

861 Education 15-

NATIONAL EDUCATION:

REASONS FOR THE REJECTION IN BRITAIN OF
THE IRISH SYSTEM:

A BRIEF EXPOSITION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONISTS.

BY

REV. WILLIAM FRASER,

PAISLEY,

AUTHOR OF "STATE OF OUR EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISES."

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON: JAMES NISBET AND CO.

1861.

B. STEWART,

PAISLEY.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

Houses of the Oireachtas

NATIONAL EDUCATION:

REASONS FOR THE REJECTION IN BRITAIN OF
THE IRISH SYSTEM:

A BRIEF EXPOSITION FOR CHRISTIAN EDUCATIONISTS.

BY

REV. WILLIAM FRASER,
PAISLEY,

AUTHOR OF "STATE OF OUR EDUCATIONAL ENTERPRISES."

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON: JAMES NISBET AND CO.

1861.

NATIONAL EDUCATION:

CAUSES OF THE REJECTION IN BRITAIN OF

THE BRITISH SYSTEM:

A PAPER LECTURE BY THE REV. WILLIAM F. DAVENPORT

REV. WILLIAM F. DAVENPORT

LECTURE ON THE REJECTION OF THE BRITISH SYSTEM

SECOND EDITION.

LONDON: JAMES NISBET AND CO.

1861.

PREFACE.

THE question, "Why not adopt in Britain the Irish System?" has, of late, been so often pressed on the attention of the friends of National Education, that it must be fairly considered. The suitability for Scotland of the arrangements under the Irish National System was specially referred to, during the Educational discussions at the Glasgow Meeting of the Social Science Association.

The following Exposition, it is hoped, will, in some measure, prove the utter unsuitableness of the theory which the Experiment in Ireland has attempted to work out. Its Results in Structure—its Moral Bearings on Individual life—and its Ultimate Effects on the National Character, deserve the fullest examination. The day, I trust, is far distant, when a system, which banishes the Bible from its rightful place in the Public School, and silences the Nation's history, will be acceptable in Scotland.

The concessions which have been made by successive Governments to the Roman Catholic Priests, and especially the recent arrangement as to Commissioners, by which the control of the whole National system has been virtually placed in their hands, may well awaken anxiety.

The wide extent of Elementary Education sustained by the Church Education Society outside the National System, and

kept there by the decisions of successive Governments, is a continued rebuke to British statesmanship.

The object of the following Exposition will be gained, if it contribute, in even a slight degree, to check the incipient tendency among Christian Educationists, to admit the suitability of this System for Britain, and if—as an independent testimony—it promote their co-operation, in demanding the revision of the whole system, and its reconstruction on a sounder and more satisfactory basis.

WILLIAM FRASER.

FREE MIDDLE MANSE,

PAISLEY, JAN. 1861.

SECOND EDITION.

THE rapidity with which the First Edition has been disposed of, and a Second called for, is gratifying, as shewing the wider interest now taken in this subject,—as giving higher token of the speedy settlement of the question in Ireland,—and as encouraging the hope that no one will, in Parliament, propose, for either Scotland or England, a system of Public Instruction which is so dishonouring to the Word of God, and, ultimately, so detrimental to the best interests of the Nation.

W. F.

FREE MIDDLE MANSE,

February, 1861.

NATIONAL EDUCATION:

REASONS FOR THE REJECTION IN BRITAIN OF THE IRISH SYSTEM.

INTRODUCTORY.

DURING the recent Educational discussion at the meeting of the Social Science Association in Glasgow, the question, "Why not adopt the Irish System?" was publicly mooted, and in side groups, repeatedly pressed. The time has come when British Educationists must look more thoroughly into the merits of a subject which has hitherto been left as a mere party question between the Protestants and Roman Catholics of Ireland.

The very question, as recently urged, presupposes a successful solution of our Educational difficulties through that system, and its repetition is encouraged by a growing disposition to acquiesce. Many have become so worn out and disgusted by this long struggle for a National system in England and Scotland, that there is danger of its being summarily closed by hasty legislation, and all the greater, if we can satisfy ourselves by vague references to some precedent like that which the Irish system supplies. Against this danger there cannot be too sedulous watchfulness. Our safety in reference to the adoption of this system lies in a dispassionate inquiry into the results which it has educes, and the educational principles which the theory professes to embody. The toil of a

generation is before us, and any one may test the results and tell their value.

Has the system harmonised the different religious denominations in the ordinary work of literary or secular Education? Has it brought together children of different persuasions for even the simplest forms of elementary teaching? And has the theory of separate religious and united secular and moral instruction proved itself to be really worthy of the serious regard of either English or Scottish Educationists?

A careful scrutiny of the system, which it was my privilege to make, on the requisition of friends of National Education in Scotland, warrants my strongly asserting that, as *National*, it has utterly failed; and that if there is any one lesson more emphatically taught than another by this long and vigorously conducted experiment, it is the sheer hopelessness and folly of any legislative effort to frame a National system by which the effective co-operation of Roman Catholics and Protestants may be secured. Thirty years ago the theory was plausible, and its *possibility* had to be tested. It was right, in the dimness and uncertainty of the public opinion of the time, that the experiment should be made. Legislation has now had ample scope, and the *impossibility* of the theory has been proved. To ask us in these circumstances to reproduce the system in Scotland is to require of us to shut our eyes, and stop our ears against the corrective beckonings and voices of as distinct a National experience as ever rose to guide a people.

All must frankly and at once admit the benevolence and well meant liberality of the educational basis as laid down by Lord Stanley, now Earl Derby, in his well-

known letter to the Duke of Leinster. It was not the chance effect of spasmodic legislation, but the evolution of twenty years' thought and debate: it originated in controversy, and was intended to close it: it was a compromise between contending communions, and was advocated as fitted to lessen political rancours, and draw all classes into kindest union, by diffusing through the intercourse of school-life, and subsequent years, the amenities and combinations of a general brotherhood. The trained schoolmaster was to be the affinitive power, combining the dissimilar elements of contending parties: the National system was to satisfy and silence the priests, and the result was to be certain—a country intellectually and morally regenerated. Taking a historical position thirty years back, we are surrounded by the plausibilities of these untried proposals, but we can now deal with the theory in the full light of an exhausted experiment. Is not the *history* of legislation utterly valueless unless it become the platform on which experience expounds her deepest principles, and enforces her practical successes? If the Irish system has disappointed cherished hopes, and if the whole theory has been experimentally proved to be utterly impracticable, is it not the veriest folly to shut out the light of all its clearly ascertained results, in order that statesmen may now legislate for Scotland amid the dimness of those kindly yet erroneous suppositions by which men were guided a generation ago.

Whatever educational benefits the Irish system is conferring, are due exclusively to individual or denominational activity; and my aim in discussing the subject at present is earnestly to warn the friends of National Edu-

cation against vague assertions of its suitability as a system for England or Scotland, and to shew that the introduction of the so-called National system would be the mere substitution of one denominational system for another, differing not only in some unimportant details, but also to such an extent in one essential condition—that of vigorous and consistent religious training—as to make the exchange infinitely worse for us.

Let me at once, therefore, solicit the attention of the friends of a sound and comprehensive system for England and Scotland, to the actual results which the working of the Irish system has placed clearly before the public.

I.—RESULTS IN STRUCTURE.

