

PRIMARY EDUCATION
IN IRELAND.

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1. *Reports of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland.* Vols. I. and II. Dublin: Printed by Alexander Thom, for Her Majesty's Stationery Office. 1865.
2. *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry into Primary Education, Ireland.* Presented to both Houses of Parliament. Dublin: Printed by Alexander Thom, for Her Majesty's Stationery Office. 1870.
3. *The Thirty-Sixth Report of the Commissioners of National Education in Ireland.* With Appendices. Dublin: 1870.
4. *A Plea for the United Education of the Youth of Ireland in National Schools.* Read at the Meeting of the Social Science Association, Belfast, Sept. 1867. With additions and an Appendix. By the Rev. J. SCOTT PORTER. London: Simpkin and Marshall. 1868.
5. *Evidence of the Irish National Teachers' Associations, In Reply to Queries Addressed by the Commissioners to Vere Foster, Esq.* London: Marcus Ward and Co. Chandos-street.

EVERYTHING Irish is misunderstood. For several years past few matters have been so much misrepresented and so little understood as the question of Irish Education. Unfortunately it has been the interest alike of the Ultramontane party in Ireland and of the Ultra-Secularist party in this country that it should be misrepresented and misunderstood, and that England generally should misunderstand it in the same manner. Antagonistic on other points, these parties have agreed in misleading English public opinion as to the actual character of the Irish national system as it now is, and also as to the character of the demands which the Ultramontanes are making for its subversion. Both assert or imply that the existing Irish system is a secular and non-religious system, and that what the Ultramontanes demand is to have it changed into a denominational system similar to that which has grown up in England. These propositions are both of them flagrantly untrue.

From the very first, that is, ever since it was initiated in 1831, the Irish National System has been religious in its

general basis and character, with special provision for the separate teaching of dogmatic forms of faith by the clergy of the different denominations to the children of their respective flocks. Secularism has never been an element in the Irish system, has never been desired, and would never have been tolerated in Ireland, where all classes and all professions may be said to be saturated with religious convictions.

For thirty years past the denominational system has been established in Ireland. The Non-Vested National Schools of Ireland are avowedly denominational, more strictly so, on the whole, than the denominational schools of England. At the present time nearly three-fourths of the Irish National Schools are non-vested or denominational.

Until the way was opened for the reception into the National System of the denominational schools, the National System made slow progress in Ireland. It was opposed from the first by the Presbyterians, the Episcopalians, and the Wesleyans, precisely because of its "unsectarian" character and the broad indifference (speaking as respects dogmatic and ecclesiastical distinctions) of its platform. It was looked on favourably at first by the Roman Catholics, Archbishop Murray co-operating with Archbishop Whately for many years on its Board. The Presbyterians in 1840 won such extensive and essential concessions to the denominational principle that, after that period, the various Protestant denominations united their schools very extensively to the Board, whilst still, for a dozen years longer, the Roman Catholic denomination continued to support it.

About twenty years after the foundation of the system, Provincial Model Schools began to be established. Before this the only Model School had been at Dublin. These schools were intended not only as models, but as training schools from which pupil teachers might be sent up to be regularly trained for their profession at Dublin in the College of the Board. They were established with the warm approval of Roman Catholic authorities, although for some years past they have been the continual subject of Ultramontane denunciation. They provide for teachers of different religious persuasions in the same school, each of whom is bound religiously to instruct the children of his own persuasion, and for the attendance at the schools weekly of the clergy of the different Churches, each to examine and supplement what the teachers have been doing, and to keep up the pastoral charge of the children of his own flock. These schools have never yet numbered thirty, and can never be regarded as

characterising the system, which, as we have said, is predominantly denominational. But they do represent what the Board, at least in its better days, would have desired all the schools of Ireland, as far as possible, to resemble. In their common teaching they are unsectarian and religious; in their special arrangements and instruction they are omnisectionarian and dogmatic. As these schools have been built and are maintained out of the revenue of the country, it is beyond our skill to discover how they are to be cleared from the reproach of what is spoken of as "concurrent endowment."

They are admirable schools; and it is no wonder if the Ultramontane party covet the possession of them as their own, without any embarrassment of a conscience clause; no wonder if they are resolved to do all in their power to wring from the weakness of English Ministries the concession of these schools to themselves, as the seminaries of an unmitigated Popish "denominationalism."

Secularism, as we have said, is utterly abhorrent to the Irish mind; Mr. Dixon's prescriptions would merely drive Ireland frantic: but Mr. Forster, if he adheres to the principles of his own Act, is bound, not only to reject altogether the claims of Cardinal Cullen, but to reform the existing denominational schools of Ireland in such a sense as, while it leaves their immediate management and working still with the respective Churches, shall make the schools much more truly answer to their designation as National, by reducing their denominationalism to a minimum, and bringing them fully under national regulations.

These general propositions in regard to the Irish school system will be established and illustrated in the condensed sketch we are about to give of the history of that system.

The people of "the land of saints" seem always to have had a great thirst for learning, whenever the way to attain it has been in any degree opened. This is a truth which might, we dare say, be illustrated by a reference to all ages of Irish history, from the days anterior to the Norman Conquest, when the island was a home and refuge for learning on the farthest verge of Europe,—then, as a continent, immersed in thick darkness—through the rare interludes of comparative peace and rallying elasticity, which are found in its sad and dismal records, both during the times preceding, and during the different stages and phases of its history which have followed, the English Reformation. Notwithstanding its poverty, its misfortunes, and its Popery, the Irish nation, at the beginning

of the present century, seems, as a people, to have valued education and learning more highly than the English; and if, on the average, the information of the people of Ireland was, perhaps, more scanty and less exact than that of the English people, their intelligence appears to have been decidedly quicker, and their national esteem of the schoolmaster and his vocation decidedly higher. To be "learned," indeed, has always been a high and great thing in the esteem of the Irish: the relative value of learning, in comparison especially with wealth or material prosperity, has been rated higher than in this country.

