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THE
INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION BILL
AND
THE ENDOWED SCHOOLS
OF
IRELAND.

A WORD OR TWO, IN SEASON OR OUT OF SEASON.

BY
AN USHER.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

ARMAGH:
PRINTED AT THE ULSTER GAZETTE OFFICE, BY T. WHITE.

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A. M. URBAN

EDWIN STEPHENS

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INTERMEDIATE EDUCATION (IRELAND) BILL.

THE Intermediate Education (Ireland) Bill, which proposes to deal with one million pounds of the public money, has passed with lightning speed through the House of Lords, without provoking a word of real criticism, or more than a superficial remark, from any Irish or English Peer. In some of the country papers I have seen this Bill designated, of course by a clerical error, as the Immediate Education Bill. I do not suggest that the Lord Chancellor should adopt this amended title, but, having regard to the hot haste, with which the measure has been prepared and hurried through its various stages, it might be, to many, a more intelligible appellation than the word "Intermediate," which could only be rightly applied to the Bill, as I am bold to think, in the sense of its being a nondescript—neither one thing nor the other.

At the present time, the Ministers have the ball at their feet, and with their large working majority in the House of Commons, they can do much as they please there. And, what sounds stranger to the ear, the Honourable Member for Limerick has made one of his blindest and most impassioned appeals in support of a Conservative Government, to the curiously mottled crowd, with whom he occasionally acts, and who occasionally act with him.

I am writing without political bias, or personal object, and I shall not criticise too freely the Protean opinions of the Member for Limerick, nor scrutinise too severely the sincerity of the motives, which have induced him to return to his early love, and to cast in his lot with the

friends of his youth. But those who have not an unfeigned belief in humanity, may well shudder at the ghastliness of the new alliance proposed to Her Majesty's Government, and breathe from the depths of their souls, "*Timemus Danaos.*" Yet it may not be hard to understand why the Home Rule party should not offer a strenuous opposition to the Ministerial proposal. There is a million of money in the wind; the carcass of the surplus of the Disestablished Church is scenting the air, and the birds are gathering for the prey.

Within the last few days, the Presbyterians have sent off to London, in hot haste, a deputation, to negotiate for the increase by one, of the number of the Assistant Commissioners, to be appointed under the new Act. No doubt, they are anxious for the constitution of a loving triplet, a triangular Commissionership, consisting of a Roman Catholic, an Episcopalian, and a Presbyterian, each, with a salary of a thousand a year. But then, how are our friends the Methodists to be represented, and the Hydra-multitude of the unorthodox, believers, or unbelievers? The ladies, too, have interviewed, as brother Jonathan would say, the Lord Chancellor, and put in their claim for a share of the result fees—a privilege which I am sure we should all, if canvassed individually, most cheerfully concede to them.

Every place-hunter in the United Kingdom is smacking his lips and rubbing his hands, and scanning with loving eye the glorious prospect opening out upon him in the future—the snug nooks and crannies, which may be secured under the New Board. The Irish Press, with one or two exceptions, has received with a wild whoop of approval the proposal of the Government; we are bidden to behold and wonder; to turn our eyes from the Ministers to their Chief, to admire. "*Virum quum foris clarum, tum domi admirandum, neque rebus externis magis laudandum quam institutis domesticis*", or, in plain English, "This is the man, no less

distinguished at Dublin, than at Berlin, great alike in making Foreign Potentates bow to his will, and in pacifying Home Rulers. The hatchet is buried, the Celt is conciliated; let us rest and be thankful, and celebrate with all devotion, this, the crowning achievement, of little Benjamin our ruler."

There is, therefore, every prospect, if time only permit this session, of this Bill being forced through the House of Commons, and becoming law. I have no expectation, of course, of being in any way able to affect a foregone conclusion.