1. There is no common support for the National School.

There is no stated provision for the maintenance of the public school, either by local taxation or by a graduated scale of voluntary contributions. Some £200,000 are annually voted by Parliament, and distributed by the Commissioners in a manner the most irregular and unintelligible. Let any one take the trouble to run over the lists of salaries in the second volume of last year's Minutes, and he will find such examples as the following crowding in dozens upon him. In a school having 68 scholars the Government pays £17, and the amount raised by school fees, local subscriptions, and endowments, to meet the Government outlay, is 17s. 6d. Another has 78 scholars, receives £11 10s., and raises, from all sources, 3s. Such examples might be multiplied from the Roman Catholic, Episcopal, and Presbyterian Schools. It will scarcely be credited that the average

income of the National Schools, from all sources, apart from Government assistance, is little more than £5 a year. Through applying no stimulating standard, the Commissioners have allowed the whole fabric to remain in the condition of an Eleemosynary Institute.

2. There is no common Local Management.

The theory started on an erroneous assumption when it proposed the amalgamation, in School control, of religious communions so opposed on every vital question as are Roman Catholics and Protestants. Coalescence has been proved to be both repugnant and impracticable: united management can scarcely be said to exist; applications come almost invariably from some one denomination, and as a result, the schools are portioned off among distinct communions. Out of the 4994 schools no fewer than 3683 are under the control of the Romish Church; and after a struggle of thirty years to secure joint management, only 124 are reported, in last Return, as illustrating the experiment. No marvel that the Earl of Derby, startled by the answer of the Secretary of the Irish Board, to the Select Committee of the House of Lords, in 1854, announcing that out of 4608 National Schools, only *Forty-eight* were under joint management, asked again, "Do I rightly understand the Return which you have now read, as shewing that the whole number of schools under joint management is only 48, of persons of different communions?"*

Failure more complete it is not easy to conceive. Let British Educationists ponder more seriously the results of this National experiment before they set it forth

* Report, pp. 20, 28.

as a model for our acceptance. It is folly to repeat what history so emphatically teaches us to repudiate.

3. There is no Common Basis for Public Instruction. Evidenced by the Irresponsibility of the Patrons and Managers of the National Schools—The present banishment of the Scripture Extracts—The Sectarianism of the Convent Schools, and the arbitrary power of a single Parent to alter the arrangements for all the Classes.

Two provisions were supposed adequate to meet the universal demand for religious instruction—the one, an hour separate from those for secular Education—the other, Scripture extracts of common acceptance to both Roman Catholics and Protestants. In both sections of the theory it has failed. In about 4000 schools called National, it depends absolutely on the will or caprice of the Patron, whether or not there shall be a single hour in the twenty-four for religious instruction, and it further depends on him to say what that religious instruction shall be. It may be Judaism, Christianity, Mormonism, or Spirit-rapping. To prevent the supposition that this is exaggeration, I add the Commissioners' Rule.*

In Schools not vested, and which receive no other aid than salaries and books—it is for the PATRONS or MANAGERS to determine WHETHER ANY, and if any, WHAT religious Instruction shall be given in the School-room.

In every one of these National Schools, if a parent desire to have religious instruction for his children, he must submissively pay suit to the Patron. This is obviously inconsistent with every benefit essential to a system professing to be National. Why should that which is most

* Twenty-fifth Report, p. 3,—Rule 9th.

important in the Education of the young depend on arbitrary decision and caprice? and how can that system be described as National, in which 4000* Schools are thus dependent for religious training on any fanatical exaggerations of feeling, belief, or unbelief which constitutional temperament, class prejudices, Church dogmatism, or individual idiosyncracies may create. But further; not only is there no separate hour for religious instruction secured in the Non-vested Schools, but from all the Roman Catholic Schools, and, what is still worse, from the Central or Model Schools, the SCRIPTURE EXTRACTS, prepared with so much care, and so affectionately recommended by the Commissioners as "fitted to make the simple wise," are now most sedulously excluded. Archbishop Cullen, seeing his Church solidly entrenched in the control of more than 3000 schools, and noticing the obsequious accommodativeness of successive Governments, coolly ordered the extrusion of the extracts from the Central *Model* Institution, and he is at once obeyed; they are all immediately taken out of the hands of 1213 pupils, and next year, 1854, are not read by a single Roman Catholic child in the National Schools of Ireland.† This is bold work, and successful as it is bold. Finding the agitation spent and his triumph complete, he laid bare the policy entered on in Rome when the Scripture Extracts were first submitted to the Pope, and, in a Pastoral letter, proclaimed before a duped and disappointed Parliament and people, that the Extracts

* In only 1678 Schools is there legal provision for separate religious instruction.

† Professor Sullivan's Evidence, House of Lords' Committee, Q. 2809, p. 384.

had been at the very outset, examined and *condemned* by the Holy See.* This fact was a profound secret until the state of public opinion warranted its revelation.

Instead of firmly adhering to their original arrangements, the Commissioners have continuously vacillated, until there is now exhibited a National system with an educational basis fluctuating as sand to the gust of every Roman Catholic behest.

The want of any one fixed educational principle is perhaps still more manifest in the existence and arrangements of *Convent Schools*. They are intensely denominational, and thus an outrage on any National system professing comprehensiveness and impartiality.

Seeing "NATIONAL SCHOOL" engraven in the granite above its door, I was astonished on entering to find Nuns the teachers, and still more, to notice the public business of the school interrupted for religious ceremonies. I could not at first be persuaded that this was tolerated by the Commissioners, but on turning to their regulations, I found special legislation providing for the interruption of public secular instruction by intermediate religious ceremonies. Can anything be more revoltingly incongruous? Has not the chief aim of the system ever been to banish "even the suspicion of proselytism?" yet in every one of these Nun Schools the teachers, with their suspended crucifixes, peculiar head-dress, flowing robes, and superstitious movements of head and hand to express religious sentiment, are themselves, silently, yet most effectively, diffusing the influences of a perpetual proselytism. Are such schools in any sense National? Can Protestant parents safely,

* Pastoral Letter, 1st December, 1856.

and with consistency, send their children, even for secular instruction, into the midst of influences like these? Assuredly not. It will not avail to say that these convent schools exist only where the population is Roman Catholic. I have seen them in the midst of mixed religious communities, and closely contiguous to Protestant schools. The concessions made to these convent schools are a disgrace to the common sense of the country, and should not be tolerated for a single day under any system avowedly *National*.

But there is a further anomaly in connection with these schools so grossly offensive as to be almost incredible. The legislation which admits to the benefits of the National system, Nuns and Monks—religious orders of the Romish Church—positively excludes the Episcopal curate or Presbyterian minister from teaching the simplest elements of secular instruction. The legislative hand which freely opens the National School to Popish monks shuts it rudely against Protestant ministers! Are not these arrangements grossly subversive of the professed objects for which the National Schools were originally founded, and do not the continued demands of the Romish hierarchy prove the utter weakness of Protestant legislation in as far as it has been attempting to cajole the Roman Catholic into co-operation with the Protestant by any amount of concession short of absolute supremacy?

Looking more narrowly into the processes of the system, we meet with legislative arrangements which few men of common sense will venture to vindicate. For example, a committee interested in the welfare of the young open a National School, and arrange that while no catechisms nor Church formularies shall be taught, the work of

each day shall be commenced with praise and prayer, and the reading of a short portion of the Word of God. They use as class-books the Scripture Extracts recommended by the Commissioners, and the volume of Sacred Poetry issued as one of their school books. Suppose a hundred Protestant children are benefiting by these arrangements, a single Roman Catholic pupil joins one of the classes, and instructed by parents, or instigated by the priest, objects to the religious services, to the extracts, and the sacred poetry; then what the issue? Praise and prayer must cease in the public school: instead of the Roman Catholic pupil remaining absent until these exercises have ended, the hundred must come an hour earlier than usual, and instead of rejecting for himself the Scripture extracts and volume of sacred poetry, or banishing them from his own class, he can arbitrarily force them out of the hands of every pupil in the school.