At the beginning of this century, there were a considerable number of educational endowments, of which, however, the Protestant proportion was, in comparison of the number of Protestants in the island, immensely richer than the Roman Catholic. All the Royal and Parliamentary endowments went on the old Establishment principle; they were Protestant endowments for Protestant, mostly for Episcopalian, education; and they were created on the principle, which for so long a period was in the ascendant, that the Roman Catholic religion must either be treated as a proscribed religion, or must at least be ignored. As a matter of course, schools founded by private bequest were of an exclusive character. The most important class of exclusive Protestant schools were the schools founded under the indenture and assignment of Erasmus Smith, a citizen of London, who had obtained a grant of estates sequestered on account of the Irish Rebellion of 1641. In his own words, under date 1682, his end in founding the schools was "to propagate the Protestant faith according to the Scriptures, avoiding all superstition." The estates for supporting these schools are very large, comprising upwards of 13,000 acres in Limerick and Tipperary, in Galway, Westmeath, Sligo, and King's County, and the income is £9,000 a year. The schools are strongly Protestant and Episcopalian. The Protestant "Charter Schools," or Schools of the Incorporated Society, hold endowments founded by Royal and private bequests, and were formerly very largely sustained—to the gross amount of more than a million of money—out of Parliamentary grants. These schools were expressly founded for "the conversion and civilisation" of the "Popish natives, who were kept by their clergy in gross ignorance, and bred up in great disaffection to the Government." They have an income from real property and estates to the amount of £8,000 a year. There are, besides, schools aided by the wealthy endowments of the Irish Society, of which the

managing centre is a committee of the Corporation of the City of London; while the Irish Sub-centre is Londonderry. These endowments, like those to which we have already particularly referred, were intended to promote Protestant education, and the establishment of the Protestant religion. The private bequests of Roman Catholics for Roman Catholic education were comparatively very small in amount; it may be doubted whether they exceeded in value the private endowments and bequests of Protestants for Protestant education, apart from those great estates of which we have spoken.

The first movement in the direction of providing a broad and equitable system of National Education for Ireland seems to have been initiated by the *Fourteenth Report of the Commissioners on Schools of Public or Charitable Foundation in Ireland*, published in 1812. It is much to their credit that three prelates of the Church of Ireland head the list of signatures to this Commission, William Armagh, Charles Cashel, and James Killala. We may note also, in passing, the name, as another of the Commissioners—a name once much better known than now—of Richard Lovell Edgeworth, the father of that distinguished, and now too little read, authoress, Miss Edgeworth, both the father and the daughter being eminent educationists. The Commissioners state that “the people of Ireland are extremely anxious to obtain instruction for their children, even at an expense which, though small, very many of them can ill afford”; they state further that, in the number of existing schools, there was little or no deficiency, so that, if the teachers, the school-books, and the school-rooms, had been what they ought, “the lower orders of this country would have less reason, perhaps, to complain of their education being neglected than those of England or even of Scotland itself”; but they condemn the great majority of the teachers as altogether incompetent, and not seldom worse than incompetent; the school-books as miserably unsuitable, and, too often pernicious; and the school-rooms as often altogether wretched; and they recommend that a system of schools be established on catholic and equitable principles, schools which should be Christian but not sectarian. Such a system, they anticipated, would be “cordially accepted” by the people, provided that “all interference with the particular religious tenets” of the children should, “in the first instance, be unequivocally disclaimed, and effectually guarded against.” They speak of the schools which they desired to see established, as schools which should invite “a careful attention to moral and religious principles with an evident purpose of

respecting the peculiar tenets of different sects of Christians." In reference to the selection of books for the proposed schools, they say: "We doubt not but it will be found practicable to introduce not only a number of books in which moral principles will be inculcated" in a suitable manner, "but also ample extracts from the Sacred Scriptures themselves," by means of a "selection, in which the most important parts of Sacred History shall be included, together with all the precepts of morality, and all the instructive examples by which those precepts are illustrated and enforced;" and they add that such a selection would not "be liable to any of the objections which have been made to the use of the Scriptures in the course of education." It is impossible to read this Report of 1812 without acknowledging the candour and liberality of the men who prepared it—a candour and liberality in striking contrast to the prevailing tone of Irish feeling on religious questions, whether on one side or the other, especially during the last five-and-forty years; and without also recognising in the sketch which they give of the system needed for Ireland the general features of the Irish National System, as originally set forth in Mr. Stanley's (Lord Derby's) Letter to the Duke of Leinster in 1831. The Commissioners of 1812, however,—wiser in this, we think, than Mr. Stanley, or the statesmen and Irish educationists of his day—made no proposal to provide special and clerical religious instruction for the various denominations in the schools which they proposed to establish. They would have founded a system, not indeed secular—the reverse of this—but unsectarian; and they would have left schoolmasters to teach the scholars on this unsectarian basis, apart from all special forms or peculiar doctrines.

The Government, however, of which Lord Liverpool was the chief Minister, and which was represented in Ireland by the Duke of Richmond, as Lord Lieutenant, did not see their way to the foundation, or the separate initiation, of a new system of schools established on the principle defined in the Report of 1812. They determined to work by means of a private society. The Kildare Street Society was a liberal Christian Association, not expressly Protestant, and including, we believe, some Roman Catholics among its supporters, which was founded on the principle of establishing or aiding schools in which the Holy Scriptures should be read without note or comment, but no denominational tests enforced or forms permitted to be used. Through this Society the Government decided to distribute its Parliamentary aid, rather than establish a new system of national character and

dimensions. The result, however, was far from satisfactory, especially as, in consequence of the Catholic Relief controversy, religious animosities and prejudices began to grow more and more embittered. "The determination," says Mr. Stanley, in his famous Letter—and the words may not be without their use and importance to us here in England to-day—"to enforce in all the schools the reading of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment was undoubtedly taken with the purest motives; with the wish at once to connect literary with moral and religious education, and, at the same time, not to run the risk of wounding the peculiar feelings of any sect by catechetical instruction or tenets, which might tend to subjects of polemical controversy. But it seems to have been overlooked that the principles of the Roman Catholic Church were totally at variance with this principle; and that the *indiscriminate* reading of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, by children, must be peculiarly obnoxious to a Church which denies, even to adults, the right of unaided private interpretation of the Sacred Volume with respect to articles of religious belief."

