an instrument of persecution. It excludes the assumption of a right to resist or interfere with parental authority; with that parental authority which is founded upon a divine right, for even in that passage so frequently adduced from the Book of Deuteronomy to show that it is the duty of parents to teach their children the word of God, the authority of the parents is distinctly recognised,—“And these words which I command thee this day shall be in thine heart, and *thou* shalt teach them diligently to thy children.” As a devoted Protestant, and a minister of the Established Church, I maintain that it is the duty of every parent to have his child instructed in the word of God. But the question here is not what is the duty of the parent?—but what is *my duty* in case the parent neglects what I believe to be *his*? And I maintain that it is not my duty to use any *compulsory* means in order to make a child resist the commands and directions of his parent. I am not a magistrate, but a minister in the House of God, and as such my proper weapon is not compulsion, but moral *sausion*; my proper duty is “to reprove, to rebuke, to exhort with all long-suffering.” But, my Lord, upon prudential grounds this principle of NO COMPULSION and NO RESTRICTION with reference to the use of the Scriptures is the correct one. Some men seem to overlook the force of reaction. A *compulsory* reading of the Bible must ever tend, upon the principle of reaction, to produce repugnance and dislike, instead of a love for the sacred volume. Some men, too, forget that the adoption of a com-

pulsory rule upon this subject is calculated to defeat its own object. There are *two* ways, my Lord, and not *one* merely, of preventing the sacred Scriptures from being read. One is by excluding the Bible from the children; the other is by driving away the children from the Bible. Now, whilst many accuse the National Board, though most unjustly, of preventing the reading of the Bible in the former way, it would be well worth their consideration whether the enactment of a rule that all children *must* read the Scriptures does not operate in the latter way, by preventing the attendance of children upon schools in which that rule prevails.

But it is time I should have done. Before I conclude, however, may I express my fervent expectation and belief, that the effect of this day's meeting will be to remove much of the misrepresentations which are so current on this subject? And, my Lord, if any persons entertain a hope that any Government will either abandon this National System, in order to go back to the support of a sectarian system of Education, or that they will support a sectarian system, as a rival and antagonist to this National System, I think I may confidently say they are mistaken. My Lord, some men seem to forget the times in which we are living,—that we are not living before, but after, 1829,—and that the great principle which, in this important year, was recognised in the abstract, must, whether they approve of it or not, be so far applied in detail, as that our institutions for social and educational improvement must, of necessity, be for the future of a mixed and comprehensive, and not of a sectarian kind. Surely, my Lord, the principle that liberty of conscience must be respected in the construction of every scheme, on the part of the State, for the social amelioration of the community at large, has been too distinctly recognised, and too firmly established, to be ever again subverted or overthrown. And think you that any Government will interfere with the present System?—a System which has already educated upwards of two millions,—a System which numbers 4128 schools upon its present list, in which about

half a million are receiving a moral, religious, and general education, a System which is making every possible exertion to superadd to its other advantages industrial and agricultural instruction, and to train up an efficient band of well instructed masters and mistresses,—and a System, my Lord, which is so extensively popular. For I maintain that the present National System is supported by about 4000 clergymen and ministers of every religious denomination, and that it is far more generally approved of by the laity than is commonly supposed. If we may take the present meeting as an average specimen of their sentiments, I think I may infer from it, as well as from general observation, that a very large number of the upper classes of the landed proprietors in our country, together with the great mass of the middle and lower classes of the laity, are in favour of the National System of Education.

I wish, then, the National System success. Upon this day, when she is commencing a new line of operation, on which I might say she is attaining her majority, I wish her long life and prosperity. She is engaged in a noble enterprise, in devising the best remedies for the evils and misfortunes of our native land, by training up its rising generation in the acquisition of that sound, useful, and religious information which must ever tend to the destruction of impiety and superstition, and act as a counterpoise to sensuality, and profligacy, and crime; which must tend to implant in the heart those principles of honesty, sobriety, loyalty, industry, self-dependence, and contentment, which may most aptly be designated the household virtues of society. My Lord, the times in which we live are not such as should induce us to allow the children of our country to grow up in that ignorance which is ever a prolific parent of pauperism, immorality, and of crime. If we would desire to rear up a peaceable, a loyal, and a virtuous population in our land, we must do so chiefly through the instrumentality of a useful, an industrial, and, above all, a religious education. Society has been most aptly compared to a pyramid, in which Royalty

rests upon the summit, reposing upon the different ranks and classes of the people underneath. If there be fitness and propriety in this figure, it may well suggest the reflection, that the stability of the whole structure must depend upon the strength and solidity of the inferior parts, more especially upon the moral soundness of that large portion of the population in which the majority of numbers, and of physical strength, resides ; and that, in fact, the maintenance of our social and political constitution can only be secured by cementing and consolidating into one compact body the several classes of which society is composed, by the diffusion of useful and religious instruction.

One word more, my Lord, and I have done. I wish well to the National System of Education, because it tends to unite together persons of different religious denominations in the prosecution of a glorious and patriotic object. My Lord, I rejoice that we have recently learned so many lessons upon union. During the eventful calamities of last year we learned this lesson, that the domains of charity are common ground. Recently, in this very room, this lesson was most impressively inculcated, that the cultivation of knowledge, and the prosecution of scientific research, is common ground ; and to-day we are assembled together, as pupils in a national school, to be taught under the auspices of your Lordship, that lesson which your Lordship has spent your life in putting into practice,—that to employ our energies in philanthropic exertions for the social improvement of our fellow-countrymen is common ground. Therefore, I advocate the National System, not only for the direct benefits it confers upon those who receive the education it supplies, but also because of its indirect advantages, in combining together persons of every denomination, who have too long looked upon each other with feelings of mutual antipathy and distrust. Whatever, my Lord, tends to eradicate prejudice, whatever tends to emancipate the mind from bigotry, whatever tends to make the candid and the liberal in sentiment predominate over every feeling of an intolerant

and exclusive description, shall ever, I trust, meet with my heartiest welcome, and be greeted with my warmest applause. I look on the National System as eminently sustaining this character, and, therefore, I desire to wish it every possible success. May she prosecute her mission of philanthropy throughout our land, achieving moral victories over ignorance and vice ; may she be the means of diffusing the elements of peace and the seeds of virtue through every avenue of society ; and may this be her earliest conquest—to triumph over the evil spirit of social and religious discord in our country, so that she may soon be enabled to point to the Rose, the Shamrock, and the Thistle, blooming in lovely harmony in the diadem of our most gracious Queen, as a happy illustration of the union that shall subsist between the three religious denominations of her subjects in our land, who, without compromising their respective convictions, have yet, by combining in the great work of promoting National Education, learned this lesson, that, after all their controversies upon points of religious belief, the wall of ecclesiastical separation that still divides them is not so high but that they may even frequently extend the right hand of social fellowship across it,—to recognise each other as the subjects of a common country, the children of a common Father, who is no respecter of persons, and whose “tender mercies are over all his works !” I have great pleasure in moving the Resolution.