Legislative processes more utterly absurd, and more completely at variance with all that is dignified and sustaining in public instruction it is impossible to conceive. It is the despotism of the few controlling the many, and banishing the Bible in the name of religious liberty. And is this a model for Britain?

Such a system as this—without regulated local support—with scarcely a vestige of joint management—with no common basis for the public instruction given—so largely controlled by the caprice of patrons—sectarianized by concessions to convent establishments, and leaving the details of school work so much at the mercy of a single parent stimulated by the priest, is not only no model for our imitation in Britain, but requires itself full and immediate revision.

It does not avail to say that the peculiarities of structure noticed are incidental to the social condition of Ireland, and that they may be modified in Britain. In Upper Canada, in Prince Edward's Island, in the State of New York, wherever, in short, the theory has been attempted, which the Irish system professes to embody, it has utterly failed.

II.—THE MORAL BEARINGS OF THE THEORY.

Leaving out of view the question of probable success, and the results which the history of every National effort to give it practical effect so amply unfolds, let us next enquire whether it is inherently such as to commend itself to British Educationists. Is it of such moral value as to repay any arduous struggle for its reconstruction and adoption, or are its moral bearings such as to demand from them the most resolute repudiation and resistance which they can give?

The proposal to devote a separate hour to religious instruction, leaving the ordinary school hours for united secular or literary education, is on the surface very plausible and attractive, but when the bearings of this arrangement on the intellectual, social, and moral nature of the young, and its ultimate effects on National character have been traced, there are few who will venture to give it unqualified support. Many, who admit and lament its erroneousness, justify its adoption by references to the difficulties of the subject, and to the consequent necessity for substituting expediency for principle: others in this country, who most violently advocate the immediate introduction of the system

obviously understand its nature least. The following among other objections may be adduced:—

- 1.—It ignores History, and is therefore to be repudiated as unpatriotic.

The principle which banishes the Bible from the public instruction of the National School, banishes also our country's history; the legislation which excludes the God of Redemption, excludes also the God of Providence. Because Roman Catholics read the records of the progress of civilisation differently from Protestants, no history is taught or can be in Ireland. The past is a great blank. Those great historical eras which mark the foundation and development of Great Britain's greatness remain un-noted. I cannot believe that the advocates of the introduction into Britain of this system are at all prepared to cast out of the National School the nation's history, and yet this concession must follow the exclusion of the Bible. The greater includes the less. History should form part of the National Education, so that our enlightened peasantry may be the better able to resist and resent all appeals of the demagogue to mere passion or ignorance. But we must take higher ground. History has been appropriately described as "Philosophy teaching by example." "History should live by that life which belongs to it, and that life is God. In history God should be acknowledged and proclaimed. The history of the world should be set forth as the annals of the Government of the Sovereign King." In forbidding the systematic study of the history of Britain and Ireland we dishonour the God of Nations, and do grievous wrong to the people, by not leading them in their earlier years

to its avenues of future study and improvement. The pupils in the schools of England and Scotland now read freely their country's records, and are animated by the examples of the great and good: they prize their nationality, and in prizing it, they lay up the elements of future patriotism. That is a wretched policy which in a Protestant empire forbids in the National School all reference to Reformation times, Reformation heroes, or Reformation principles, in order that the Roman Catholic may grow up nurturing, undisturbed, and uncorrected, his sullen antipathies. Let this system be adopted, and we must henceforth withdraw all our school histories, and be silent as to the life, the character, or the times of Patrick Hamilton, George Wishart, Knox, and Melville; we must conceal from our rising, intelligent youth, what Wickliffe and William Tyndale did—we must shrink from the life of Oliver Cromwell, and the poetry of Milton, and draw a veil over all that has been remarkable in the historical revolutions of the past, and all that sanctified genius has cast into the Treasury of the Nation's Thought.

2.—It ignores Conscience, and displaces the Bible in the enforcement of Moral Obligation in the public school, and is therefore unphilosophical.

It is based on a most defective view of human nature: it classes the methods of intellectual culture with the processes on which the development of moral character depends; it toils more to strengthen intellect than to enlighten conscience, and thus subordinates the central to the subsidiary elements of life. The only authority which can arouse conscience and bend will is the Divine,

but reference to it is impracticable; the highest is the human, and it is feeble as a bruised reed. We have thus the unseemly spectacle of a Government attempting to establish a common brotherhood, without the only basis and the only compacting power which the philosophy of history reveals as effective and enduring. To suppose that the current of religious or irreligious feeling can be regulated, and the gradual formation of right habits of reflection and conduct can be secured by a short hour or half hour's conference, betrays a fatal misconception of what moral life is, and what its forces and laws demand. Morals, it is true, may be taught in the public school on human authority alone, and "by this method," to use the words of Lord John Russell, "the difficulty is apparently got over, but in reality only to fall into a yet more serious one, namely, that of attempting to teach morality without admitting that all morals derived their sanction from the Immortal Book—that our duties and obligations were derived from a higher than natural source." Every pupil stands before his teacher with an intellect for thought, with judgment for discrimination, and with conscience to pronounce on the right and the wrong, and surely if one power more than another require the most continuous and the most exquisite care, it is that which deals with right and wrong, and associates the spirit of man with the omniscience and authority of the Most High. It is this regulation of conscience which gives stability and strength to the moral character of the individual, and a nobler, more elevated, and more reliable citizenship to the country. The scriptural should ever be associated with the secular, and the divine authority with the human in public

instruction. It is of course absurd to associate the doctrinal teaching of the Bible with the elements of arithmetic, or geometry—that is never proposed—but the two influences—the spiritual and the secular—must blend for the right development of character. It is as absurdly unscientific to separate the scriptural from the secular, or the moral from the intellectual, in order to a healthful mind, as it would be to separate the oxygen from the nitrogen of the atmosphere, and in order to a healthful body, assign so many hours for the breathing of the one gas, and so many for the other.

3.—The system is non-Christian, and therefore counteractive to the progress of the highest civilisation.

The National School, bereft of the spirit of the Bible, and ignorant of History, is powerless for national good : it is only deistic, and as such, wants that moral lever by which alone nations can be elevated, and permanently upheld. To estimate aright its character and influence, we must first trace its processes in the Central, or Normal Institution, from which the future teachers of the country draw so much of the impulse and tone of their educational life. Let any one acquainted with the spirit and working of the chief Normal colleges of Scotland and England, make himself familiar with the training given in Dublin, and while at once gratified by the admirable professional fitness of the teachers, and especially by the ability, scholarship, and geniality of the gentlemen charged with the preparing of the students, he cannot fail to be struck with the difference. A sense of honour in connexion with their system compels them to silence on the loftiest themes. There is none of that

higher culture which springs from the study of God's Word, which gives dignity to the teacher's character, and equips him best for the moral training of the young. The students meet and are dismissed morning and evening without a shadow of that homage which even the deist may offer to the Creator. The only homage paid, the only noticeable recognition of immortality and responsibility is when the pastors of the different communions spend two hours weekly with their respective students, as if this were adequate to mould the impulses of the young heart, and guide to right conclusions the speculative tendencies of the young intellect, now more than ever aroused through the systematic instructions of the training hall.