The opposition of the Romish clergy was too powerful for the system of which we are speaking to be maintained. In 1824-5, accordingly, the Commissioners of Education for Ireland recommended a system according to which "two teachers" (we are again quoting the late Lord Derby's Letter of 1831) should be appointed in every school, "one Protestant and the other Catholic, to superintend separately the religious education of the children; and they hoped to have been able to agree upon a selection from the Scriptures which might have been generally acquiesced in by both persuasions. But it was soon found that these schemes were impracticable; and, in 1828, a Committee of the House of Commons recommended a system to be adopted which should afford, if possible, a combined literary and a separate religious education." It was in consequence of this recommendation that the present Irish National System of education was initiated, in 1831, by the issuing of the Letter to the Duke of Leinster, then Lord Lieutenant, from which we have been quoting, the authorship of which was one of the most famous and fruitful acts in the public life of the late Earl of Derby, who, in 1831, was the Secretary for Ireland, in connection with the Whig Government of Earl Grey. He was then the Honourable Mr. Stanley, and had not as yet renounced the Whig traditions and official connections of his family.

The leading principle of the Irish system was shadowed

forth in the words quoted by Mr. Stanley, and which we have quoted, from the recommendations of the Committee of the House of Commons in 1828; the words are—"a combined literary and a separate religious education." If, however, the word *literary* had been understood to mean *secular*, as that word is employed in the educational controversies of the present time, it would have been found impossible to construct any system of education for Ireland on such a basis. Now-a-days—in the *Daily News*, and by the preachers and agitators of the Birmingham League platform—the principle of the Irish National System is continually spoken of as that of "united *secular* and separate religious instruction." There could scarcely be a more pointed misrepresentation. The first draught of Mr. Stanley's letter spoke of "combined literary and separate religious instruction." But he found it necessary, on consideration, to alter his phraseology and to speak of "combined literary and moral instruction." And when the Board of National Education was appealed to in regard to the meaning to be attached to the word *moral*, they found that the moralities of instruction could not be separated from religious convictions and principles; and so "combined literary and moral" was officially interpreted to signify combined "literary, moral, and religious" instruction.

The truth as to this point is well set forth by the Rev. J. Scott Porter, a distinguished Presbyterian minister, of Belfast, in his *Plea for the United Education of the Youth of Ireland in National Schools*—a witness all the more unimpeachable for our present purpose, because he is at the same time a supporter of the general principles of the Irish National System, and also a professed opponent of what he describes as denominational education.

"The excellent principle," he says, "adopted by Mr. Stanley from the Commission of 1828, that of 'a combined literary and separate religious education,' was no sooner enunciated than it was departed from. Before the Letter of Lord Derby (Mr. Stanley) was formally expedited, a draught copy of it was submitted to the Duke of Leinster and the other gentlemen who were to be, and who afterwards were, named as Commissioners; and, by their advice, a very important alteration was made in its terms. By the advice of the Commissioners elect, Lord Derby was prevailed upon to introduce the words 'moral and literary,' instead of 'literary' alone, before the word 'education;' the change was made with the avowed intention of intermixing a considerable amount of religious teaching with the instruction given during the time set apart for united education; and, accordingly, not only were the ordinary lesson-books, prepared by the Commission, largely

impregnated with religious teaching, but four volumes of extracts from the Bible were drawn up—together with one of religious poetry, containing some things of a very sectarian character—and a little work on the Evidences of Christianity, *all of which are decidedly religious, if they are anything; yet all of which were recommended by the Board for use in the National Schools during the hours allotted to united instruction.*”

So also, in the *Report of the Royal Commission of Inquiry*, the following passage, among many to a similar purpose, occurs:—

“In preparing the Board’s reading-books of combined instruction, Mr. Carlile introduced a very considerable portion of religious instruction. So far, indeed, is the association of religious with literary instruction carried, that Mr. Cross, when secretary, declared—‘There is really, strictly speaking, nothing that can be called exclusively secular instruction. In a National School in which the books of the Board are read, it cannot be called a system of purely secular instruction; for the books are penetrated, every page of them, with religious knowledge and religious sentiment. So that there really is a combination, during the ordinary school hours, of literary and religious education, though it is not peculiar to any one religious denomination.’ ‘From the first book to the last,’ says Mr. M’Donnell, now Resident Commissioner, ‘there is, in proportion as the understanding of the child develops, always something of religious food prepared for it in each of the books.’”—*Report, &c.*, p. 39.

In fact, as Mr. Holmes, another Commissioner, affirms, it was a “fundamental principle of the system that, so far as it could be accomplished, a religious education was to form part of it, subject to objections from any particular class or sect of Christians.”

Whilst, however, the Irish National System was intended to provide, and did to a very effective degree provide, a common unsectarian education, literary and religious, for the children of all denominations, it also made express and particular provision for the instruction of the children of the different sects in their own special doctrines and formularies. This was no less an essential part of the system than the other. We are not, however, fully persuaded that it was in itself a necessity of legislation or of administration. That forty years ago Ireland would not have endured a secular system of schools, we can have no doubt. Such an idea as that of a merely secular education, could find no entertainment among such a people. Purely secular schools would have been regarded as altogether irreligious, as no better than infidel schools. Schools in which no religious reference, no appeal