The Rev. John Moran, Presbyterian minister, then came forward to second the Resolution, and said:—My Lord, it is not my intention to trespass at any length on the time of this meeting, and it is still less my intention now, after the speech to which we have just listened ; for although I might not be able to join in every sentiment expressed, so much has been said on those points to which I might have addressed myself, as to leave little room or necessity for anything additional. We are generally best acquainted with anything as it affects ourselves. I am best acquainted with the National Board in its relation to the schools of that Church with which I am connected, and

therefore I hope to be excused if, in the few observations I have to offer in connexion with this Resolution, I speak of it chiefly or altogether in that relation. I am connected with the Board in being manager of four or five schools in the neighbourhood that receive endowment from it; and it might seem as if I were ashamed of my connexion with it, or afraid to avow it, if I did not come forward on this occasion; and therefore I am here, not to express my approval of everything connected with the Board, or every sentiment expressed in that Resolution, but to say a few words respecting our connexion with it as Presbyterians, and to bear my testimony to the religious freedom that we are permitted to enjoy in that connexion. I do this all the more readily that I am aware there exist misapprehensions and mistaken views of this relation on the part of many, and objections and prejudices founded on these misapprehensions. And as the gentleman that has gone before me said, as a Protestant, he was here to speak for himself, so I am here, as a Presbyterian, to speak for myself. It is well known that when the National System was first established in 1831, the Presbyterian Church refused to be connected with it, or receive its endowment for her schools. Her ministers and people believed that it laid an embargo on the Word of God, as at that time it did, and they could not consent to receive endowment for their schools on terms that in any way fettered or restricted them in the use of the Scriptures of truth. On this ground they made up their minds to lose their share of the public money, and to support their schools from their own resources. They felt it, however, a hardship to be deprived of that share of the public funds to which they might be entitled, and application was made to Government in 1833 for such a modification of the system as would enable them, without compromise of principle, to receive endowment. The propositions which they then submitted to Government, as embodying the terms on which they could receive its aid, were the following :

“ 1. That the ministers and people of the Church, without the necessary concurrence of the minister or ministers of any other Church,

shall enjoy the right of applying to the Board of Education for aid to schools, by a statement of the constitutions and regulations of the schools, accompanied with an engagement to adhere to them. But in this proposition recognising a right of the Board to consider the regulations, and to decide accordingly.

“2. That it shall be a right of all parents to require patrons and managers of schools to set apart for reading the holy Scriptures a sufficient and convenient portion of the stated school hours, and to direct the master, or some other whom the parents may appoint and provide, to superintend the reading.

“3. That all children whose parents and guardians shall so direct, shall daily read the holy Scriptures during the period appointed, but that no compulsion whatever be employed to induce them to read or to remain during the reading.

“4. That every use of school-rooms be vested in the local patrons or committees, subject, in case of abuse, to the cognizance of the Board.”

These had been previously submitted to several dignitaries of the Episcopal Church, and had obtained their approval, as containing all that Protestants needed to obtain to justify them in receiving endowments from the Board. The result of the negotiation connected with this application was not altogether satisfactory to our Church, and in 1835 she established a system of education for herself, to be sustained by the voluntary contributions of her own people, and for five years her schools were thus supported. In 1840 application was made by deputation to Government for aid to these schools. The deputation were informed that no aid could be given but through the National Board, but that if an application were made in that quarter, there would be found every disposition to meet their views. This led to a conference with the Lord Lieutenant and the Commissioners, and resulted in their obtaining all that they had asked before, and even more than they had asked in their application based on the four propositions. They (the deputation) submitted the constitution and regulation of the schools for which they sought endowment. They said, “will you give us aid for schools thus constituted and thus conducted?”—And the Board of Education said “we will.” That I do not misstate this matter, here is the form of application which was then drawn up by the deputation, and presented to the Board, on which aid was granted. This form,

after stating the name of the school, its situation, the time of erection, &c, says:

“The school is under the management of a committee chosen by the parents of the children. The times for reading the holy Scriptures and for catechetical instruction are so arranged as not to interfere with, or impede the scientific or secular business of the school; and no child whose parents or guardians object is required to be present or take part in those exercises; and no obstruction shall be offered to the children of such parents receiving such instruction elsewhere, as they may think proper.

“The school is open upon all days of the week to the public of all denominations, who have liberty to inspect the registry, witness the mode of teaching, and see that the regulations of the school are faithfully observed; but no person except members of committee, and officers of the Board, are permitted *ex officio* to interfere in the business or management of the school.”

Such is the form of application made by the Synod of Ulster to the Board,—such are the grounds on which aid was sought, on which it was then obtained, and has since been obtained,—even a statement of the constitution and regulation of our schools. Now, my Lord, from this brief sketch of the history and nature of our connexion with the Board, it must be seen, notwithstanding all that has been said to the contrary, and notwithstanding all that may be said, that our Church has been jealous of the Word of God, careful to maintain her principles, and in earnest in her demand for a religious education. She would not receive endowment for schools so long as it was accompanied with any restricting conditions. She would not receive it on any terms that in the least trench on her religious freedom. She would not consent that the Bible should be banished out of her schools, or bound during school hours; and not until she had been guaranteed perfect liberty in this matter,—not, in fact, until she was permitted to combine in her schools religious education with secular, in the manner and measure that she wished, would she have any connexion with the Board, or receive one penny of endowment? She held that religious and secular learning must combine in every right and thorough education. And rightly so. It is a poor education into which religious training does not

enter as an element. I will not say that secular education apart from religion is an evil. I know there are those who esteem it so, but I cannot so regard it. I will not say that it were better to leave a man in utter ignorance than to give him a knowledge that is merely secular. On the contrary, I believe that all truth, whether secular or sacred, is good, and that a knowledge of it is a good so far as it goes, and not an evil; but I do say that an education into which religious instruction does not enter, from which the lessons of God's Word are excluded, is essentially defective and incomplete. It is a pitiful and partial education which trains a man's head and neglects to train his heart, which educates his intellectual nature, and neglects to educate his moral nature. If man were related to secular things only, such an education might suffice, but so long as he stands related to God and to another world, any education must be essentially defective that embraces only his earthly relations, and does not take account of him in these higher and holier relations. And it was because our Church was convinced of this, because she felt the necessity of a religious education, and her obligation to provide it, and because she knew that the Bible is the only book that supplies it, that she could not agree to any restriction in its use, and consented not to receive of the Board endowment until it was made as free in our school as any other book. Now, my Lord, she obtained all this,—she had all this conceded her. On her own statement of the constitution and regulation of her schools, she received aid in 1840, and has since been receiving it. The modification of the system under which she obtained this is one available also for other denominations. And now, in all our schools, it is for the manager and the committee chosen by the parents of the children to say what books are to be used. The books of the Board are those that are most used, for they are generally most excellent, but we are not bound to them. It is for them to say when religious instruction is to be given, and how much is to be given,—when the Bible is to be read, and how long it is to be read,—when the Catechisms of our Church are to be taught,