Protestant students coming from the homes of pious parents, with hearts genialized by finest Christian sympathies, and devoutly receiving the Bible as above all books precious, and, above all, to be deeply searched and studied, are stunned at seeing it systematically set aside and disregarded by those whose scholarship, talents, and distinctions most impress them. In the lecture room and in the public work of the Model School they never witness the direct application of Bible truth to the guidance of life; they never are taught, nor are they called to teach, those doctrines and precepts, a full knowledge and appreciation of which are the foundation of all duty. They may quote from Byron, Shelley, Shakespeare, or Voltaire, but not a sentiment from David the sweet singer of Israel, nor a lofty utterance from the exultant strains of the Gospel prophet, nor an argument from the profound reasonings of Paul. To establish a principle in political economy they may quote freely from Blackstone

and Adam Smith, but not from the higher and older legislation of Moses; they may refer at will to the ethics of Socrates, but must be silent as death on that loftiest and purest morality which has been given by Him who spoke as never man spake. The Roman Catholic here loses nothing, the Protestant every thing.

The students are kept sedulously away from the facts and philosophy of history—from all the elements and evidences of the highest civilization—especially from all those mighty movements which, under God, have made Britain what she is, and from all that is ennobling and animating in the life and character of her greatest statesmen, patriots, philosophers, reformers and martyrs. Students trained in institutions in which not only the history of Redemption and the character of Jesus are left unstudied, but the History of Britain unread, will go forth to their arduous duties, ignorant and undecided, not only on those questions which give confidence in God and resoluteness to piety, [but on those also which give attachment to country and power to patriotism.

The influences of such Normal training on the elementary schools of a country, it is not difficult to foresee. When the Bible has been dislodged from its rightful place, and, reduced to the level of Euclid's Elements or a "Penny Primer," is confined to its separate lesson hour, there are naturally and necessarily brought into combination those elements of uncertainty, distrust, and speculative belief which, if unchecked, will certainly issue in silent, if not indeed in avowed, scepticism or infidelity. With what fervour can teachers so trained enter on their arduous work, and what ennobling conceptions of its deep responsibility can they cherish—with what stimulating

zeal can they direct the moral energies of the young, and mould their character? Is it not weakness, or worse, to expect that the apathy as to the highest form of Education which has been induced amid the excitement of intellectual culture in the Normal Institution, shall transform itself into sustained activity amid the benumbing influences of solitary toil in the common School? What exists in the Normal School repeats itself in the country; the character of the teacher is reflected in those whom he trains. The Prussian apophthegm is sound, "What you would put into the life of the nation, you must first put into the school." This can be done only through the teacher; what he is—the children become; what the Normal Institutions embody—the trained teachers every where reflect; they can raise or lower the moral temperature of a country.

We are now prepared by this review to trace its effects in the development and character of public sentiment.

III. FACTS SHOWING THE PRESENT TENDENCIES OF THE SYSTEM IN IRELAND.

Standing apart from the thick and turmoil of the contest, we are in favourable circumstances for reviewing the whole struggle, and marking to which side the tide of success is bearing the Educational forces of the country. There are two parties: the one vindicates and adopts the National system—the other condemns and rejects it; the one is represented by the Commissioners of National Education—the other by the Church Education Society; the one is overwhelmingly Popish in its character and management—the other is almost exclusively Protestant

—the one is fostered, the other frowned on by the Government. The two organisations are most noteworthy. The facts and the tendencies which they express deserve immediate and most serious consideration.

The tendencies of the National system to consolidation as a vast Popish Institution are clearly manifest from the following facts:—

1. Of 570,551 Pupils on the roll by last return, no fewer than 478,802 were Roman Catholic, leaving only 91,749 Protestant pupils as taking advantage of the National Education.

2. Of 6145 principal teachers, 4941—nearly 5000—are Roman Catholic.

3. There are 9237 teachers, including assistants, &c., and of these 7403 are Roman Catholic. It may be asked, Are not these, after all, fair proportions of the population? It is enough to reply, in the absence of accurate statistics, “No, there are more Protestant teachers outside the system, and under the Church Education Society alone than are under the National Board.”

4. During the last five years, only 266 Protestant teachers were trained for all Ireland, while during that time 1425 Roman Catholics were trained at the public expense. In the Normal Institutions of the Free Church alone, there are at this moment a larger number of teachers in the course of training than have been sent out, during the last five years, for all the Protestant communions in Ireland.

5. The Protestant teaching staff received last year £28,777 9s., the Roman Catholic £114,139 12s.

6. While the pupils attending the Central Model Institution in Dublin, might be supposed to be a satisfac-

tory example and illustration of mixed Education, or of the amalgamation of religious communions at purely secular work, we have the following note-worthy return:—there are, including Established Church, Presbyterian, and Jewish, in short, all non-Roman Catholic pupils, 241! Roman Catholic pupils, 1269!

7. The Scripture Extracts have been banished from the Roman Catholic Schools, and even the *Decalogue* is not now legislatively honoured with suspension in the National School.

8. Not contented with the control of 3385 National Schools, and the payment of 7400 of their teachers—not satisfied with sheltering their children from the feeblest ray of Bible light, as gleaming from the Scripture Extracts, the Roman Catholic Prelates feeling the security of their position, and marking the obsequiousness of successive Governments, boldly demand completely separate and independent management; so that crucifixes, holy water, altar pageantries, anti-Protestant histories, and more intensely sectarianized inspection may be made freely available for their purposes. The present Government have refused this claim, but have conceded what is virtually the same. They have increased the Commissioners to twenty, have placed ten Roman Catholics on the list, and have thus given over virtually to absolute Popish control the whole National system in Ireland. This concession has excited the indignation, as well it may, of the most zealous Protestant supporters of the system, but that indignation will soon exhaust itself, and we shall have silence—possibly sullenness—until some new revelation is made of their utter helplessness, beneath the thoroughly organized master rule of the Roman Catholic

hierarchy. The priests have played their game nobly. They win admiration, and they deserve it, for their unyielding perseverance, their depth of purpose, and their power of aim. With what ineffable contempt must they regard these concessions. They owe us no gratitude, because every concession must be an admission of past injustice; and to what conclusion can they possibly come, but that Protestantism is really without fixed principle or purpose, and cannot be too speedily crushed. They have not done with their demands yet, and they are right. The relative position of parties is changed, and Protestantism under Roman Catholic control will have soon to sue humbly for that toleration in the National School, of which she should be the enlightened and dignified dispenser.