to the authority of God, or to the religious sanctions of conscience, no recognition of the duty of worship or of the character and office of the clergyman, could be allowed, in which all religious feeling and consciousness, all play or acknowledgment of religious life, was to be by law suppressed, would never have been tolerated by the Irish people. But schools from which the official presence, the authority and instructions, of the clergy were to be excluded, might perhaps, we think, have been accepted by the people, though probably not without much dissatisfaction in many quarters; at all events the Kildare-street Society's schools, which were numerous, appear to have been carried on apart from clerical visitation and indoctrination. Such a thought, however, as a national system of schools for any division of this kingdom, from all share in the administration of which the clergy were to be excluded, was not likely to be entertained by any British statesman forty years ago. That the clergy should have their prominent and recognised place in any educational system, was deemed proper in itself, according to the decorous ideas which then prevailed: it also appeared to be necessary, in order to secure the co-operation of the clergy with the Government in working the new measure, especially the Catholic clergy. It is not unlikely, indeed, so far as the clergy of the Protestant Establishment were concerned, that the recognition of the clergy of other denominations as, equally with themselves, entitled to be recognised in a national system of education, may have operated to prejudice them against the proposed measure. It is certain that the extent to which the Roman Catholics were recognised in the Whig scheme, set the Protestants of the country generally against it, whether Churchmen, or Presbyterians, or Methodists. But, on the other hand, although the mixture of children in the schools, and the admission, in any form, of a community of Christianity between themselves and Protestants, was undoubtedly, from the first, no less an offence to the necessarily intolerant spirit of Romanism than the recognition of the Roman Catholic clergy was to the clergy of the Irish Establishment, yet the recognition by Government and Parliament of a sect just emerging from all manner of civil and religious disabilities was a great recommendation of the measure in the eyes of the moderate, and equally of the wily and politic, Romanists. On the whole, it seemed greatly to improve the national position of the Roman Catholic Church. It could not, also, but be foreseen, from the first, that, practically, a large proportion of whatever schools might be set up must

be thoroughly Roman Catholic, either wholly, or almost wholly, unmixed with any Protestant element, and, by virtue of the provision for special religious instruction by the clergy, not only under the potent indirect, but under the full and immediate, religious direction and influence of the priest.

Accordingly, while Irish Protestants in general regarded the new measure with bitter antagonism, a feeling which very many earnest Christians in England shared, it was welcomed by many Roman Catholics, and Roman Catholic landowners and priests prepared themselves to use and work it to their utmost advantage. Now, Cardinal Cullen and his party are bold enough to demand, and strong enough to exercise great political pressure in support of their demand, that the system of 1831 may be displaced for one which shall give complete ascendancy, at the sole cost of the State, to the Roman Catholic priesthood over the education, in every grade, of all the Roman Catholics in Ireland; now, they denounce as an infidel compromise Lord Derby's great measure; but, in 1831, Archbishop Murray and his clergy accepted the same measure as a great boon. The tables, in fact, are completely turned. In the interest of Protestant ascendancy (not without some reason, as the result has proved) the Irish National System was denounced, forty years ago, as a latitudinarian and unbelieving compromise, which would undermine the position of Protestantism, while it would at the same time strengthen and endow Popery, and also, in some of its tendencies and results, foster religious indifference or unbelief. Now, the Roman Catholic party in Ireland, in the interest of Popish ascendancy, make parallel charges against the same system; they affirm that it prevents the true and rightful ascendancy of the Church in the training of the people, and that it tends to religious indifference and unbelief. H. v.

The arrangement for special religious instruction in the schools provided that, before or after the ordinary school hours, the clergy or their approved substitutes might instruct the children of their respective congregations in their peculiar tenets, and, in fact, hold a religious service with them. The authorised substitutes of the clergy were the schoolmasters of the same denomination; and so the system came to be that immediately before or after the ordinary hours the school-teacher instructed the children of his own faith in religious knowledge, following the directions in so doing of his clergyman, and that once a week the clergyman attended himself to examine, and test, and hear repetitions, and supplement in every way the work of the teacher.

The following were the original rules of the Irish Board in regard to religious instruction:—

“ 1. The ordinary school business, during which all the children, of whatever denomination they be, are required to attend, and which is expected to embrace a competent number of hours in each day, is to consist exclusively of instruction in those branches of knowledge which belong to literary and moral education. Such extracts from the Scriptures as are prepared under the sanction of the Board may be used, and are earnestly recommended by the Board to be used during those hours allotted to this ordinary school business.

“ 2. One day in each week (independently of Sunday) is to be set apart for religious instruction of the children, on which day such pastors or other persons as are approved by the parents or guardians of the children shall have access to them for that purpose.

“ 3. The managers of schools are also expected, should the parents of any of the children desire it, to afford convenient opportunity and facility for the same purpose, either before or after the ordinary school business (as the managers may determine) on the other days of the week.”—*Reports of the Commissioners, &c., Vol. I. p. 10.*

From which it will be seen that, besides the instruction before or after school daily by the school teacher, one whole day in a week was set apart for the children to receive religious instruction from their own pastors.

Where the children are largely mixed in any school, it has been the principle of the Board that, if possible, two teachers of different religious persuasions should be provided, a chief and an under-teacher, so that each of these might take the children of his own denomination daily for religious instruction. This has been most fully carried out in some of the Model Schools, where, we believe, there have sometimes been three teachers of different religious denominations to correspond to the different denominations of the children. From which it is evident, that when the National Schools of Ireland, built and maintained out of the Consolidated Fund, are not sectarian, it is only because they are multi-sectarian, or, as far as possible, omni-sectarian.

We have given above the original rules of the Irish Board in reference to religious instruction. When the system was about ten years old, however, these rules were modified,—so modified that, on the one hand, religious instruction may, on certain conditions, be given at any time during the ordinary school hours, while, on the other hand, the requirement to set apart for religious instruction by the clergy of the denominations one separate day a week has been dispensed with.

We find this alteration fully defined in the *Rules and Regulations* of the Board, as published in 1842.

“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 opened 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, religion may be given, either during the fixed school hours or otherwise.*”—*Reports, &c.*, Vol. I., p. 109.

So that, if the patrons or managers so please, religious instruction may be given in an Irish National School at eleven in the morning or three in the afternoon, and this has been the rule for thirty years. The rule of 1842, which we have quoted, was one of the concessions agreed upon in 1840-1, to meet the demands of the Presbyterians, who desired to put their denominational schools under the Board. The Roman Catholics have always insisted that this rule ought either to be cancelled, or an entire and thorough denominational system granted. They now insist on the latter. We trust the other alternative will be taken.