and how frequently they are to be taught. Our own rules, approved of by the Board, are those and those only to which we are bound to adhere. The only restriction (I ought not to call it so, for it certainly does not deserve the name) is one that common sense would impose,—one that would exist if there were no Board in being,—a restriction that is involved in the very nature and object of a day-school,—it is, that the reading of the Bible and the teaching of our Catechism do not put out of place secular instruction, reading, writing, arithmetic, &c. Now, I do maintain that this is no restriction, that it is not of the nature of a restriction. It is an arrangement that common sense dictates, and that no rational parent would wish to see disregarded. The Bible is not, surely, to displace secular instruction in our schools; it is not to throw overboard grammar, and book-keeping, and geometry, but to sanctify, and hallow, and direct these; just as a man's religion is not to make him neglect his farm, or his shop, or his counting-house, but to hallow and sanctify these, his secular employments. There is, then, no restriction on us in the use of our Bibles and our Catechisms. I wish this to go forth to those of my own Church who may be prejudiced, because unenlightened, on the matter,—who may have their doubts and their difficulties about our connexion with the Board, because they do not understand it. And I wish it to go forth to those, of whatever Church they may be, who look upon us with suspicion in our relation to this system,—I wish it to go forth to such that not on one day in the week only,—not for any prescribed period only, but that every day in the week, and for such a portion of every day as we deem useful and compatible with the general business of the school, we can instruct our children in the Word of God, and in those compilations that form part of the standards of our Church. If this be not perfect freedom for the Word of God, I know not what freedom is; and if there be in this any unworthy compromise of principle, then I confess I do not understand in what compromise consists. But, my Lord, we would assume no right of compulsion over others,—

we would force none to receive our religious instruction,—we would compel no child to be present at, or to take part in our religious exercises,—we would respect every man's religious freedom,—and claiming and asserting liberty of conscience for ourselves, we would most freely, and fully, and readily, extend it to others. But it is not because the regulation of the Board requires this, although it does rightly require it, but because one of the great principles we hold, liberty of conscience, requires it; because the authority of God, who alone is lord of the conscience, requires it; and because that freedom which is every man's inalienable right requires it. We hold that liberty of conscience is every man's birth-right, and that no man, and no body of men, has authority to invade it, and for this reason we could not, and would not, use aught of compulsion or obstruction. Long before we had any connexion with the Board, when we were supporting our own schools, our doctrine was, "that children of other denominations might avail themselves of the literary advantages of our schools, without being compelled to join in the religious exercise provided for our own children." And what our doctrine then was, when unconnected with the Board, the same it is now, when connected with it. I am aware that we have been blamed upon this head,—we have been blamed for giving secular instruction to those whose parents would not allow them to receive our religious instruction. Now, the parties who find fault with this, may have zeal for the truth, but I think it is an unenlightened zeal; they may be jealous for the Word of God, but I think they do not understand the doctrine of liberty of conscience. For my part I have no sympathy with those who would refuse secular instruction to children who may not be permitted to receive religious instruction. We hold it to be our duty to provide a full education, an education combining secular and religious information,—for our own children, and to offer it to all; but we have no hesitation in declaring that our schools are open to those who will take only a part of this education, and that those who do not feel them-

selves at liberty to take our religious instruction may come and receive our secular. I would be ashamed of myself if I did not hold this principle, and I would be ashamed of my Church if she did not act on it and declare it. We dare not provide for the teaching of what we believe to be error, nor approve of provision being made for it. This is a responsibility we could not underlie, and, so far as any system, in our mind, does this, we do not approve, but disapprove of it. But it is altogether another matter to offer no obstruction, and use no compulsion. The first we dare not do; the second we dare not refuse to do. I may provide a religious education,—I may offer it,—I may persuade to its acceptance,—but I have no warrant from Scripture, precept or example, for going further, and, therefore, I would not go further. Such is the nature of that relation in which we stand with the Board, and it is not a relation that any Presbyterian need be ashamed of. It is not such as puts any dishonour on the Word of God,—it is not such as makes us in the least responsible for the teaching of what we may regard as error,—it is not such as compromises one of our distinctive principles,—it is not such as trenches in the least on our religious liberty,—it is a relation that allows us to give our children all the religious instruction we would desire to give, and withholds from us no power, in regard to children of other denominations, that our own principles would suffer us to exercise.

Chichester Fortescue, Esq., M. P., next rose to move the third Resolution, and spoke as follows :

In coming forward to address you very shortly, I feel myself fortunate in the subject on which I have to speak, and in the Resolution which is committed to my care, because the subject is one upon which my own mind is so completely made up, and which possesses so deep an interest for me, that it will even of itself suggest to me language that might otherwise fail me; and the Resolution commends itself so entirely to your approval, that it does not need that eloquence which I certainly cannot

hope to bestow upon it. The sentiment to which I call upon you to respond is simply this,—that we rejoice at the progress of National Education in Ireland, anticipate the best results from its future working, and call upon the Government to extend it to the middle classes of the community.

Now really such a sentiment as this seems to speak for itself; it seems at first sight vain and superfluous to attempt to enforce it by argument, that we rejoice at the progress of Education, that we rejoice at any tolerable system of Education making any kind of progress among such a people as our's. But when I remind you that this is a great educational system, in which the resources of the State, and the latest discoveries in the art of teaching, are brought to bear upon ignorance and error; when I remind you of that noble establishment which is now one of the boasts of our metropolis; when I remind you of the army of teachers who are being disciplined and sent forth to fight in the good cause; when I remind you of those educational books, probably the very best ever composed for the instruction of the lower orders, which are now extensively used in England and America, so that Ireland, for the first time since the days of St. Patrick, has again become the teacher of the nations;—when I remind you that this great institution now possesses some 500,000 of the youth of Ireland within its schools, drawn in fair proportions from the leading religious communions of the country, or, if there be any disproportion, deriving most from the Church which is the Church of the peasantry, and least able to provide for itself;—when I remind you of all these things, it might seem that the Resolution I have the honour to propose would be carried by acclamation in any assembly of educated Irishmen. And so it will be here to-day; but so it would certainly not be in some other places, and on some other occasions. Now how is this unfortunate opposition to be overcome? You have heard many most cogent arguments on the subject to-day, and I shall not attempt to go through them now; nay, I should say that it is not so much argument that is needed, as information on, and still

more a candid hearing for, the facts of the case ; and I believe that this important meeting will do more good by the information it will supply, and the example it holds out, than even by the able arguments we have listened to. Still I must endeavour to put before you one or two ideas which may serve as arguments for this cause of National Education.

And, in the first place, there is a consideration which has great weight in my mind, and that is, that this system is really adapted to the circumstances of Ireland ; that it takes Ireland *as it is*, deals with Irish facts *as they are*, and not as we may wish them to be ; acknowledges Ireland to be, not a Protestant country, which it is not, but a Protestant, Presbyterian, and Roman Catholic country, which it is. One of the crying evils of Irish history has always been, that we have dealt with her, not as she was, but as something we voted her to be. Government has always found the facts of Ireland against it ; but, like the obstinate arguer in the old story, has always answered, "So much the worse for the facts." First of all, England voted Ireland to be an English colony, acknowledged only the English Pale, and ignored the existence of the mere Irish ; so that the natives of the very spot from which I now address you were treated like wild beasts, to be kept out of the camp, as it were, by walls and ditches. These evil days are, indeed, long passed away ; but a later time came, and in the reign of Henry the Eighth it was voted that Ireland should be considered an *English-speaking* country. Schools were established in which the English language alone was to be used ; however, the facts were against them, and this great educational system failed. Then came a time when Ireland was voted to be a Protestant and Reformed country. The whole Roman Catholic population had no existence in the eye of the law : none but Protestant schools were permitted. In spite, however, of many grave and solemn Acts of Parliament, the Irish people continued Roman Catholic and unreformed, and the schools failed, because the facts were against them. At last came the days of the Kildare-place Society, a Society of

which I speak with much respect, for it made a great step in advance, and, for the first time, made some impression on the mass of Irish ignorance. Still the old mistake was made; the Irish were voted to be a *Bible-reading* people; and as, unfortunately, they were not, the system failed because the facts were still against it.