An Englishman, occupying a very humble and obscure position in Ireland, I have no pretension whatever, as an individual, to rush into print, or to intrude on the public. I may, however, though I could have wished to say nothing of myself personally, be, perhaps, permitted to urge this much by way of explanation, if not in excuse, of my temerity. I was educated at one of the first public schools in England, and am a member of the University of Cambridge. For three and twenty years I have been busily engaged in the work of teaching; for the last seven years I have been associated, as I still am, with the School, which, without any wish to be invidious, I think I may assert to be at the present time, both as regards the number of boys on the roll, and the distinctions which have been gained, and still continue to be gained by the pupils it sends to Trinity College, Dublin, second to none of the Endowed Schools in Ireland. Circumstances have afforded me, both in England and Ireland, opportunities of observation, and of obtaining a close and practical experience with the working of very many of the great schools, such as perhaps do not fall to the lot of many teachers.

The question of Higher Education is one on which I have thought much, and in which I have ever taken a deep interest; and, therefore, though I do not claim at all to be more instructed than my fellows, I crave permission to say a few words as to the reasons why I cannot join in this universal chorus of jubilee, nor be too sanguine as to the realisation of the results, predicted

from the measure, so shortly to be brought under the consideration of the House of Commons.

No one will be disposed to deny the Government full credit for sincerity, nor for their natural anxiety to deal with the difficult question of Irish Education, but it may well be doubted, whether in this, as in most matters affecting Ireland, they have not been misinformed and illadvised, and have been acting on data, either insufficient, or at variance with existing facts. I would fain hope that they may not, as it appears to some, have been hood-winked by designing persons, who are ever on the alert to catch unwary politicians.

However this may be, my firm belief, and the belief of many who think with me is, that the proposed scheme, if it can be carried into effect, will prove to be only another denominational sop, which will be absorbed by, but will not in any way satisfy, the rapacious maws of that cormorant crew, who, by their clamouring claim to represent contending creeds and national interests, in this distracted country.

Before, therefore, that the matter passes altogether out of the region of argument ; before that so large a slice of the capital of the State is swept away, *tout d'un coup* to be dissipated, as I believe, mainly in jobbery and corruption ; before that the question of Higher Education in Ireland, whether affecting the Roman Catholic or the Protestant part of the community, is shelved, without being solved, and all real reformation in existing educational institutions, though most urgently needed, is thereby indefinitely postponed,—I would put as briefly as possible, and in the form of questions, one or two points, which have suggested themselves to my mind. I shall not attempt to offer a solution of the *quaestio vexata* of Irish Education, nor will time nor space permit me, to enter into details, as I should wish, had I the opportunity, to establish many of the positions, which I may seem to advance.

I would ask then :—

I. Is there, apart from the exigencies of party, and the affectation of statesmanship, any such pressing need of an immediate solution of this question, as would justify a measure, dealing with so large a sum of money, being hurried through Parliament, towards the end of a Session?

II. Ireland is undoubtedly governed, at least, as far as the great majority of her population is concerned, in all matters, educational and religious, more than any other Roman Catholic country in the world, from Rome.

As long as the Irreconcilable party, there, that is, at Rome, exhibit the vitality and the determination they have exhibited, since the accession to the Pontificate of Leo, XIII., is there the slightest reason to hope that the sop, now offered, will really soothe a single ache, or stifle the faintest scream of the Irreconcilables here?

I trow not; they will pretend to accept your overtures, they will take your money, in any quantity, and contrive to satisfy any conditions that may be imposed on them, involving its acceptance, but they will spurn your principles, and reject any liberal basis of education, which may require united action.

III. Has the result system, on which the new Bill rests, been so absolutely and entirely successful in England, as a means of, or a stimulant to sound education, as to encourage a wide and costly application of the same system to Ireland?

I know that this is a controverted matter, and that many eminent men, Mr. Lowe among the foremost, have a great belief in the principle, which he has so consistently supported, in the University of London, and in other places. But here again, at the risk of a personal reference, I must say, and I say it with all humility, that I presume to differ from men much more enlightened than myself.

I have had a practical experience, extending over some hundreds of pupils, in preparing for result examinations. I have derived a considerable income from this source, and I have no

doubt, that should the Government measure become the law of this country, I could, without great difficulty, derive much pecuniary profit, in the future, from the same source, were I so minded. Yet, though I do not, with some, regard the system as an unmixed evil, I do believe that it is not only open to most mischievous application, but that it is often most mischievously applied.