In the later editions of the *Rules and Regulations*, the liberty to give religious instruction at an intermediate hour in Irish National Schools is thus particularly defined and guarded:—

“Religious instruction, prayer, or other religious exercises, may take place, at any time, before and after the ordinary school business (during which all children, of whatever denomination they may be, are required to attend), *but must not take place at more than one intermediate time, between the commencement and the close of the ordinary school business.*”

There is also an “earnest recommendation” (the Commissioners have not ventured to make a *Regulation*) that, “*when- ever the patron or manager thinks fit to have religious instruction at an intermediate time, a separate apartment shall (when practicable) be provided for the reception of those children who, according to these rules, should not be present thereat.*” The rule is that they should not be present; the recommendation is that they shall have a room found for them. Suppose “the patron or manager” should not “think fit” to provide such a room, are the children to go out of the school into the air?

The words we have put in italics in the last quotation show where the power rests in these schools. There is no local or managing committee, except in very rare cases, in Irish National Schools ; it is not required that there should be one. The all but universal system is for the clergyman or priest to be patron ; and he is absolute master.

It will be evident, from what we have now written, whence the Birmingham League and the Nonconformist Conference at Manchester have derived their ideas as to a new National System for England. They would have the Irish system in its general outline, as originally intended, with this most grave and fundamental difference, that the teacher shall teach absolutely nothing but what is secular. Substitute for an unsectarian Christian education, literary and religious, a purely secular education, and forbid the teacher to teach religion in the school-room at any time whatever, even though it were before or after hours ; the Irish system will then be transformed into the system proposed to-day by such men as Mr. Dale, of Birmingham, and the extreme party with which he has unhappily identified himself. They take from the Irish system its worst feature, that which has made it a means of promoting clerical exclusiveness and Ultramontane bigotry, that which stamps it with the brand of concurrent endowment, and they propose to put this as a frame-work round a school-routine of hard and bare secular instruction. They would do what even in Ireland, where lay Christian rights are less understood than in England, and all denominations are too much under the domination of clerical ideas and influence, it had not been attempted to do, silence the lay teacher altogether, and make the clergy the sole instructors of children in Christian principles and doctrine. They may be congratulated on having proposed the most plausible and attractive concordat which it would have been possible for cultivated infidelity to offer to exclusive clerical pretensions. Arch-deacon Denison has at last found an effectual ally in Mr. Dale. Unitarians and Anglo-Catholics may not improbably agree on this basis. Unbelief, High-Churchmanship, and the concurrent endowment so dear to the mere politician, may here combine.

Let it be observed, however, that the Irish scheme was in one respect adapted to the conditions of Ireland and to Irish ideas, whilst, in the same respect, the English copy is opposed to the conditions of England and to English ideas. In Ireland the number of religious denominations is much smaller than England ; frequently there is not more than one ; only in larger towns are there more than two or three

of the least consideration ; and there are not many towns in Ireland of any considerable magnitude. Besides which the number of ministers of all denominations in Ireland, in proportion to the population, is much larger than in England, and furthermore, there are very few families in Ireland without any sense whatever of religion. The Protestant population is a population possessing real Protestant religious convictions ; the Roman Catholic population are loyal to their Church and its priests. Whereas in England there is a large proportion of children belonging to families which own no minister and no relation to any Christian congregation ; for these, so sadly in need of Christian nurture, of the "bread of life," the League of Birmingham and the Nonconformists at Manchester would provide only the secular "stone," hard, bare, chilling, God-ignoring, merely secular, instruction. There are, on the other hand, multitudes of village Methodists in "circuits" where there is one "head" place, town or larger village, with its resident ministers, and a dozen or even twenty, sometimes thirty, villages on the circuit plan, in each of which there is a parish church and a clergyman. The Birmingham plan would, in effect, hand over all these children to the religious instruction of the parish clergyman, instead of allowing the lay teacher, whether of the National, the British, or the Methodist school, to give them plain instruction out of the Bible. The teacher could have given them an interesting and effective Bible lesson ; the clergyman will require them to learn off the catechism, and will prepare them for confirmation.

It is perfectly idle to suppose that Methodist local preachers or class leaders, as approved substitutes for the Methodist ministers, can be found to give regular instruction to these children. If they were competent, they would not have time. The village pastor of the Baptist congregation may sometimes be able to look after the children of his flock, if he has not some lay business to prevent him from so doing. But, on the whole, if the Birmingham Anti-State-Church educational agitators had entered into a "League" to further, instead of to oppose, clerical influence, they could hardly have played more completely into the hands of High Churchmen. They make the Christian instruction of children to be in effect a perquisite of priests and parsons—"a clergy reserve." They propose, besides, to endow the Church of England and village Dissenters with buildings ; to be built and kept up for them at the public expense, in which they may teach their respective doctrines, however sectarian, to the rising generation, and hold

"children's services." The whole scheme of the ill-assorted party, in which religious voluntaries of high professions and unbelieving doctrinaires are strangely combined, is itself an ill-omened and inharmonious combination of secularism in school hours, with clerical exclusiveness and concurrent endowment.

The Irish system could not be accused of any such fault and folly as that of silencing the teacher as an instructor in religion; its founders knew that the school-teacher, as a rule, would be by far the most efficient instructor in religion. But they placed him absolutely under the direction and control of the priest-patron, or the minister-patron, as the case might be. This has always been a great blot in that system. One good point in the Irish regulations is, that the use of religious emblems in the schoolrooms is strictly prohibited.

We have seen that the principle of the Irish system is an impartially *omni*-sectarian principle. Where, in any place, however, there is practically but one denomination, of course the *omni*-sectarian school becomes a denominational school. From the beginning, this was the case in regard to a large proportion of the Irish National Schools. Except where the heterodox minority (we use the Greek adjective in its radical sense) was considerable, the only religious instruction given in the school was, as a rule, that given by the teacher, under the authority of the patron, to the children of his own religious persuasion. The right of other ministers to instruct the children of their own flocks existed on paper, but was, for the most part, dormant.