In our day almost the only remnant of this policy is to be found in the ideas of some among the clergy of my own Church who oppose the National Board. I should be sorry, indeed, to speak or think harshly of them, and I entreat their Roman Catholic countrymen not to feel harshly towards them either. But the effect of the false system of policy I have endeavoured to describe upon their mind is, that they wish to deal with Ireland in the matter of education, *not as she is, but as they think she ought to be*; they wish to ignore the existence of any other Church in Ireland, and regard themselves as the sole legitimate managers of Irish Education. There can be no doubt that this feeling is at the bottom of much of their opposition to the National System; it came out in all the pamphlets that were published last summer, and in the documents of the Church Education Society; it shows itself in such language as, "the trust committed to us by the Legislature, of superintending the education of the people"—"functions not congregational, but parochial," &c. Now one really does not know how to meet such reasonings as these. A great author has said, "When it comes to *prove* things that are self-evident, there is no chance of convincing any one;" and so, I suppose, if I argue that voting certain persons the teachers of the people will not make them so unless the people choose to be taught, and designating a certain building the parish school will not make it so unless the parishioners choose to enter it, I shall fail in convincing many persons. And has it ever struck you that the feeling I have described is the real reason why the Presbyterians have given in their adhesion to the Board, while so many members of the Established Church stand aloof? It is that the Presbyterian ministers do not consider themselves

“trustees for the education of the whole people,” and finding that they can give the religious instruction they approve of to the children of their own communion, they are content,—for can it be supposed that the Presbyterians set a less value on scriptural Education than the members of the Established Church? On the contrary, the motto of all Presbyterian Churches may be said to be, “The Bible, and nothing but the Bible;” and I am content to be not less zealous in the cause of Bible-reading than the followers of Calvin and Knox.

My Lord, there is another reason why I most heartily concur in the sentiment of this Resolution, and that is, that this National System is a decidedly religious and Christian system. I do not mean to say that I am afraid of even the most purely secular instruction for the lower orders. We hear a great deal of the dangers of knowledge; I confess I have much more fear of the dangers of ignorance: and even if there be danger in the merely intellectual education of young men removed from the control of their parents, such as medical students, or students at some colleges, I can see none in that of children attending a day school under the eye of the ministers of their religion, and within that influence to which, after all, we must mainly look for the training of youth, the influence of the family and the fireside. It must be remembered, too, that any tolerable school cannot fail to do much more than teach reading, writing, and arithmetic; that its discipline cannot but extend to the heart as well as the head; that under any tolerable master the child must learn habits of order, of truthfulness, of obedience, of self-denial. Now a school under the National System *may*, if the local managers will have it so, accomplish little more than this, which indeed is, I believe, all that is really done in the majority of schools, under whatever professed system.

But with all this, as I said before, the National System commends itself to me as one framed in a Christian spirit, and with Christian views. It springs out of a spirit of enlightened toleration, not out of carelessness or indifference; it numbers

dignitaries and leading members of the Christian Churches of this country among its managers; it provides books of general education, which, as you have heard to-day, are full of religious lessons, and imbued with religious spirit; it gives every encouragement and opportunity to the parents and ministers of the children to give them all the religious instruction that their consciences permit: in fine, it does all that the peculiar circumstances of this country admit of,—that is, it uses all *legitimate* means for the promotion of Christian education. I say “legitimate means,” because so many condemn it for not using means which I regard as illegitimate,—I mean the compulsory use of the holy Scriptures. I believe the National System has done what the circumstances of Ireland compelled it to do, in carrying one step farther the principle of the Kildare-place Society, and of the British and Foreign Society in England, by including the reading of the Scriptures in that religious instruction which is not made compulsory. Now I will say, without fear of giving offence to any one here, that I deeply deplore, and regard as a grievous error, the practice of the Roman Catholic Church in restricting the use of the holy Scriptures. I think no Christian Church ought to be so afraid of the free circulation of the Bible as many (I doubt not conscientious) Roman Catholics are. At the same time I know that there are many differences of feeling and opinion among them on this point; and I sincerely hope the day will come when the Irish Roman Catholic Church will be as fearless in the circulation of the Scriptures as the Roman Catholic Church of Germany is, I believe, at this day. But to effect this object there are means at every man’s disposal,—exhortation, example, the distribution of the Bible to all who are willing to receive it; and, not least, the power of reading, and that intellectual and moral cultivation which, in the opinion of Roman Catholics themselves, would render the people fitter for its reception. All I protest against is the use of compulsion, and under that head I cannot but reckon the compulsory use of the Bible in schools, inasmuch as it endeavours to force

it upon an unwilling population, under the penalty of losing the other benefits of the school. It is a process of intellectual and moral starvation which says, unless you take the fare that we provide for you, you shall have none other. In connexion with this subject, I cannot help alluding to a line of argument that is often heard from Protestants, which represents the rule of the National Board as *unfair* to them, as complying with the conscientious scruples of the Roman Catholics, and violating their own. Now, what is the meaning of this? The Roman Catholic parent says: "My child must not join the Bible class;" the National Board says, "it shall not be compelled to do so." The Episcopalian and Presbyterian parent say, "My child must read the Bible in school;" the Board says, "it shall have perfect liberty to do so." Surely here is fair treatment; here is equal tenderness for the consciences of both. But the Episcopalian goes on to say: "These little Romanists *must* read the Bible too, or my conscience will not allow me to keep them in my school." These are the scruples of which we hear so much, and which are represented as on the same footing with the scruples of the Roman Catholics. But would the Board be dealing fairly with all classes if it listened to them? Might it not as well, talking merely of fairness, listen to a Roman Catholic who objected, on the plea of conscience, to the use of the Scriptures by Protestant children attending his school? And in illustration of this point I must say I was much struck by the speech of the reverend gentleman who immediately preceded me. That was a remarkable speech; it was a very strong speech; I may call it a decidedly Presbyterian speech. It was so strong, that at first sight it might seem as if the Board had given way too much to the Presbyterian body,—had dealt too leniently with them, and therefore unjustly towards others. But a moment's reflection shows that such is not the case. The reverend gentleman made indeed as strong a speech in favour of Bible reading as could have been made at a Church Education Society's meeting; but he spoke only of the children of his own communion,

and finding himself able to give a full scriptural education to them, he seeks not to impose upon others by illegitimate means the education which he himself believes to be the best. Such, my Lord, are some of the reasons which enable me with a good conscience to come forward in support of the Resolution I have the honour to hold. In conclusion, I must congratulate this meeting on the high Christian tone taken by the reverend gentlemen who preceded me,—a tone equally removed from intolerance and indifferentism. I would call upon persons of all creeds, and especially on the ministers of religion, not to be afraid of the progress of education. I would remind them that Christianity cannot exercise its mighty powers of good upon a barbarous and brutalized population. Let them, therefore, hail the schoolmaster as their best ally, and let us all join in using those weapons which alone can really advance the cause of Christianity, or decide between the various forms of it which we profess; those true moral and spiritual weapons of mutual tolerance, mutual example, free inquiry, and good education. Thanking this meeting for the indulgent attention with which they have heard me, I shall conclude by reading the Resolution :—

RESOLVED,—“That we sincerely rejoice at the success which has already attended the National System of Education in Ireland, and feel justified, when contemplating that success, in anticipating the happiest results from its more general diffusion throughout the country; and we earnestly hope that Her Majesty's Government will very soon provide an enlarged system of education for the middle classes in all the leading towns of Ireland, based upon principles which will prove acceptable to all classes and denominations of Her Majesty's subjects in this country.”