IV. Admitting the soundness of the principle, where is the educational area, in Ireland, which is to feed your examinations? How is the feast to be furnished with guests? Will you go out into the highways, for your examinees, if you do, what becomes of your higher educational standard?

It is very easy to say that the prizes offered will create the supply of candidates. In the halcyon days, which await this Isle of Erin, pigs may fly, and schools and scholars multiply *ad infinitum*. But any one, who is at all acquainted with the possibilities of Higher Education, in Ireland, and who would give a candid opinion, must say that the establishment of high class schools, in any numbers, in addition to those already existing, is virtually impossible, and that the growth of such schools, if established would be very slow, as slow almost, as the growth of the plant of charity in this island, which some people think has been growing downwards, since the days of St. Patrick.

As regards the present supply of candidates, any one again, who has the slightest acquaintance with the subject, would not hesitate to say that, taking the whole number of boys, at this moment, receiving their education in Ireland, whether in the Roman Catholic seminaries, or in the Protestant schools, endowed or unendowed, of every denomination, not one in ten of them could be found to qualify for such an examination, as the one proposed.

There are those in modern times, as well as in the days of old, who will compass sea and land to make one proselyte.

There are those, and of every denomination, who will move heaven and earth to secure the largest share of the spoil offered to them by this Bill; *Si possint, Recte; Si non, Quocunque modo*. I do not draw any inferences, as to which of the many contending parties, will fill its pockets, or the coffers of its schools, the fastest and the fullest.

But I do say, that the chief result of this measure, if ever it can be made to work at all, will be to inaugurate a system of atrocious cramming and of abominable trickery.

The race will be for the result fees, and the victory will, in many cases, fall to the most unscrupulous.

There are, as I have shown, very few schools, in Ireland, which could prepare candidates to satisfy the proposed test. In order, therefore, to obtain the fees, boys will be nominally members of some school, and it will be contrived that they shall, in some way or other, satisfy the hundred attendances, during the previous year. These boys will be really got up, I cannot call it prepared, by some of those ingenious persons, who are adepts at getting boys and young men through any examination. Will this promote sound education?

V. What is the meaning of the word "Intermediate," as applied to this Bill? Is its object to stimulate Middle Class Education in the sense in which this term is ordinarily understood in England? Will any practical teacher, who has ever been half-an-hour in a school room, turn to the Schedule of the Act, and look at the list of subjects proposed, and say whether they are such, as he would expect to find taught generally in Middle Class Schools?

I cannot but think that this part of the Schedule, especially, when I consider the amiable way, in which subjects and groups of subjects and languages, are mingled together, in happy confusion, so that it is quite impossible to discover the precise limits of any one subject, must have been drafted by some of those mysterious persons, alike irreconisable and irresponsible,

who prepare the programme of the English subjects, set for the Competitive Examinations, for the Army and the Civil Service. These sublime beings exhibit their practical acquaintance with the potentiality of the ordinary British boy, at 17, by proposing the works of Bacon or of Burke, for his bewilderment, and they are the real authors of any mischief that may have arisen, or may arise, from that which is abused, whether rightly or wrongfully, as cramming.

There is a Middle Class, at least, in the North of Ireland. One of the members for the County of Monaghan, speaking some time since, I think, on the Municipal Franchise (Ireland) Bill, informed the House, if I understood him rightly, that there was no Middle Class in this country. The statement, no doubt, at the time, served his argument, and would be modified and explained by him, for it is quite impossible that he should not be aware of the existence of so important and influential a body of men.

The merchants, the larger farmers, the tradesmen, I am speaking only of those in the north of Ireland, for I have no personal experience of other parts of Ireland, are to my mind the true backbone and sinew of this island. They earn their money here, and they spend it, where they earn it. They do not, like too many of their superiors, in social rank, turn their backs with scorn upon the institutions of their country, and take themselves, their children, and their money to England. They are not struck with the prettiness of the English accent, and the superiority of the connections, to be formed, in boyhood, in England. They do not send their sons to English schools, to get no better instruction than they could get at home, but to grow up in complete ignorance of the wants and feelings of those, of whom they are to be the lords and masters, and too often to learn to regard with contempt the soil, which is to yield them their means of livelihood.