The keen eagerness which the Commissioners are shewing to coax into silence the Roman Catholic prelates, is ever now and again throwing them into discreditable positions. Take a recent notorious instance. At a time when the public schools were dismissed,* and part of the pupils had gone to confession, two or three Presbyterian pupil-teachers, in a youthful freak, instituted "a mock tribunal of penance," and imposed tasks on each other, in a central part of a large hall—a foolish yet natural enough boyish amusement, with its parallel in every play-ground, where boys imitate preaching, platform, and other public services, and one which the judicious master, of course, would at once so deal with and rebuke, or punish as to prevent its recurrence. But mark the ponderous process of formal justice. No sooner does the Roman Catholic priest hear of it than he rudely writes in a public newspaper against both

* Belfast Model School.

the local officers of the Board and the Commissioners, and no sooner does the letter appear, than a formal investigation is ordered by the alarmed Commissioners. The Rev. Richard Marner, the accusing priest, was invited to the investigation, but the Presbyterian chaplain, the Rev. Mr. Wilson, was dispensed with. The evidence against the young and buoyant-spirited lads was taken before the priest; he examined the witnesses, and another priest was allowed to be present as his coadjutor, but no one was allowed to be present as the friend or adviser of the youthful teachers on their trial. They are most unfairly dealt with, and the Committee of the Belfast Presbytery find

“ That the Protestant pupil teachers, though on their trial, were not permitted to be present, or confront, or cross-examine a single witness, the witnesses having been called on one by one; that they were brought in to criminate themselves and their fellow pupils; and that when thus brought in, those Protestant lads were not only examined by the officials of the Board, but by Mr. Marner, their accuser. Who the witnesses were, or what their evidence was, these Protestant pupils cannot tell to this hour; and yet it is upon an investigation, compromising thus every principle of British justice, that they have been convicted and condemned under the sanction of the Commissioners.”

To this hour the evidence on which the lads were condemned—for which three were expelled, and seventeen were severely reprimanded—has been withheld from the Presbyterian Committee, although two priests were present. This actually reads like a record of the Inquisition. So blind and infatuated was the Board in its zeal to please the priests, that they reprimanded

manded severely ten who took no part whatever in the proceedings, and some of whom, as they have since been forced to admit, were not in the building at all at the time. It is difficult to look at such proceedings without mingled indignation and disgust. "Never is law less venerable than when it is turned into an instrument of oppression, nor power less impressive than when it is trampling on the weak."

There are other rapid changes for the worse which might be specified, as, for example, the demands boldly made and conceded to displace Protestant Inspectors by Roman Catholics. These demands are not limited to Popish districts. In a district in Ulster in which there are 413 Protestant schools to 68 Roman Catholic, they have had the cool assurance to insist that the head Inspector be displaced by a Roman Catholic. Other instances might be adduced, but are not these facts sufficient to prove how complete Popish control is becoming, and to indicate an ominous future?

There is only one other tendency which I can wait to specify: it is of great moment and significance, and is so clearly manifested in the analysis of the mixed attendance which is given in the last Annual Report by the Commissioners that it cannot fail to be noticed by the most casual observer. It is the tendency on the part of the Protestant parent to indifference as to the moral tone and character of the instruction which his children receive as compared with the sedulous watchfulness of the Roman Catholic parent. Out of the comparatively small number of Protestant children under the National system, 91,486, no fewer than $18\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. are under exclusively Roman Catholic teachers; while of

470,802 Roman Catholic pupils, only $3\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. are under exclusively Protestant teachers. The Roman Catholics have managed admirably. They have guarded their own children, and drawn nearly 18,000 out of 91,000 Protestant children under their care, leaving only 73,000 to enjoy the advantages of a more vigorous Protestant example. The tendency on the part of the rising Protestant community trained under Roman Catholic teachers must be to a cheerless rationalism and to such profound indifference to all that is vital in our common Protestantism, as greatly to facilitate the achievement of the designs of the Romish Church.

IV. ULTIMATE INFLUENCES OF THE SYSTEM ON THE NATIONAL CHARACTER.

The National teaching as diffusing an apathy to those great historical principles on which the British Constitution is based, does something more than deaden the power of patriotism, it prepares a people ignorant of history, or indifferent to its great lessons, for assenting to the demand which may be sooner made than many anticipate, that in deference and in justice to Roman Catholic claims, the British throne be as free to a Roman Catholic as to a Protestant succession. Banish history from the schools of Scotland and England, as at present from those of Ireland, and in a generation hence the task will be comparatively easy to an able statesman, with a House of Commons representing the national indifference. So much for the certain issues of a silenced National History. They will be promoted by a silenced or degraded Bible. The purely negative religious teaching of the National

school not only denies all vitality to the Christian system, but degrades the Word of God below the moral maxims of Socrates or of Seneca, and the vitiating mythology of Greece and Rome; for all maxims and mythologies may be freely discussed and explained at such hours, and in such way as the teacher may see fit. While unfettered as to the use of Lempriere's Classical Dictionary, with its foul and corrupting medley, he is so trammelled as to the use of God's Word, that he must raise a large printed warning to the school, that he is going to refer to it, and give time to all who choose to escape. Those who may have most needed the kindly encouragement or solemn warning of the Bible have gone, leaving the conscientious teacher with the bitter conviction that they have carried off in their heart and life the moral poison, without its only antidote.

No ideas so arouse and elevate human intellect as ideas of God, Infinity, Eternity, and no truths so purify the heart, quicken conscience, and transform the life as those of revelation; in withholding these, therefore, we withhold the mightiest forces of national renovation, and are incurring a fearful responsibility. It avails not to say that an hour daily, before or after school work, supplies the religious element, for even when this is given, the hours of school service obliterate its impressions, and the pupils taught in the morning from the Word of God must be greatly perplexed to know the value of that Book, when, to meet the gravest offences through the day, the teacher never notices those very commands, and that wondrous Example which he pressed on them a few hours before. Their quick perception will induce a belief that the teacher is not sincere, or that the Book is

not much to be regarded; for if the one half of the school can get on without its authoritative guidance, so may they. The National system thus withers where it should give beauty, paralyses when it should give moral strength, and gradually ripens a people for the wild anarchy of any revolution. To no conclusion does the Philosophy of History, as she rests above the ruins of empires once Christian or always heathen, more earnestly and constantly guide us, than that the greatest catastrophes of nations have to be connected, not with the want of intellectual culture, but with the absence of moral principle.

Nor can any have traced with ordinary thoughtfulness the progress and decay of nations without noting the perpetual recurrence of the law of a dark moral deterioration, by which the vices and villanies of those countries which have dishonoured the Bible, and at last repudiated the sanctions of religion, grow deeper and more defiant as they pass downward from their height of civilisation than are those which appear in that twilight time when they were rising out of the depths of barbarism.

A system of public instruction carrying with it these inevitable issues cannot be too strongly repudiated by British Educationists. Let it be summarily rejected as ignoring our country's history, and thus robbing patriotism of its vital force, as unphilosophical in its theory of mental and moral character, and in its recognition of the soundest methods of human culture; as impolitic, in limiting the influence of that one Book which most conduces to an enlightened public opinion, a stronger yet more sensitive public conscience, and a higher national morality; and as unchristian, in forbid-

ding the utterance of the name of Jesus as the only Redeemer, and all reference to the way of salvation through Him who has said, "Suffer little children to come unto me, and forbid them not." In short, as *patriots*, desiring a higher and purer love of country; as *philosophers*, tracing the effect of Bible truth on the feelings, intellect, conscience, and character of the people; as *philanthropists*, toiling to build up a more vigorous social fabric, and diffuse finer domestic susceptibilities; and above all, as *Christians*, believing this to be a God-given Book, and the richest treasury of consolation and wisdom which the world possesses, it becomes us to resist, with unfaltering strenuousness, every attempt to institute such a National system as that in Ireland; and to demand that in every school receiving Government assistance the Word of God shall be recognised and freely used, as the only true basis of intellectual, moral, and religious training, and the only foundation of that righteousness by which nations are exalted and saved from the catastrophes of revolutions.