Denis Caulfield Heron, Esq., Barrister at Law, came forward and said:

My Lord, Ladies, and Gentlemen, I rise to second the resolution which has been just proposed. It is unnecessary for me to say how deep an interest I take in everything which concerns the welfare of Newry, and how gladly I come forward to lend my humble assistance to further the objects of

this meeting. Indeed I do not think that I could address you on a more auspicious occasion. We are assembled to commemorate the laying the foundation stone of a building, which, I trust, we shall live to see flourishing and benefiting the town. The Rev. Mr. Alexander, in one of the ablest speeches which I ever heard, has told you to-day, that for this we are indebted, in a great measure, to the active exertions of the Rev. Mr. Bagot. Your applause shows how you value his services. But, entertaining the highest sentiments of gratitude towards him, I would not give him all the credit; and I am certain that no one will join more heartily with me than himself in saying that the town should have some credit; and that the Commissioners of Education were influenced in some degree by seeing the wish to give good intentions a fair trial, the spirit of fair play, and the freedom from violence and outrage, which have so long and so honourably distinguished Newry and the surrounding counties. Many things have co-operated in gaining this good character for us; amongst which we are deeply indebted to the examples afforded, and the exertions made, by the Clergy and Ministers, whom we must all rejoice to see assembled this day together, in public spirit co-operating for their country's good.

Of late years, my Lord, the social condition of the labouring classes has much attracted the attention of statesmen. This feature in politics presents itself now for almost the first time in the history of the world. Nations have exhausted their strength in the pursuit of military glory; some few of their citizens have gained the praise of all time by their success in those varied branches of Art, in which human genius and industry delight; but, although the world was progressing for a long time, the light of knowledge shone only upon the heights whereon the rich were dwelling, and penetrated not the humble valleys of the poor. Some of my hearers may remember the outcry which was raised when it was first proposed that the Education of the poor should be undertaken by the State.

But this opposition has been overcome. It is now acknowledged by all that it is vain to expect a nation to flourish in peaceful prosperity whilst the poor are left ignorant and uncared-for. Our present enlightenment has overcome old prejudice:

“ Once we thought that Education
 Was a luxury for the few ;
 That to give it to the many
 Was to give it scope undue,—
 That 'twas foolish to imagine
 It could be as free as air,—
 Common as the glorious sunshine
 To the child of want and care ;—
 That the poor man, educated,
 Quarrelled with his toil anon :—
 Old opinions, rags and tatters,
 Get you gone !—Get you gone !”

I am glad, then, to see this town coming forward so prominently in the educational movement. I consider that, in holding this public meeting to commemorate this extension of the National System, you are taking an important step for the interests of the country. In this meeting, so honourable to the town, and so hopeful for the future, I perceive something which will not cease with the events of the day, the sounds of our voices, and the dispersion of this assembly,—on the contrary, I know that it will have a good result in exhibiting that you, amidst the hurry and fatigues of mercantile pursuits, find leisure to show your zeal for the welfare of the labourer, and your sympathy with him ;—I am convinced that it will have a good result in encouraging him to honourable exertions, accompanied with sobriety and order.

An objection very frequently urged against those who advocate the Education of the people, is, that it is of no use to educate the very poor, that it is our first duty to relieve them from poverty. Now we maintain that, by giving them an Education, we relieve their poverty in the truest and best manner, for we place within their own hands the most certain and effectual means of raising their condition. And even, though we cannot avert poverty altogether, it is in our power to de-

prive it of much of its bitterness, to lighten poverty by opening new sources of enjoyment, and separate poverty from crime.

The Vicar of Newry, in his able refutation of the assaults on the National System, has repeated to day the maxim of the great Lord Chancellor, that "Knowledge is power." I believe we differ a little as to the point whether knowledge be always power for good, but I am certain we are both agreed that a power is always striving to enthrall the world, which has influence but for evil, — that is, the power of ignorance. If knowledge be a power, ignorance is also a power, and, at present, the greatest power in the world. It is the power which keeps the savage a savage, and the heathen a heathen; the power which, in Christian countries, commits each varied crime which disgraces civilization; the power which triumphs in prejudice and bigotry, and whose terrible influence extends beyond the grave. But in our life the most formidable influence which ignorance exerts as to our social condition, is, that those under that power cannot, whilst they remain so, rise from poverty. As far as we know at present, no savage nation can rise from barbarism unaided by a civilized state. So, ignorance, though surrounded by the triumphs of civilization, must always remain poor. The man who cannot read will always remain poor.

Unable to read !—I ask the audience, whom I have the honour to address, can they for a moment imagine themselves unable to read. These three words are easily said, and yet they mean a great deal. And these words were, in 1841, applicable to in round numbers almost four millions of the Irish people. Unable to read!—Fancy what those in such a state are deprived of. I speak not merely of the higher advantages which we enjoy, favoured in our youth by accident, and having received an Education. I do not speak of the mere luxuries of knowledge, never to be enjoyed by the ignorant. It is not their hardest misfortune that the glory of the authors, with whom we live in daily converse, never shines

upon them,—that the great minds which have been created from time to time to enlighten the world, can never find in that dark, impenetrable mass, an opening wherein to diffuse their amenities,—that they are confined in a dreary prison, closed against the beauties of poetry, the lessons of history;—but to come down to the practical purposes of daily life, the point which most nearly concerns themselves, and the state to which they belong, is, that those unable to read and write are condemned for life to be chance labourers for the lowest hire, and, whilst they remain so unable, cannot raise themselves from that condition.

Apply this truth to the present condition of our country. You may pass the most beneficent laws for Ireland, and pour millions of money into the country, but still there were here in 1841, 3,766,066 persons above the age of five years unable to read, and there are still nearly four millions, whose condition you cannot raise, unless you first educate them. The only labour for which they are fit is that whose just remuneration is the lowest; and unless you give them higher wages than they earn, and thereby make them a present of all that you give them above what they earn, they cannot be raised from their present poverty. And, therefore, do I advocate the Education of the people as the means which shall render their labour more valuable, and take the first step towards rendering Ireland for them a prosperous and happy home.