The Middle Classes in the North are warmly attached to their

country and to its institutions. They are anxious to educate their children well, and they do want a system of education, more adapted to the requirements of the positions, which these children are destined to occupy, than any, which is afforded them, at present. Will this new Bill supply their wants? Assuredly not. Enlarge the borders of the Endowed Schools, at present in existence, and increase their usefulness. Establish either in them, or in Middle Class schools, to be associated with them, a real and efficient system of English education, a thing which is not even attempted, in the majority of existing schools, and which is carried out, consistently, in none of them. Create new schools, where necessary, on the same principles of instruction, and without respect to creed or party. These men, of the Middle Class, will then heartily thank you and readily avail themselves of the privileges offered to them. But how are they to get their sons prepared for this complicated examination, as matters stand at present, and how much better would their sons be, if they could pass the examination?

Again, the prizes offered, seem to me, considered relatively to the difficulty of the standard required, far too paltry to be likely to stimulate, to any great extent, individual exertion. The boys in the higher schools, who would be qualified to enter into such a competition, have before them the greater attraction of the competitive examinations, for the Army and Civil Service, open to all Her Majesty's subjects, and hundreds of Irish boys have competed and are competing successfully in these examinations.

Lastly, will not the main, and, for some years, the only tendency of this measure be to create new machinery, new patronage, more place-hunters, more toadyism? Is not Ireland, at the present time murdered with machinery, and blasted by Bumbledom? We have wheels within wheels, and Boards upon Boards, and not one drop of oil to prevent rust; not a spark of life, or of energy, to drive away senility and decrepitude from this elaborate

organisation. There are two Boards of Education already, in Dublin, and any number of Examining Boards, established there, and in other parts of Ireland.

That man would be a bold prophet, who would venture to speculate on the amount of clashing and clatter, and official squabbling, that will take place, when the New Board shall spring into being, and confront those already in existence.

Revise and reform your old Boards before you create new ones. Purge them of their ex-officio members, whether laymen or ecclesiastics, who seldom grace the meetings with their presence, and when they do, know nothing about the business brought before them. Put practical men on every board, and pay them, if necessary, for their attendance. Let there be a sprinkling, among the Commissioners, of men with local influence, and such as are in a position to know something of the wants of the various localities, in which the educational institutions are situated. You will then have useful and working Boards.

I said, that I should not attempt any solution of this problem of Irish Education, one of the most difficult ones, that has ever puzzled a statesman. I do not believe myself that the question is yet ripe for solution. Until European opinion can make itself felt with greater force, than it is, at present, in ecclesiastical circles at Rome, and throughout Italy, till the subtle influence of the Italian Cardinals, which is holding even the Pope himself in thrall, is finally stamped under foot and crushed out of the dark corners of the Vatican, you will never content the extreme party here, by any legislation, which stops short of an absolute surrender to them of most of the educational revenues of the country, or such a scheme of concurrent endowment, as places, unconditionally, at their disposal, the lion's share.

But I do believe that much may be done to prepare the way for an harmonious settlement, in the future, by an honest and thorough Reform of existing educational institutions, by enlarging their borders, by broadening their bases, and blotting out

from them, utterly and for ever, any traces still remaining of bigotry and sectarianism. There would be thus eliminated from the question one great element of discontent, which has afforded to many Protestants, who are not Episcopalians, a plausible pretext for welcoming the Bill of the Government.

Under the altered circumstances of the Endowed Schools, it would be possible for Protestants, of all denominations, to meet on the broad platform of education, and to enjoy in common the schools and their endowments, nor should I despair of liberal minded Roman Catholics, eventually sending their sons to be educated, under this extended and enlightened rule.

The mention of the reform of the existing institutions, in Ireland, and of their extension, leads me on naturally to say a few words, in conclusion, as to the present condition of the Endowed Schools. My time is too much occupied, just now, and my space too limited, to admit of my touching on more than one or two points, which seem to require notice. I shall trench as lightly as possible upon vested interests, and shall try to say nothing that may wound the sensibilities of the most touchy of school masters. I shall make no statement that I do not firmly believe in, and cannot substantiate.