The revered name of Dr. Chalmers, it may be well here to notice, has been of late much bandied about, as an authority on their side, by those who defend the Irish system, and urge its adoption in Britain, and by those also who have lately relinquished the platform of *principle* in connection with the Irish Church Education Society for that of *expediency* in connection with the National Board. Their allegations are not only a mistake, but an injustice. Dr. Chalmers never contemplated the shunting of the Bible to a side-corner in the movements of public instruction. The spirit of his life and of his writings is a perpetual repudiation of such

a policy. The letter to the Hon. Fox Maule, so often quoted, assigned the secular alone to the Government, as its charge in legislation, and left the religious element altogether in the hands of the people, and in connection with the churches. He never contemplated Government interference with religious instruction through prohibitory enactments, as in the Irish system, but held that the Government should satisfy itself that a vigorous secular instruction was given. No man in Britain would or could have denounced with greater emphasis and power than he the extrusion of the Word of God and of National History from the public school.

The paragraphs on which so many false assumptions are based run thus :—

“It were the best state of things that we had, a Parliament sufficiently theological, to discriminate between the right and the wrong in religion, and to encourage or endow accordingly. But failing this, it seems to us, the next best thing that in any public measure for helping on the education of the people, Government was to abstain from introducing the element of religion at all into their part of the scheme, not because they held the matter to be insignificant—the contrary might be strongly expressed in the preamble of the act—but on the ground that in the present divided state of the Christian world, they would take no cognisance of, just because they *would exact no control over*, the religion of applicants for aid, leaving this matter entire to the parties who had to do with the execution and management of the schools which they had been called on to assist. A grant by the State upon this footing might be regarded as being appropriately and exclusively the expression of their value of a good secular education.”

“Let the men, therefore, of all churches and all

denominations, alike hail such a measure, whether as carried into effect by a good education in letters or in any of the sciences ; and meanwhile in these very seminaries, let the education in religion which the Legislature abstains from providing for be provided for, *as freely and amply* as they will, by those who have taken the charge of them."

These are the chief sentences in his letter bearing on the religious aspects of the question; and they, but especially the last, clearly prove that he contemplated no prohibition of the Bible by the Government. In the Irish system they not only legislate for the secular department, but they enter *prohibitively* into the religious.

Lest there may be any ambiguity as to Dr. Chalmers' views of what constituted the religious in education, let himself be his own interpreter. Take the following sentence from one of his own speeches :—

"Knowledge," it is said, "is power; and if knowledge is associated with religion, it becomes a power for the virtuous and the good, and tells, with the best and most beneficent influence, on the well-being of society. But if knowledge be dissociated from religion, this destroys, not the truth of the maxim that knowledge is power, but that it is power emancipated from the restraints of principle, and such a power let loose on society, like the deep policy of an artful tyrant, or the military science of a reckless conqueror, would have only the effect to enslave and destroy. Yes, gentlemen, we mean to have our schools, but we mean in the economy of these schools, to abide by the good old ways of our forefathers. We mean to have the Bible the regular and daily school-book—we mean to have the catechism for a regular and daily school exercise ; and these shall be taught openly and fearlessly—*not dealt with as contraband articles*—

not smuggled into a mere hole or corner of our establishment—not mended or mutilated by human hands, that the message of the Eternal may be shaped to the taste and prejudices of men—NOT CONFINED TO THE ODD DAYS OF THE WEEK, OR MADE TO SKULK FROM OBSERVATION INTO A BYE-ROOM, LEST THE PRIESTS OF AN INTOLERANT FAITH SHOULD BE OFFENDED. No, gentlemen, we will place the Word of God in the fore-front of our system of education, and we will render it the unequivocal, the public, the conspicuous object that is becoming a Christian and Protestant nation.”*

It is a foul injustice to the memory of Dr. Chalmers to associate his name with the vindication of the Irish system—his life, and all the principles of his social, moral, and Christian economics are an everlasting protest against its very first condition, that of sending off the Bible and its great lessons to a separate hour. The very foundation and essence of Dr. Chalmers’ outline is a sound, all-pervading religious Education. With such a legislative measure—with such full religious provision freely laid out, he throws on the parent the responsibility of rejecting the Bible.

Before passing from the authoritative influence of name, let us take the deliberate judgment of one who has profoundly studied the question, and who is far removed from ecclesiastical or political prejudices and partizanship. Dr. Duff, the well-known catholic-minded missionary in India, in addressing the General Assembly, said—“I feel that this House, like its noble, reforming ancestry, has been, is now, and ever will be, the intrepid, the unbending advocate of a thorough Bible instruction, as an essential

* Extracted from Dr. Hetherington’s admirable pamphlet on National Education. Third Edition, p. 12.

ingredient in all sound education, whether on the banks of the Forth, or on the banks of the Ganges. . . . Let us hail true literature and true science as our very best auxiliaries, whether in Scotland, or in India, or any other part of the globe. But in receiving them as friendly allies, let us resolutely determine that they shall never, never be allowed to usurp the throne, and wield a tyrant's sceptre over it. Let us *never suffer the Bible to be dislodged by the great antichristian confederacy from its throne of rightful supremacy in wielding the sceptre over the whole educational realm.*" "Our maxim has been, is now, and ever will be this—whenever, wherever, and by whomsoever Christianity is sacrificed on the altar of worldly expediency, then and there must the supreme good of man lie bleeding at its base."

Holding these principles to be fundamental, we turn with liveliest interest and sympathy to the long struggle maintained in Ireland, by those who hold substantially the same views of Bible training, and who have consequently all along rejected the National system. Amid the new aspects which the agitation has distinctly assumed, it becomes us seriously to enquire whether a strong responsibility is not laid upon both English and Scottish Educationists to co-operate more widely and with greater earnestness than hitherto with the friends of Scripture Education in Ireland, not only to resist and check the continuousness of Governmental concessions to Roman Catholics, but, at the same time, to claim a revision of the whole system, and its adjustment on a sounder and more satisfactory basis. For this end, let us next notice,

V.—PUBLIC INSTRUCTION OUTSIDE THE NATIONAL SYSTEM.
THE CHURCH EDUCATION SOCIETY—ITS PRESENT
DIFFICULTIES—THE DUTY OF BRITISH PROTESTANTS.

The educational organisation outside the National system is deserving of special notice, as exemplifying the principles of a sound intellectual and religious training, and as making the necessity for the rejection of the Irish system all the more distinctly recognisable, in the light of the controversy which, for a quarter of a century, the Church of Ireland has sustained.

On examining these outside processes, the British Educationist will find much that is strikingly noteworthy. I give the following as a brief selection:—

1. Under the Church Education Society there are more Protestant schools than under the National Board. The Society has 1615,* the National Board only 1201.† This is a result for which British Educationists are not prepared. I subjoin its evidence, and ask, is not the legislation which leaves unmet for a quarter of a century such a result as this unworthy of British Statesmanship?

2. There are in attendance in those schools no fewer than 11,000 Roman Catholics.

3. There have been educated under this Society during the last ten years more children than there have been Protestant pupils in attendance in the National Schools.

4. During the last seven years the Church Education Society has raised more money for promoting element-

* Report of Church Education Society, 1860.

† Twenty-fifth Report on National Education, p. 9. In the analysis there given by the Commissioners themselves, it is stated that those under the National system are, Established Church Schools, 597; Presbyterian, 688; other dissenters, 26; total, 1201.

ary instruction than has been raised by all those who enjoy the pecuniary benefits of the National system. The Society has raised on an average about £40,000 a-year. The income under the National Board has averaged during the last seven years only £32,000.* In 1859 the Church Education Society raised £41,938.