For, my Lord, no matter what may be the natural resources of a country, it is only the labour of its inhabitants which can make such resources productive. In all natural and ordinary circumstances, the more a country produces, the more it has to sell,—it is enabled to buy the more, and it is the richer. But how is labour to be made productive? By making it skilful and applying it properly. Skilled labour is more productive than unskilled; consequently it is more valuable to the employer, and he pays higher wages to the employed. The man who is able to read and write, and cast accounts,

is worth more than the man who is only fit to dig the ground and run messages. But skilled labour cannot be attained without Education.

If we could throw patriotism, zeal for our fellow-men's welfare, benevolence and charity, and all such virtues, aside, and if the landlords who want tenants for their land,—and without tenants there is no rent,—and if the merchants who want buyers for their goods,—put the question of the Education of the people on the mere basis of profit and loss, I ask the former class whether they would prefer upon their land men unable to read, and fit for nothing but to dig the ground, prejudiced as ignorance ever must be against the improvements of agriculture, with little hope of bettering their condition, and little to lose,—and, truly, is not such a state of things despair?—or an educated, improving, and industrious tenantry, from childhood trained in reverence for religion and the law?—which will extract more value from the soil, retain more to provide comforts for themselves, and pay the higher rent? And I ask the merchant which will bring more corn to market, and have the more money to spend there? There can be no doubt but that an ignorant race, though situated in a country teeming with health and wealth, remain comparatively unable to render the natural advantages productive; whilst an educated and intelligent people, though placed in dreary swamps, as in Holland, overcome the unkindness of nature, and attain wealth and prosperity.

Those who superficially discuss the Irish character often say that our humbler countrymen are idle and will not work. Now I have a higher opinion of them, and believe that the reason why they are so often idle is, because they cannot get enough of that work for which they are suited. Whenever there is an opportunity given them to earn anything, they *do* work hard; whenever there is an extensive demand for their labour, they supply it well. Thousands annually go to England to reap the harvest there; and so far is it from being true that the Irish requires more inducements to make them labour

than other nations, that at this period of the harvest in England, riots constantly occur between them and the native labourers, because the Irish are willing to work harder for lower wages. The perseverance and fidelity are famous with which they work there on the occasion of that almost sole opportunity of earning a little money, which they obtain in the year. They work taskwork sixteen hours in the day, and deny themselves the comforts of existence, in order that they may be able to bring home their little earnings untouched. I believe that this people, who thus exert themselves when this slight opportunity is afforded them once a year, are fit for Education. And I believe that, when by Education nobler spheres of existence are opened to their view, and brought within their reach, they will make greater and more enduring exertions; and that whatever may be expended on them in giving them Education they shall gloriously repay, by increased industry, virtue, and order, the good fruits of which shall not result to themselves alone, but bring a splendid increase of prosperity to all within the land.

The resolution which the honourable Member for Louth has this day proposed, and which I have the honour to second, refers to a matter which is of vital importance to Ireland—the almost total want of superior places of Education for the middle classes of the country,—the want of endowed schools. I believe that it is strongly felt by the meeting, that besides the Education which is at present given to the labouring classes under the National System, we require also a more enlarged Education for the middle classes of the country. In fact, we want endowed schools. From the earliest time it was perceived that Education could never be left to right itself on the common principles of supply and demand. Hence, private benevolence and public munificence have founded colleges and halls of learning, and have given endowments to schools. But in Ireland it is positively distressing to see how few schools of this nature are thinly scattered over the country. In England, on the contrary, they are numerous, rich, and

flourishing. They form a most important feature in the educational establishments of that country. At the head of these institutions stand the collegiate schools of Eton, Westminster, and Winchester. Eton is a magnificent college, not a school. Founded by Henry VI., and enriched by him, it has a Provost, with a large salary ; the fellows, seven in number, have upwards of £650 per annum each ; it has an efficient staff of other officers, and supports and educates seventy free scholars, who receive the best education ; and the result of all these endowments is, that in 1846 the school numbered 777 boys.

See the numerous schools in London. The Charter-House School has an estate of £22,000 per annum given by its founder, Thomas Sutton. It supports and educates 124 young men, and sends many of them to the Universities, where it has numerous Exhibitions and Scholarships. There is the noble institution of Christ's Hospital, founded by Edward VI., with endowments amounting to upwards of £44,000 per annum. This grand establishment clothes, maintains, and educates upwards of 1400 children. There are also the great public schools of Rugby (so long presided over by that good man, Dr. Arnold), Harrow, and Shrewsbury, and many more ; and altogether the number of endowed schools in England is upwards of 4100, with an annual income of more than £300,000.

I do not know anything which should more raise the character of the English people in our estimation than the fact of this vast sum having been given by private benevolence for one of the noblest of purposes—Education ; this sum, too, being but a small item of what has there been left for charity. It has been said, “the evil which men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones.” Here it is not the case. Most of this money thus bequeathed was acquired by merchants in trade. And these good men, having in life fulfilled the duties of an honest merchant, at their death devoted to the doing of good for ever the money which had been gained in developing the resources of their own country, and rendering available for domestic use the products of foreign climes. And

this money has since that time produced good fruit, training up youth to virtue and honour, perpetuating the benevolence of the founders whilst the English name shall last.

Turn from this gratifying spectacle to the endowments of the schools in Ireland of a similar nature. The pitiful sum applied for this purpose is scarcely worth mentioning. First, there are the Royal Schools of Enniskillen, Armagh, Dungannon, &c., the allowances to which are, in the aggregate, £2870 per annum for salaries to masters, and £1225 per annum for Exhibitions in Trinity College. The estates given to these schools by Charles I. are vested in a Commission which makes the above distribution. There are the schools founded by Erasmus Smith, an Englishman, which have an endowment of about £7000 per annum, part of which is given to the University. There are a few schools, such as Clonmel, Middleton, Kilkenny, and Bandon, with very small endowments attached to them. That is all. These schools are well and ably conducted, according to the limited encouragement which they obtain. But how can we expect to have first-rate national establishments for the Education of the middle classes, when not £15,000 per annum is devoted to that purpose here, whilst upwards of £300,000 per annum, exclusive of the great endowments of the Universities, is applied in England for the same purpose. Now I do say, without any wish to encourage jealousy or undue rivalry between the countries, that the young men of Ireland, coming into competition with those of the sister kingdom, who enjoyed in their youth the benefits of these numerous and wealthy educational establishments, must meet them at a great disadvantage. No matter what natural abilities we possess, if they be not cultivated in our youth, they are scarcely of use to us. These things should be known and insisted on. It is now idle for us to speculate upon the reasons which prevented in Ireland such an application of private wealth to public advantage; but it is the duty of us all to take some steps to remedy the evil. I do not see why we should not have a well-endowed school in this town; I

think we ought to get up another meeting and a petition on the subject; but at present I feel that it is the unanimous opinion of this meeting that in this important matter Ireland labours under a great deficiency, and whatever statesman may take steps for its removal, he shall obtain our lasting gratitude.

Whilst insisting upon the necessity of Education for the people, I do not confine the term Education to the mere teaching of reading, writing, and arithmetic. It is obvious that one may be well acquainted with those useful arts, and yet be ignorant as to many of the duties and obligations of life. The aim of Education ought to be to place the young in a condition to fulfil their duties in a creditable manner, and to improve themselves during the whole of life; for our Education here does not cease until the hour of death, and life itself is but a preparation for eternity.