The Irish schoolmasters, as a body, are hard working and energetic men, and circumstances, over which they have no control, are responsible for many of the defects, which I shall have to point out.

Lord Randolph Churchill and the Lord Chancellor, have each, at different times, referred in Parliament to the Royal and other Endowed Schools, and the latter has hinted at the appointment of a Commission to inquire into their management, and into other matters respecting them. I fervently hope, that whatever may be the fate of the Intermediate Education Bill, this will be done speedily and be done well. I hope that the Commission will be constituted, irrespective of politics, or of party, of men, who really understand the subject they have to deal with, and who will be empowered to summon, as witnesses, not only persons in high official or scholastic positions, who will give the Commissioners plenty of statistics and plenty of theories, and supply them with information,

on every subject, except those, on which they need to be informed, but of others also without distinction.

Among the subordinates, there will be found men of practical experience, who have borne the burden and heat of the day, and who will have no interest, either in keeping back, or in explaining away the truth.

I have not the honour of an acquaintance with Lord Randolph Churchill. I am sure that he is a young nobleman of earnest mind, and one, who is sincerely desirous to take a statesmanlike view of all questions, especially of Irish questions, and to provide a remedy for the admitted deficiencies of the Higher Education in Ireland.

But, if I might use the privilege of a *Davus*, and the liberty of December, I would,—first declaring myself, in all sincerity, to be *amicum mancipium domino, et frugi, quod sit satis*, that is to say “his Lordship’s obedient servant and well wisher, and as honest as most men in these days”—recommend Lord Randolph to study more for himself and to trust less to others. He may have been insensd in his facts by some of the literary hangers-on of the Castle, or he may have gleaned his information in the purlieus of the Dublin Historical Society, or in the still more mysterious precincts of the Ulster King at Arms. Yet his letter to Sir Bernard Burke, who, by the bye, one would have supposed greater at escutcheons, than at education, appeared to me, and to many others, to be incorrect in its statements, and to contain an embryo scheme, which, however plausible, must have been strangled in its birth.

Both the Lord Chancellor and Lord Randolph Churchill seem to have depended too much on the Report of the Irish Education Commission of 1858, a Commission, which, no doubt elicited valuable information, but which had its origin, to a great extent, in local and party prejudice, and whose Report, defective at the time of its issue, does not certainly represent the state of the Endowed Schools, at the present time.

The case of these Institutions has thus been both understated and overstated. One inconvenience arising from the overstatement of abuses, is that an opportunity is afforded to venturesome individuals to rush by way of disclaimer, or of advertisement, into cor-

respondence with great personages, and to assert with vehemence the achievements of themselves, or of others, while they studiously avoid all reference to what they have really done amiss.

And now, there is neither time nor space left, for much that I had hoped to say about the Endowed Schools, and I must reserve for a future opportunity, if it should be afforded me, many of the details. I will express, as concisely, and as clearly, as I can, what seem to me some of the worst blots in the present system of Higher Education, in Ireland. My experience has been chiefly of the Royal Schools, but I believe that any statement, I may make, will apply to all, or the majority of the Endowed Schools, throughout Ireland.

For convenience of arrangement then and for brevity, I will consider :—

I. The Character of the Schools.

Whatever may be said to the contrary, there is no such institution, in Ireland, in any sense of the word, as a Public School. The Royal and Endowed Schools are simply private speculations, bolstered up with, and assisted by Public Money, and the Head Master is the only person connected with them who derives any personal benefit from the success of the School.

II. The position of the Head Master and his relation to the School generally.

The Head Master has a fixed annual salary, whether there is a single pupil in the school, or not.

The Commissioners of Education in Dublin pay the Head Master and also in each Royal School the salary of one Assistant Master, who is appointed by the Head Master.

A handsome private residence, good school buildings, built, by the Commissioners, and enlarged, when necessary, and kept constantly in good repair, at their expense, together with lands, are attached to the Head Mastership, far beyond what is usual with Head Masters, in England, who may occupy as good or better positions.

I say nothing in disparagement of this. The labourer is worthy

of his hire, and gentlemen, who have gained the highest University distinctions, as many of the Head Masters have, and who have such onerous duties devolving upon them, deserve the handsomest remuneration.