It is provided in the *Rules and Regulations* that the school-houses, built with the money of the State, may, under the direction of the "patron or manager," be used as Sunday Schools, and even, occasionally, for Divine worship. As a matter of fact, the great majority of the State-built Irish schools are used by the Roman Catholic Church as Sunday Schools, the rest being so used by other denominations.

Virtually, therefore, from the first, the Irish National System was, to a considerable extent, a denominational system; and it could not but tend to become so more and more. The chief, almost the only, safeguard against abuse in this direction was the Time-table Conscience Clause which mutual ecclesiastical and religious animosity greatly serves to enforce, and for the effectiveness of which, accordingly, in Ireland, there have been stronger guarantees than, perhaps, we can expect to have, in England, for our similar conscience clause, notwithstanding the efforts of the League. In this

country, we must trust more to the English sense of honour and fair-play, in which, we will hope, English gentlemen, even although they may have "taken orders," will not be found wanting.

Thus far we have dealt with the Irish system in general, without taking account of the distinction between the schools called "vested" and those called "non-vested." We cannot but admire the original conception—broad, generous, and statesmanlike—which governed the moulding of the plan set forth by Mr. Stanley (Lord Derby). It has been fruitful and operative in the provincial legislation of some of the dependencies of Great Britain, and has undoubtedly, to some extent, been realised in the actual working of the Irish system. The idea which inspired the scheme was precisely the same as the Whig Government would have embodied in a National measure for England, according to the abortive, but finely-conceived, proposals which they put forth in 1839, and which provoked such a tempest of opposition in this country. But, by force of circumstances, the original conception, as set forth in 1831, has proved to be, as a whole, impracticable. The diverse elements of Irish ecclesiastical and religious life could not be held in neutral solution within the schoolroom; the process of crystallisation would proceed; it has, in fact, taken place; and, instead of a common unsectarian system, we have an aggregate of schools under denominational influence and management, which, to some effective extent, yet with many lamentable failures and drawbacks, are nationalised for educational purposes.

The experience of the first eight years after the initiation of the National School System seemed to show that the system was not likely speedily, if ever, to become truly national. The Protestant denominations generally were arrayed against it. It would not be possible to say whether the Episcopalians of the Established Church, or the Presbyterians of Ulster, were more opposed to it. It was not by any means unanimously supported by the Roman Catholic clergy. Up to the year 1839, the number of National Schools did not reach 1,400. In 1839, the Irish Board found a way to admit denominational schools, as such, into union with the Board; and from that time the number of schools rapidly increased, until, now, it is nearly 7,000. The Board secured the success of the system—by the abandonment of its original principle. Both these results were effected by the capitulation of the Board, in 1839, to the Ulster Presbyterians, from which date definite recognition has been given to the class of non-vested

schools—a class of denominational schools, which, in a fuller and stricter sense than English National or Wesleyan schools, are denominational, and which, notwithstanding, are called National, and are, in many cases, wholly—in all cases, almost wholly—maintained out of the national revenue.

At the end of 1869 (the last return) there were 6,707 schools called National in Ireland. At the same date there were in all Ireland of schools called Vested, and which, though managed by denominational patrons, are national property, having been built by public money, 1,943 separate departments; held and taught in 1,274 school-houses. All the rest of the 6,707 schools—viz., 4,764, are what are called Non-Vested schools, that is to say, schools which are the property of different denominations, or (in a few instances) personal and private property. Among these Non-Vested schools are convent schools not a few, and also monastic schools. The Model Schools (doubtless the best schools in Ireland) are only 27 in number. During the year 1869 there were 179 schools added to the list of National Schools; of these 30 only were Vested, the remaining 149 were Non-Vested.

The Non-Vested schools, as we have stated, were admitted into the system of National Schools in consequence of concessions made by the Board in 1839. From the beginning, however, the germ of that which has become so dominant a development was found in the system. From the beginning Convent Schools and the schools of the Christian Brethren were admitted into the system and to its benefits, although the buildings remained the property of the Roman Catholic Church. This was only allowed, however, under certain *nominal* conditions. The clergy of other denominations were to have access to these schools, if they thought good, at certain hours; and, except at fixed hours, it was agreed that religious instruction should not be given. But no Protestant clergyman would ever trouble the inside of a convent or of a fraternity school; very few Protestant children would be found inside such schools; and we may be absolutely certain that all restrictive conditions as to such schools would from the beginning be little more than a dead letter.

It was, however, to the sectarian tenacity and pertinacity of the Ulster Presbyterians that the full and avowed development of the system of Non-Vested schools was due. When they saw National Schools in purely Romanist districts working under the sole management of priest-patrons, they could not but know that, whatever they might profess to be, they must really be thoroughly Romanist schools; when they found Roman

Convent and Fraternity Schools, as was the case from the first, recognised as if they were proper Board Schools in the fullest sense, no wonder that they were resolved to leave no stone unturned to secure similar help and recognition for their denominational schools as National Schools. The keen Scotch-Irishmen of Ulster had a long fight to secure their point; but they did secure it at last, after years of bargaining, after negotiations had been once before concluded and then broken off. And they secured it most completely. Other denominations have since entered into the fruit of their contentions.

The Presbyterians gained three vital points—(1) That their schools should be adopted by the Board, as Church schools or as Congregational schools, not as general public schools of the town or village, the district or locality; (2) That the ministers of other communions should have no right, as in the case of ordinary National Schools, to enter their schools at any given time, for the purpose of instructing in religion the children of their flock, or at any time for any special purpose whatever; (3) That they should not be prevented from reading the Scriptures, or giving specific instruction at any hour, whether first, or last, or intermediate, which should be fixed and made definitely known—although they repudiated all obligation to dismiss or to warn the children of Roman Catholics when the hour of religious instruction should begin. From the year 1839, when they won their victory on these points, it has been a standing, a continually reiterated complaint on the part of the Roman Catholic authorities of Ireland, that throughout Ulster the children of Roman Catholics in Presbyterian schools have been in the habit of receiving in the intermediate school-hours Biblical and religious instruction from Presbyterian teachers in the Non-Vested National Schools which stand in connection with the Synod of Ulster.