5. There is, under the Church Education Society, an excellent Normal Training Institution, pervaded by a fine moral and religious tone, and sending out teachers imbued by the true spirit of their calling. The examination papers, by which the Teachers in Training were tested, at the close of the session just ended, embrace a wide range of subjects, and indicate high and efficient intellectual and religious culture. There are distinct papers on, Old Testament History—The New Testament—The Liturgy and Articles—The Science of Education—English Language and Literature—Geography—English History and Social Science—Arithmetic—Mathematics—Practical Mechanics—Music—Perspective Drawing—and Domestic Economy. It is specially gratifying to find British History a part of their school study, and to note to what extent the questions in the papers are at once searching and comprehensive. No one can examine these papers without arriving at the conclusion that the Church Education Society, in sending out teachers so trained, is doing the country a great public service.

6. Practising schools have been established in the Normal Institution, in which the male and female

* This is only an approximation to an accurate average. It is based on the statement by the Commissioners in their Twenty-sixth, or last Report, p. 20, that the income from local resources last year was £43,763, while in 1852 it was £26,022.

teachers in training see exemplified those very arrangements and methods which they are expected to carry out in their own schools. The importance of this arrangement it is difficult to over-estimate, as contributing to prevent the failure so common, even among teachers highly educated, and well read in the theories of school management. No Normal Institution should be without Model Practising Schools, in which the future teachers may obtain practical skill, by directing and managing such mixed classes, as to age and attainments, as will fall to their charge in ordinary schools. *Lecturing* on Method, and giving the young teacher the opportunity of *looking* at the best practice, will no more enable him to manage efficiently his future school, than lecturing and looking on will enable the unpractised hand to construct a watch. Teachers have too commonly to train themselves to the best methods after leaving the Normal examples. It is somewhat singular that this Institution, though unaided by Government, should in this respect be in advance of the National Normal Schools. They are as yet without the means of adequately exhibiting to the students in training the real every day work to which they must address themselves. The same serious defect marks the working of several Normal colleges in both England and Scotland.

7. Although the range of systematic supervision is yet by far too limited, and has not nearly reached what the Society hope to accomplish, it is satisfactory to observe in the Inspectors' reports,* furnished from time to time,

* See Educational Society's Report for the Dioceses of Dublin, Kildare, and Glendalough, by Rev. Samuel Greer—Dec. 1860.

the faithfulness with which the adequacy or inadequacy of material provision for these schools, and the efficiency or inefficiency of their internal organisation, are specified. By the Inspectors making themselves acquainted with the arrangements now followed in their practising schools, they will be able, not only to appreciate the success and example of the trained teachers, but to give such practical hints to the untrained, as may greatly promote a higher average efficiency.

It must, therefore, be matter of continued regret to the friends of a sound education to find such an organisation working outside the National system, while it might be working still more vigorously, and with still greater practical effect, within it. And the question is here naturally raised, What keeps the schools outside—why are they not reaping the advantages of the National system—what is the precise nature of the barrier in the way? I give the answer from one of the papers of the Society, as they can best explain their own case:—

“A communication was very recently made to the Government by the Presidents of the Society, pressing its claims in the most urgent manner, and offering to make every concession, short of giving up the great principle for which we have been contending; in the hope that such an offer on their part might afford the basis of an adjustment to the question at issue between the Government and the Society. The proposal was made to place the schools of the Society as to all secular matters under the Board of National Education—to use its books, to be subject to its inspection, and in every way to conform to its rules, with this one exception, that the Scriptures should be used in the education of all the children in attendance.” This is the only barrier in the way of Government aid, A FREE BIBLE!

"And it was offered that the fullest notice should be given of the Scriptural character of the School, so that no children should attend without their parents being made fully aware beforehand of the kind of instruction imparted in it."

"Every concession was thus made that could be made, and every thing was done to reconcile the principles which the Government have laid down for their guidance, with the great principle which the Society has been instituted to maintain, namely, that the Word of God shall be made an essential part of the education of every child."

"The cause of the Society was thus once more put before Government in a manner that seemed to carry with it great weight; and it remained to be seen whether now, at last, on these most reasonable grounds, any concession would be made to its just requirements."

"To these applications, it is well known, a final and decisive answer has been returned. Any concession of the kind demanded has been positively refused. Permission will not be given in any Schools aided by Government, under any circumstances, to make instruction in the Word of God a necessary part of education."

The refusal of the Government to re-adjust their plans is a public injury. The National system thus loses the increased vitality and power which the support of the Established Church would impart. Most assuredly, the legislation which has for a quarter of a century trampled on the consciences, and disregarded the remonstrances of 2000 clergy, and of the laity which they represent, while it has deliberately accommodated itself to the claims of monastic institutions, will be regarded, a few generations hence, as partial and persecuting. The policy of successive Governments has been to woo and win, into party friendship and support, the Roman Catholic priesthood; hence perpetual

claims and perpetual concessions, until now, an insatiable church claims the whole system for herself, or threatens to break it up. She has the power, and if she carry out her threat, the Government of the country will stand as a laughing-stock beside the miserable fragment left. Had British Governments so legislated as to make the National School available for all the Protestant, as they have for the Popish community, we should have heard none of those threats; or were they made and carried out, there would have still been left an educational power to tell effectively on the whole country. But as it is, the Popish Hierarchy have dragged successive Governments unmercifully at their chariot wheels, until now, for peace, they have given them, nominally and practically, a preponderance in the list of Commissioners. But in vain: this will not satisfy them; nor ought it. On the *principle* of present legislation, they are *entitled* to a *majority* of Commissioners and Inspectors corresponding to their schools. Short of this concession, the Government has no logical resting-place. To what a pass have expediency and party warfare in politics brought us !

I can attach no weight to the cry against the Church Society, because they insist that Roman Catholics shall, at least, read their own version of the Scriptures, nor do I think it warrants the refusal of assistance. The Romish Church is most accommodative on this very question. In the Ragged and Industrial School in Edinburgh—raised in opposition to Dr. Guthrie's, who insisted on the *free* use of the Word of God in his school, even though attended by Roman Catholics—the Douay version of the Bible is read by *all* the Roman Catholic children in attendance,

and that, too, by authority of the Popish Bishop. This was broadly stated by several speakers at the Annual Meeting of the Society, held a few days ago in Edinburgh. Lord M'Kenzie said, "he was glad to state that *all* the children in the school, both Protestant and Catholic, read the Scriptures every day, and therefore it could never be said, with any approach to truth, that the religious element was neglected in the school."* Another speaker affirmed that, with the concurrence of the Roman Catholic Bishop, he had himself given New Testaments to all the Roman Catholic scholars. With these and similar facts before me, I can reach no other conclusion, than that the Roman Catholics in Ireland have denounced the reading of the Bible in Ireland, as a violation of religious liberty, in order to keep the Established Church outside the National system, and weaken her moral influence.

When the Roman Catholic prelates made their recent demand for a separate Grant and Exclusive Management, the friends of a National, as opposed to a Denominational, system, waited, with anxiety, the deliverance of the Church Education Society on the subject, because the legislation which would give the Roman Catholic Church a separate Grant, could not refuse it to the Irish Church. Had that Society cast its influence into the same scale, the question would have been settled, and we should now have had in Ireland the unsatisfactory Denominational system of England and Scotland. Although such a settlement of the question would have given the Society great relief from present responsibility, and great impulse

* Edinburgh Evening Courant, January 1, 1861.

and expansion to their Educational efforts, they nobly refused to bear any share in pressing this new policy, and gave a fresh proof to the country of the simplicity and strength of their one purpose—to honour the Word of God, and sustain in the land a vital Protestantism.* It is worthy of the Society, and again forces on us the question, Whether the Protestant community in Britain ought not to co-operate heartily with the Protestants in Ireland, so as to obtain a revision of the whole system, and its reconstruction on a sounder and more comprehensive basis.