The unreserved possession however of these buildings, lands, etc., has naturally a tendency to create in each Head Master a sense of private and personal ownership, and of an absolute and unconditional tenure of them, which is not always compatible with the true interests of the School at large. In theory, the existence of any such feeling will, no doubt, be denied; its result in practice is undeniably true.

III. The Head Master's Boarders, and the Day Scholars.

In addition to the salary and the appurtenances of his office, already mentioned, the Head Master takes a large number of boarders, for whom the Commissioners provide the necessary buildings. I do not, myself, consider it desirable to give any Head Master so direct a personal and pecuniary interest in the numerical increase of a school. I believe that it lowers his dignity, endangers his impartiality, and impairs his usefulness. Still, under present circumstances, it is a most proper and beneficial arrangement. It enables the Head Master to realise an income suited to his position and to engage the services of efficient Assistant Masters, and it undoubtedly tends to raise the character and tone of the school, and to extend its usefulness.

But if each school was not founded, in the first instance, for the benefit of the locality in which it is placed, it could have no reason for its particular location, nor even for its existence.

It might be expected therefore that the Day Boys would be the centre, around which the rest of the school would revolve.

This, as it appears to me, at least, is not invariably the case, though I am aware that my view may be contested, and exhibited in a different light. I must be understood therefore, as recording only a personal impression, which, though not rashly formed, is liable to honest exception by those, who do not share my opinions, in this respect.

IV. The method of appointment of the Head Masters. Their responsibility and removability.

On this point of the subject, I am rather at a loss, how to make any statement, which may not be contradicted. The principle of appointment appears to me to vary according to time and place and circumstance, and if I am wrong, I can only cite one or two instances, which seem to me to justify this view.

The appointment of the Head Masters, in the Royal Schools, does not, strange to say, rest with the Commissioners of the Schools, but in some of the Schools, is vested in the Crown, and in others in the Lord Primate, the Archbishop of Armagh. The posts however, both in the Royal Schools and in the other Endowed Schools are, ostensibly open to general competition.

In the case of the Royal School of Armagh, the Lord Primate has claimed and exercised, for many years, a prescriptive right of appointing the Head Master, much to the chagrin of our Presbyterian brethren. I do not know how far the Disestablishment of the Irish Church may affect this right, nor do I desire to enter into the merits of the controversy, as to the right, in question.

I am glad, however, of this opportunity of recording my sense of the great debt of gratitude, which the cause of Higher Education owes to His Grace, for the very admirable appointment, made in 1869, of the present excellent Head Master, who, in a very short time, has turned the desolation of the wilderness into a smiling garden.

The principle of competition was most fully recognised, in making this appointment. The vacancy was advertised, both in the English and the Irish newspapers, and the selection of a fitting candidate from those, who offered themselves was most judiciously entrusted by His Grace to a Committee. The wisdom of this proceeding has been most amply illustrated by the excellent results, which have followed from the adoption of the recommendation of the Committee.

The same wisdom and openness of dealing has not been exhibited in a more recent and a more notable instance. We have

here to deal almost entirely with rumour, and a want of accuracy, in any statement, must find its excuse and its explanation in the mystery and secrecy of that, which should have been a public transaction.

Somewhere about a year ago a vacancy occurred in the Head Mastership of an Endowed Protestant College, in one of the largest cities in the north of Ireland.

If I recollect a-right, no such advertisement as to the vacant post appeared, as would invite general competition, nor did any competition take place. But, if report says truly, by a negotiation entered into by the Bishop of the Diocese with the Honourable Irish Society, with whom conjointly with himself the appointment rested, the Bishop ceded to the Society his right of appointment. According to the same report, after an amount of higgling, which, if true, recalls the palmy days of Shylock and the Rialto, the Society filled up the vacancy. The only part, which the Bishop bore in the transaction, if rumour again is not in fault, was subsequently to deconsecrate, or secularise some building, which under a former regime had been appropriated to Sectarian uses, but which under the paternal and universal rule inaugurated by the new Head Master is now devoted to higher and wider purposes.