The victory of the Presbyterians on behalf of denominational schools brought after it, as a consequence, an important change of the rule of the Board as to religious instruction in all the schools under the Board. The date of the Presbyterian victory was 1839. In 1842, as we have already seen, the right of giving intermediate instruction in religion, besides what might be given before or after the ordinary school hours, was extended to all the schools under the Board, whether Vested or Non-Vested. The only distinction of any importance which now exists between the Vested and Non-Vested Schools is that, in the former, the ministers of all denominations have a right to give instruction to the children of their flock in the schoolroom at certain fixed periods. We have

already seen that, in a large proportion of the Vested Schools, this right is merely a right on paper ; practically it amounts to nothing. Not even in all the Model Schools is it practically operative ; although, if claimed in any of these, it would of course be enforced.

It will be evident, from what has been now shown, how thoroughly denominational in their character and influence are most of the Irish schools, not only the Non-Vested, but many also of the Vested. In *all* the Irish schools, the " unsectarian " schools of Ireland, the catechisms of the respective denominations are taught by the school-teacher—the catechism of the Westminster Confession by the Presbyterian teacher, the Church catechism by the Episcopalian teacher, the Romish catechism by the Roman Catholic teacher. In all, the clergymen of the respective denominations give specific religious instruction themselves ; all the schoolrooms are used as Sunday schools ; in nearly all, the children are prepared for confirmation by their spiritual pastors ; most are used by the denomination to which the patrons belong on the week-night for denominational purposes as well as on the Sunday. The schools are managed, all alike, by denominational patrons, who, in nearly all cases, are clergymen, who are checked by no committee, but govern absolutely alone, and who can dismiss a teacher (according to a very precise rule of the Irish Board) at their mere option, with or without reason, without reason assigned either to the teacher or any one else. Finally, in all the Irish schools, whether Vested or Non-Vested, religious instruction may be given by patron or by teacher at any fixed hour during the ordinary school hours, besides the instruction given before or after hours. This last concession to denominationalism, forced on the Board by the Presbyterians, who had a powerful co-religionist ally, a member of their own Synod, on the Board itself, has been turned to abundant profit in Romish convent and fraternity schools. In our English denominational schools, on the other hand, there is no irresponsible priest-patron, but a responsible local committee, and no religious instruction whatever can be given at any time within the fixed school hours reserved by the Act. In our denominational schools, moreover, the Government cannot pay more than half—cannot well, on an average, pay more than about a third of the cost of maintaining the school : whereas in Ireland the national revenue contributes sometimes the whole—in most cases nearly the whole—in all cases, we believe, not less than three-fourths of the cost of maintaining the school.

The Presbyterians having obtained such a complete concession from the Board, it is no wonder that their schools were speedily brought into connection with the Board, and no wonder that other denominations presently followed their example. The whole concession was gained by the denominations, together with the advantages of Government inspection, national maintenance, and national prestige, on condition of accepting the title "National"—National "*Non-Vested*" Schools—and inscribing "National School" on their school-houses. The same description might, with at least as much justice, be conceded to the existing denominational inspected schools of England. Unless, indeed, the fact that the Government pays for schools is sufficient to constitute them "National," whoever may have the management. If so, the way to do away with the denominational character of the English voluntary inspected schools would be for the Government to relieve the denominations of their cost, while the denominations retain the management.

Before the Board capitulated to the Presbyterians in 1839, and by so doing gave definite recognition to the class of *Non-Vested* schools, the total number of National Schools was 1,384; it is now, as we have seen, 6,707. In 1838 a few Convent and Fraternity schools were almost all the schools not strictly *Vested* which were connected with the Board; now the vast majority are *Non-Vested*. In short, while the number of *Vested* schools in the last thirty years has only increased fifty per cent., the present number being, as we have said, 1,943, nearly 5,000 *Non-Vested* schools have been brought into connection with the Board. We are bound to add that the Presbyterians have made compensation for their zeal in preserving to the utmost extent possible the Protestant, the Presbyterian, the sectarian character of their own schools, by their keen and watchful jealousy to enforce, as far as possible, the non-sectarian principle of control and management in the case of Roman Catholic schools, and especially by their anxiety to prevent the Government from allowing convent schools to carry out fully the principles which they had claimed to act upon in their own Presbyterian schools. If the English principle now embodied in the Education Act were made the rule for Ireland, and strictly secular limitation were imposed on all the teaching during the recognised and ordinary hours, it would be a great relief to Irish agitation, or at least it ought to be.

We do not need to say much about the Model Schools of Ireland. The first was established in connection with the

Training Institution for Teachers in Dublin, and dates from the beginning of the system. In 1835 the Commissioners suggested in their Report the desirableness of establishing thirty-two Model Schools, one for every county in Ireland. But this has never been carried out. Even at the present time there are but twenty-seven, and it was not until 1849, that is, nearly twenty years after the beginning of the system, that any provincial Model Schools were opened. There is no doubt that these are excellent schools, although the want of local management is a serious disadvantage in some respects, however advantageous in others, and would of itself limit the multiplication of such schools. In these schools the pupil-teacher system is properly carried out; they are excellently organised, and they embody the ideas of combined literary and moral and separate religious instruction, as the Board would like to have these applied in all the National Schools of Ireland.

At first the Roman Catholic hierarchy were strongly in favour of the establishment of Model Schools, on this plan. But for more than ten years past, since the influence of Paul Cullen soared all at once to the ascendant in Ireland, they have bitterly denounced them. They now covet them, as Ultramontane establishments, in connection with which to train Roman Catholic teachers for *such* denominational schools as they would have established. We regret to say that in this, as in a number of other points, the *Report of the Royal Commission* seems to incline far too much towards the Ultramontane demands. If the Commissioners would not concede all that Cardinal Cullen desires as to this particular, they would at all events abolish these noble school establishments.