The influence of one of the principal branches of Education has been greatly overlooked; but from its cultivation I expect the happiest results. I mean *Æsthetic Education*, or the development of the sense of the beautiful, of order and harmony,—in fact, the cultivation of taste. This is a branch of Education in which we are most deficient, and yet it is one of the most important. It is important because it is certain to add to our happiness, because it assists the development of the moral faculties. What I mean by *Æsthetic Education* for the people is that the ideas of beauty and order should be more developed in children; that they should be taught to admire the glories of nature,—to admire harmony in works of art,—to cultivate cleanliness and order. I am certain that you must have often seen, how amidst the most splendid and romantic scenery, the peasant was indifferent to all displayed around him. This simply arises from the *Æsthetic* sense having been suffered to remain dormant through want of Education. The earliest advocates of popular Education seem not to have perceived the want of the cultivation of taste. They considered that it was only necessary to teach the people to read and

write ; but it is evidently necessary to educate their taste. A man must have correct ideas upon a great many subjects before he can disregard those publications which issue from some of the London cheap presses, and appreciate the works published by Mr. Chambers and Mr. Knight, who have both done good service in the cause of popular Education. And his taste must be cultivated in a still higher degree before he can appreciate the works of Walter Scott, and many other writers whose names must occur to you all, and whose productions, as far as price goes, are within the reach of the poorest. In the same manner the street ballads of Ireland are at present gross and ludicrous. If the mere knowledge of reading and writing would make the people writers and readers of such productions, I, for one, would not advocate popular instruction. But again I say, the want of taste which causes them to take pleasure in such productions arises from the sense of the beautiful not having been cultivated by Education. When Education extends its proper influence in Ireland, I hope to hear recited in our streets, instead of the present collection, the ballads of Griffin and Ferguson, and the songs of Moore.

Another department of Education which is at present much neglected is Social Education,—the Education which prepares children to be worthy citizens, obedient to the law. The word patriot should not be confined solely to the hero who is willing to die in battle for his country, but that man also is truly a patriot who performs through life the duties of an honest citizen. Now upon this subject correct ideas are often wanting amongst the poorer classes. Many believe that taxes are arbitrarily imposed by the powers that be, for their own emolument : they should be informed that they are necessary for a great many things,—to pay the military forces who protect life and property against the rapacious of other states, and the wicked in our own,—to pay those who carry on the machinery of government and the law. Whilst cultivating the patriotic sentiment also, the teacher ought to guard against

antipathy to what is foreign. This last is most assuredly the patriotism of ignorance, for all that such patriotism requires is to be ignorant of what is good in other states ; but the true patriotism is that which, loving native land above all else besides, still enlarges its view, loves the human race, and sympathizes with mankind. Such is the patriotism of Christianity.

These, my Lord, are what I consider should be among the objects of a National System of Education. And I trust that the present system, becoming in the progress of time more extended and enlarged, will accomplish for the rising generation, as the old poet says, "a healthy mind within a healthy frame ;"—that it will educate them to be Christians in heart and fellowship with mankind, and worthy citizens for the Nation,—possessed of that general enlightenment which all ought to have, and of that particular knowledge essential for the path in life which each may be called on to pursue. A National System of Education should do more than this. In order to be truly National, to inspire a people with public courage and a just sense of national honour, it should teach the nation's history,—point out the ancient achievements of its distinguished families,—bring home familiar to each cottage and each drawing-room the strains of native music and the melodies of native song,—should cherish all the memories which ennoble the nation,—and form Schools of Art to illustrate the scenes of beauty which abound in this native land of our's, to which nature has denied nothing which constitutes the wealth of nations, nothing which could entitle her to be the happy home of a prosperous community.

The love of country is natural and ardent within our hearts. This virtuous and ennobling sentiment, then, should always be introduced as one of the truest allies of Education ; nor should we neglect to augment it by every means which the liberal arts may place within our power. By placing before the eyes of a people the history of their great men,—by cultivating the sense of the beautiful,—and teaching them to perceive and appreciate the natural advantages of their native land, and the

good reasons they have to be proud of her,—we furnish them with nobler motives for patriotism, and a more exalted sense of public and private honour. Those who seek to accomplish merely the bodily comfort of a nation have not a perception of its true glory. “Not by bread alone doth man live.” It is not in the mere pursuit of the physical comforts of existence that man, made but a little lower than the angels, should pass the brief hours of his mortal life.

And whilst Literature and the Arts breathe a purer patriotism into the hearts of the people, augment a nation's glory, and virtually increase its power, they at the same time are closely connected with the merest material prosperity. The painter's skill stamps with beauty the plain creations of the loom, and enables Manchester to find a market in China and India. Do you imagine that it has no influence upon the national conduct and character, that thoughts of patriotism and virtue, clothed in beautiful language, should be familiarized to a people through the medium of their native tongue? Truly, if England be proud of her commercial enterprise and manufacturing skill, she has juster pride in her immortal literature; and the name of Shakspeare has borne her fame and language through the world. And Scotland, too, many of whose sons are in the North here, sharing prosperity with us,—though proud she well may be of the perseverance of her sons in overcoming the difficulties of nature,—proud of her commercial prosperity,—has a truer pride in him whose glorious songs speak to the best impulses of the heart,—that son of a Scottish peasant, Robert Burns. And when I mention Burns, I cannot forget, as we are met here to-day to commemorate the progress of popular Education, how Robert Burns has placed the happiness of the peasantry as among the foremost objects to be desired by a State. Burns, when he portrays the scene in which Scotland should take a pride, turns from the displays of wealth and its wonders, and describes the Cotter's Saturday Night. He describes the educated Scottish peasant, his honest labour for the week concluded, resting from toil,

and surrounded by his virtuous family, looking forward with joy to the morrow's holy day, and he tells us,

“From scenes like these old Scotia's grandeur springs;
This makes her loved at home, revered abroad.”

It is often said, my Lord, that we, Irish, being a Celtic race, are incapable of improvement. Now, in the first place, I disagree entirely with those men who separate us into two or three distinct races. For me, every man born on Irish soil, and who loves his country, is an Irishman. But even if we are Celts,—what then?—That pride of race which hugs itself in fancied superiority, forgetting how in the progress of time alternately one race is degraded, another exalted, is the mark of a narrow soul, which sympathizes not with the human family, and does not acknowledge the universal brotherhood of mankind. I believe that we are as anxious to get on in the world,—as anxious to make money,—although sometimes we are too ready to spend it,—as capable of improvement, as any race in the world. I consider that we, as a nation, are “not slow and dull, but of a quick, inquiring, and piercing spirit; acute to invent; subtle and sinewy to discourse; not beneath the reach of any point, the highest to which human capacity may attain.” Four millions of this people are unable to read. How noble a task for a statesman to devise the means to make this waste of intellect green and fertile! To place within their hands the means of prosperity,—to give them reliance on themselves,—to enable them to fit themselves for well-rewarded labour,—to fix within their minds the principles of order and law,—to establish sympathy between the highest and the lowest,—to raise their minds to a contemplation of the grand achievements of former days, the magnificent efforts of the human race, the beauty of Nature, and the wonders of Art,—to give them the knowledge which will convince them that nothing can be had without labour, or enjoyed without prudence;—in a word, to give them Education, the means to make their country prosperous and their homes happy,—this should be the aim of a statesman who under-

stands his position. "These are imperial arts and worthy kings."