I cannot close this review of the state of parties in Ireland, without noticing the difficulty in which the Church Education Society has been placed by the suicidal policy on which some of its most ardent supporters have recently entered. As a Scotchman, and as connected with a Presbyterian communion, I have, of course, neither party nor personal interest in this subject. I deal with it only on public grounds.

Disheartened by the long controversy, and specially by the inefficiency of some of the schools, the Lord Primate has publicly recommended that the patrons of Church Schools, when they find it difficult to make them as efficient as they desire, or to keep them at all open,

* Subjoined is the formal deliverance of the Church Education Society's Committee: "There is hardly any measure which the Church Education Society would contemplate with deeper regret than that which would partition off the responsible management of the public funds given for educational purposes to the several denominations of which the people are composed. They are convinced that the result of such a measure would be seriously to retard educational progress, to foment strife, and the bitterness of party spirit, and to place the Church of the country in a grievously false position—that of being only one denomination amongst a number equally recognised by the State."

transfer them to the National Board; and that the Church retain under her care only those marked by the greatest efficiency, and best exemplifying Scriptural and secular education. This advice, strange to say, has been strenuously urged and defended by such as the Right Hon. Joseph Napier, late Lord Chancellor, and the late Hon. Secretary of the Society, the Rev. H. Verschoyle, and has been plausibly vindicated in a pamphlet, "Is it a Sin?" from the pen, it is understood, of the devout and learned Professor of Natural Philosophy in the Dublin University, the Rev. H. Lloyd, D.D. The Church Society has rejected the advice, and is receiving the benefit of ample and unanswerable expositions and vindications of her policy in pamphlets written by the Bishop of Ossory, and in public addresses by her Hon. Secretary, the Rev. A. M. Pollock.

With the metaphysical ingenuities, pressed for adjustment into the consideration of a simple ethical question, by those, who, upholding the Church Education Society, yet recommend the transference of a large section of her schools to the patronage of the National Board, I do not intermeddle. The recommendation is itself easily intelligible, but is extremely feeble, and the pamphlets written in its vindication are singularly limited in range of idea, argument, and illustration, and totally unworthy of their respective authors. Coming after the lapse of a quarter of a century, it is out of date; coming from the *opponents* of the Church Society, I could honour it; coming from its influential supporters, it violates one's common sense: it is simply absurd, or worse. Not a single argument nor plea has been adduced as to difficulties, destitution, and inefficiency, which could not have been urged twenty years ago with tenfold greater force than now.

The Society must be the exponent either of a moral principle or of a mere preference. It can represent only the one or the other: if a moral principle, no lapse of time, nor change of circumstance can annul it—if a mere preference, then the long history of the Association and its labours lose at once all moral grandeur, and by every thoughtful and unprejudiced onlooker must be regarded as the sum of a most unwarrantable and factious opposition to successive Governments. A mere preference can never justify an organised resistance to a Government toiling to elevate the country through another system, which it legislatively affirms to be preferable.

Individuals or private associations may prosecute freely their preferences, but public men incur the gravest responsibility in sustaining, or in recommending to be sustained, a national organization based on no great moral principle, and tending only to weaken or embarrass the Government of the country. To be consistent, those who can adopt the recommendation should, at once, give their individual support exclusively to the National system, and confess that they laboured for years to promote a political blunder. But if there is more than mere preference, if moral principle is involved, then obviously, to act out a wrong principle, in order to give greater efficiency of application to a right principle, is to do evil that good may come. It is sin.

In point of mere policy, the recommendation is utterly suicidal. It is most preposterous to suppose that it can stop at the limit indicated, and apply only to inefficient or collapsing schools. If, to increase the efficiency of a sinking school, it is to be transferred to the patronage of the National Board, why not also transfer the vigorously

sustained school, that its efficiency may be still more increased? Why incur the responsibility of keeping a single school at a *lower point of efficiency* than it is possible for the patron or the Church to give it?

The Christian public, though benevolent, is highly discriminative, and would, at once, apply the argument for the transference of the inefficient, to the duty of transferring also all the rest, that they might share in the same impulse and be correspondingly elevated. Claims for money to maintain a mere preference would be indignantly and deservedly repudiated.

It will never do to assign as a reason for the continued organization of such a Society, a mere regard to the conscientious convictions of a number of good men. These fluctuate. Consciences vary in sensitiveness and in strength, and can never be the permanent basis of any social or moral fabric. Moral or religious principle alone constitutes a permanent foundation for a Christian Society, and must be drawn from the Word of God. It is in this lies the strength of the Church Education Society, and, I say it emphatically, in its renunciation lies its ruin.

It is because of her self-sacrificing devotedness to the maintenance of the Bible in the public school, that the Church of Ireland has obtained so much public sympathy, and she may rest assured, that the fresh trial to which she is now exposed, will draw to her still wider sympathy and deeper respect. As a Church, her leading scriptural principle, bearing on the godly upbringing of the young, should win for her the homage of Scottish Christian Educationists, because it is the very principle which John Knox lays down, when, in treating of Education in the

First Book of Discipline, he insists "that it must be carefully provided that *no father, of what estate or condition that ever he be, use his children at his own fantasy, especially in their youth head*, but all must be compelled to bring up their children in learning and virtue." It is for the maintenance of this Reformation principle alone the Church of Ireland has been deprived, and is still deprived of the benefits of the National system, at the very time they are fully accorded to monastic schools.

Let the Church Education Society continue to maintain, before the world and Christian Churches, the high claim for the free and unrestricted use of the Word of God, in any system professing to be National, and although the toil be at times burdensome, the cause is good, and there is a present reward in knowing that their example is stimulating Christian communities elsewhere to increased watchfulness and zeal.

Let Christian Educationists in Britain at once indignantly repudiate every proposal, come in what form it may, having for its object the introduction of this system.
OBSTA PRINCIPIIS.

And let them bring their influence to bear on their respective representatives in the House of Commons, so as to obtain such a remodelling of the Irish National system as shall make it freely available for all classes of the community.

NOTE.

If, amid the acknowledged difficulties, which must beset every attempt to legislate anew, no higher or more satis-

factory arrangement be at present practicable, the following suggestion might, in the meantime, be pressed; and if the simple change which it proposes be granted, the National System will be immediately strengthened, I believe, by the accession of the Established Church, without in the least increasing the elements of a so much dreaded proselytism. Let the enactment, banishing the Bible from its rightful place in public instruction, be withdrawn from the present regulations,—let the Government satisfy itself, through a vigorous unsectarian inspection, of the efficiency of the schools under its control,—and when the teacher or patron of any school has been proved to have been tampering with the peculiar religious tenets of either Roman Catholic or Protestant children, or to have been pressing on them obnoxious church formularies, let the assistance it gives be, for a time, withdrawn. The prohibitory regulation, as it stands, and is now applied, dishonours God;—deteriorates public instruction, by depriving it of the highest and only authoritative guide-book on social, moral, and religious duties;—and, as a political expedient, intended to satisfy the Roman Catholics, it has most completely failed. It now serves no purpose whatever, save to keep aloof from the National System thousands of the best friends of public education. Might it not, therefore, be removed?