We have already intimated that there is much in the Irish system that we admire. The Time-table Conscience Clause is an invaluable element in the system, and has, in effect, been transferred by means of Mr. Forster's Education Act to our English schools. It furnishes the best solution of the religious difficulty. Whilst we should utterly protest against any proposal to make the Irish system more denominational, we by no means desire, on the other hand, to see it stripped and peeled down through all the ordinary school-hours to as barely secular a system of instruction as would seem to be required by the new Act in our English inspected schools. At the same time, to have a system of schools without local committees, under the government, each one, of a patron, who is, besides, usually a priest or clergyman, and to give to such patrons an absolutely irresponsible control over the

teachers ; all this seems to us to call very loudly for redress and reformation. Assuredly, too, the fatal, and, we had almost said, disgraceful concession to the Roman Catholic Church, by which Convent Sisters and Monastic Brothers are, as such, accepted by the Board as qualified public teachers, without any Government examination or any trial whatever, ought, on every account, to be immediately repealed. ✓

We have shown that the existing system is virtually a denominational system, and yet Cardinal Cullen is persistent in his demands for what he calls a denominational system in Ireland ; and men, either for want of any real knowledge of what the Irish system is, or to secure the advantage of an ignorant and passionate party cry, are perpetually repeating the assertion that either secularism must be established in England on the ruins of all denominational and all Christian voluntary schools, or else we shall be compelled to concede the Cardinal's demands. These men speak of the Irish system as a secular and undenominational system. How absolutely contrary to fact all this is we have fully shown, and we have no more to say on that point. But to some it may perhaps seem strange that, if the existing system in Ireland is virtually denominational, the Roman Catholic prelates should desire to change a system so favourable to the denominations. But we must not forget that the policy of Ultramontanism is absolutely exclusive. Many Roman Catholic children attend Protestant schools in Ulster ; in parts of the same province, and elsewhere, where there is a numerous Protestant minority among a Roman Catholic majority, Protestant children attend Roman Catholic schools, and are visited and catechised at the schools by their own ministers ; both these facts are unfavourable to the exclusive claims of the Ultramontane hierarchy. The National System, on the whole, tends to produce liberty of thought and liberality of feeling. A strictly and fully denominational system, managed without interference absolutely by the priesthood or the confraternities, would be immensely more congenial to the spirit and favourable to the waning power, but unabated claims, of Ultramontane Romanism. ✓

The denominational system of education which the Ultramontane party demand as their right is in entire antithesis to all the principles on which the State deals with denominational schools in this country ; is, indeed, essentially opposed to the principles of the late Privy Council Code as well as to the present New Code of the Department ; is as extreme in its Ultramontane arrogance and exclusiveness as the worst

system of education which the Pope and the Jesuits, by the most exacting of Concordats, ever imposed upon Austria in the days of her most servile and reactionary superstition; and is such as is not conceded to Rome in any Roman Catholic country at the present moment. The lower the Papacy falls in its fortunes, the smaller the real power of Roman Catholicism grows in Ireland, the louder, the larger, the more daring are the demands of Cardinal Cullen. There is a certain wisdom, no doubt, in the method. The unabashed aggressor who would in vain appeal to equity, and who knows better than to resort to actual force, will often try to carry his point by loud and persistent demands and threats.

All parties in this country, except a few Ultramontanes, whatever their politics and whatever their ecclesiastical denomination may be, are utterly and immovably opposed to the Irish Ultramontane demands. It is well that the leaders of the Birmingham agitation are opposed to these demands. But Mr. Forster occupies as firm and impregnable, and as thoroughly consistent a position, from which to refuse or oppose Cardinal Cullen, as it is possible for man to hold. Mr. Forster has disdenominationalised the English voluntary schools to the utmost possible extent, notwithstanding that the denominational managers must still find, in fees and subscriptions (one or both), at least half the cost; the Cardinal demands that the Irish National Schools shall be made denominational in the fullest and most absolute sense, although in many of them not a farthing is contributed by the managers towards their cost, either in fees or in any other way, but the whole charge lies upon the State, and in the rest next to nothing is contributed. Mr. Forster has done away with denominational inspection here, and made the undenominational State inspection much more independent and searching than before. Cardinal Cullen demands that books, methods, teachers, and inspectors should be all and wholly "Catholic," and entirely under uncontrolled and unshared priestly direction. Mr. Forster has made a stringent conscience clause binding upon all the inspected schools in this country; Cardinal Cullen demands that in "Catholic" (not in Protestant) schools in Ireland the conscience clause shall be removed and done away with. Mr. Forster has only to carry out for Ireland the principles he has embodied in his Education Act for this country, has only to proffer the Cardinal our English denominationalism, and the Cardinal will be effectually flooded.

Mr. Forster's is, in fact, the only basis on which it is possible for an English statesman to settle the educational

policy of England. This policy must be an Imperial policy. It must rest on the same fundamental principles, whether it has to deal with education for England, or Ireland, or Scotland. The very argument, mistaken as it is in its assumptions of fact, pressed by Mr. Dixon and Mr. Dale, assumes this postulate. It implies that the same fundamental principle must govern in Ireland as well as in England. Let us add Scotland, as we are bound, to England and Ireland; then what have we? Secularism abhorrent to Ireland; not less abhorrent to Scotland. Secularism cannot then be established for England. In Ireland the ordinary education of the National Schools is, in its common and central character, Christian, religious, although not in a denominational sense. In Scotland the common education is to be not only Christian and religious, but positively dogmatic. The Westminster catechism is to be taught in the rate-built schools. In neither country is the school-teacher silenced; in both he is expected to teach religion. The clergy are to be excluded from the Scotch common schools, as they are excluded from the English Board schools. In Ireland, as befits a clergy-dominated country, they give instruction in the schools at certain fixed times; but their instruction is not regarded as a part of the common, the statutory, the legally necessary, instruction. In both cases as much common religious instruction and influence is incorporated with the universal education as can be practically accomplished. The existing English system is in harmony with this principle; a secular system would be entirely opposed to it. As to the Irish University question, we will only say that we have no fear that Mr. Gladstone's, or that any Government will dare to endow a Roman Catholic University or College. All the indications point in one direction—to the establishment of a National University for Ireland, on the principle of our London University. Probably Trinity College foundations and endowments will have to be made tributary to the carrying into effect such a design as this.