The people are not undeserving of this care. They will repay such efforts for their welfare. Good qualities exist undeveloped amongst them. They can still appreciate excellence. In a public assembly, whenever a generous and noble sentiment is sincerely spoken, it is greeted with enthusiastic applause. Virtues slumber in their hearts, which it is the province of Education to draw forth,—literally draw forth. Vices arise from that faulty development which it is the business of Education to check. Plant schools over the land, and the more you build every day, and the more pupils you obtain by just management to frequent them, so much the less occasion will you have to pay taxes to maintain the barrack and the gaol, which, together with the poorhouse, I regret to say, are so often the most prominent features in an Irish landscape.

In fact, my Lord, whilst other nations are triumphing in the diffusion of knowledge amongst the people, we must not be left behind. I am not so sanguine as to expect Education to do everything. I feel assured that a long time must elapse, and many elements unite, before Ireland can assume a truly prosperous position; but of this I am certain, that one of the very best things for the country is the spread of popular Education.

Most of the misfortunes which afflict Ireland have been, as His Excellency, Lord Clarendon, lately said, "the growth of ages, the offspring of unrighteous legislation." These things cannot be at once remedied. If we be in a state of progress, it is the most we can expect. And much can be done in the way of remedy, by patience, by mutual forbearance, and, I trust, by the Education of the people.

The School whose origin we are met to commemorate to-day, is principally designed for the instruction of teachers. This is exactly as it ought to be. It was one of the primary difficulties in the way of the National System, at the outset, that they found it almost impossible to get good teachers.

No class of men is of more importance to a nation than her schoolmasters. On them depends, in a great degree, the conduct of those who hereafter will have the labour, trade, and legislation of the country in their hands. No character is more deserving of respect than that of the good teacher. His calling is high, his duties are the noblest in the world. To snatch the gun from the hand of the hired assassin,—to extinguish the torch of the incendiary,—to banish from the peasant's home the poverty and other evils which wait on ignorance,—to aid in the defence of religion from immorality and infidelity,—and teach the serf to be a truthful and an honest man,—what tasks than these are more noble for the teacher to aid the minister of religion in accomplishing? My Lord, I have done: I have endeavoured to speak practically about the importance of Education to the people, and the want of schools for the middle classes of the nation, and I thank the audience for the attention with which they have listened to me.

The Chairman then put the Resolution, which was carried unanimously.

It was then moved by Denis Caulfield Brady, Esq., J. P., and seconded by the Rev. John Dodd, Presbyterian minister, that THOMAS FORTESCUE, Esq., D. L., Ravensdale Park, should take the Chair; when a vote of thanks to the Earl of Gosford for his kindness in presiding at the Meeting was moved and seconded by the same gentlemen, and passed with acclamation.

[In consequence of the day being so far advanced, Mr. Fortescue simply proposed the vote of thanks, without speaking on the question of National Education, as he had originally intended; but he has since given a sketch of what he had intended to say, which is here printed. As the testimony of a gentleman of his position, who is universally acknowledged to be one of the best landlords in Ireland, and most anxiously solicitous for the welfare of his tenantry, it is most important.]

I cannot allow this opportunity to pass without expressing my humble approval of the system of Education, the extension of which we are here met to celebrate.

While those gentlemen who have already addressed you

have chiefly dwelt on the abstract excellence of this system, and of the benefits likely to result from it, I would remind you of what it has already actually effected. I speak from experience when I say that in a very extensive district with which I am acquainted, the old "hedge schools," so called, have become almost extinct, and in their place we see the substantial school-houses, the intelligent teachers, and admirable school-books, of the National Board. What is true of the district of which I speak is, I believe, equally true of the rest of Ireland. There is scarcely a corner of this country which has not felt the happy effect of an improved and daily extending Education. I firmly believe that this great Institution has inflicted upon ignorance and prejudice, those enemies of all improvement, whether moral or religious, heavier blows and greater discouragement than they ever before received.

A leading feature of this system is, the excellent spirit in which secular knowledge is imparted: their books are imbued with an undoubted Christian tone and feeling, so that while the head is instructed, the heart can hardly fail to be touched; and if it were unhappily true, as it is so often asserted by our opponents, that, for religious instruction, the National System leaves children to take care of themselves, I should still look with satisfaction and gratitude upon its operation, feeling it to be impossible for children to pass from its schools to their several religious instructors, the ministers of their several forms of Christianity, otherwise than with hearts more opened and minds better prepared to receive the good seed of divine truth which it is their more especial duty to impart. It becomes, then, the clear duty of us all to aid so desirable an object; and, knowing ourselves the blessing of an enlightened understanding, to use our best efforts to bring our ignorant fellow-countrymen from darkness to light, believing that thus only can they be brought from the power of Satan unto God.

The whole meeting then adjourned to the ground in Catherine-street, in which there were already thousands of persons

from all parts of the country, from many miles round, anxiously waiting to witness the interesting ceremony. The Earl of Gosford then laid the first stone amidst the plaudits of the spectators. The band of the First Royals, which had been most kindly granted by Lieutenant-Colonel Bell and the officers of that distinguished regiment, played some national tunes; and the large assemblage quietly dispersed, having given a most decided evidence that the National System of Education is—with persons of every rank and class of society—the most popular instrumentality at present in operation for the social and moral improvement of our country.

APPENDIX.

As a proof of the necessity and advantage of the National System of Education, a statement of the Schools in the parish of Newry, of the number of Children in them, and of the support afforded them by the Board for the year 1847, is here given, viz.:

NAME OF SCHOOL.		Chil- dren.	Salaries.			School requi- sites at half price.	Grants of free Stock.				
			£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.	£	s.	d.
1	Crowreagh,	117	13	0	0		3	16	0
2	Grinan,	112	13	0	0		3	4	0
3	Crowban,	92	21	15	0	1	0	3			
4	Loughorn,	66	13	0	0	1	5	6			
5	Sheeptown,	98	13	0	0	0	10	5			
6	Crowhill,	117	16	10	0	0	13	0			
7	Rockvale, male,	72	14	0	0	0	12	0			
8	Do. female,	62	13	0	0				6	16	0
9	High-street, female,	634	30	0	0	5	6	2			
10	Chapel-street,	203	21	0	0	2	2	0			
11	Kilmorey-street, male,	160	13	0	0	0	15	0			
12	Do. female,	102	8	10	0						
13	Ryan,	117	13	0	0	0	11	7			
14	Ardaragh,	77	13	0	0	0	10	3	1	16	0
15	Shinn,	103	11	0	0	1	11	3			

SUMMARY.

National Schools in the parish of Newry in 1847, 15
 Number of Children educated in them, 2132

Salaries to teachers, £226 15 0
 School requisites, 14 17 5
 Grants of free stock, 15 12 0

In addition to the above, the District Model School will educate about 300 children. A lithographic sketch of the front view of this is given in this pamphlet. It is also expected that an Agricultural School will very soon be established near the town.

THE END.

Houses of the Oireachtas

WORKS

ON

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