But, I am not now dealing with Rites and Ceremonies, nor do I wish, in any way, to call in question the aptness of this appointment. The gentleman appointed, had been previously, I believe, chiefly known for the excellence of his theories on the bad effects of corporal punishment on boys, and the beneficial influence on schools of moral suasion, and equestrian exercise, but I hear that he is a shrewd and a clever man, and likely to make good use of every opportunity afforded him.

The instances quoted, however, do seem to point to the desirability of a more uniform and intelligible system of appointment to all these Head Masterships.

V. The responsibility and removability of the Head Masters.

I believe that the Head Master of every school is practically

irresponsible and irremovable. In corroboration of this belief, I can only adduce the case, which has now become notorious, through Reports of Commissions, and other Public Reports, of a Regally Endowed School, in the North of Ireland, which, for nearly twenty years, has been languishing in a hopeless condition, and in which, for several years the Royal Exhibitions and Scholarships tenable from the school, at Trinity College, Dublin, have lain dormant, because there have been no boys properly prepared, or qualified to take them. The Head Master of this school, is still, if I am correctly informed, engaged in elaborating schemes for a retiring pension for himself, but as none of these has, as yet, secured the approval of the Lord Lieutenant, he has not thought fit to yield to rebukes and remonstrances, nor to make any change either in his own position, or in that of the School.

VI. The Board of Commissioners.

The Head Masters are, no doubt, nominally, responsible to this Board, and nearly all of them would give ready submission and obedience to any wish that the Commissioners might express. But, as I have said before, the Board seldom meets, and many of its members are high officials or ecclesiastics, who have no time to attend the meetings. Those of the Commissioners, who do come, are most anxious to do what they can for the good of the Trusts committed to them, but they are completely hampered, by the limitation of their powers. For instance, each of the five Royal Schools has a separate estate for its maintenance, and the Commissioners want the will, if they have the power to transfer one farthing from the revenues of any school, that is languishing, as in the instance recently cited, to help other schools, which are more deserving. The whole constitution and powers of the Board want revision, and it might perhaps also be arranged, that the Commissioners should occasionally hold their meetings at one of the schools, to be selected in turn, instead of always meeting in Dublin.

VII. The Assistant Masters. Their position and emoluments.

This is the last point, on which I shall have time to touch, in

connection with the Royal Schools, and I am sorry that I shall be compelled to speak very briefly, for though it has come last, it is by no means the least of the defects in the present system.

The Assistant Masters in the Royal Schools, and, I believe, in the other Endowed Schools, are simply persons hired by the Head Master to assist him in the work of the school, and to do such work, in or out of school, as he may appoint. I have already said that in the Royal Schools, the Commissioners pay the salary of one Assistant Master, who is appointed by the Head Master.

There are but few schools throughout Ireland, where the wages, or position offered to an Assistant Master are such, as a man of University Education, with the instincts of a gentleman could accept.

I am proud to say that, among the most honourable exceptions to "so degrading a debasement of educated men, the School, with which I am connected, stands preeminent. The Head Master is, in every sense of the word, a gentleman, whom it is a privilege to know, and by whom, all, officially connected with him, are ever treated with respect and personal friendship. Yet, the Assistant Masters are but his hired servants, and though they might remain twenty years in Ireland, and give all their health and strength to the service of the school, they would be in no better a position at the end of their time than at the beginning of it, but in one much worse, as they would be much older, and more unfit for work.

The tenure of all Assistant Masters is simply "*durante beneplacito*"—"to be paid, as the king pleases, and dismissed at his good pleasure;" they have no direct personal interest in the school, nor real position in it. When to this is added, the shabby way in which they are remunerated, in most cases, and the social degradation to which they are subjected, it is not wonderful that the Assistant Masters in Ireland are so inferior to those occupying a similar position in England. Another great mistake is, that no facilities are afforded to the Assistant Masters, for taking boarders, on their own account, and that no real encouragement is given by the Head Masters to private enterprise, in this respect.

Let the Assistant Masters be nominated by the Head Master, and under his control, but let them be appointed and paid by the Commissioners, and let them be encouraged and even assisted to take boarders. You will then have really first class schools in Ireland, and a liberal system of Higher Education established, in schools at present existing, and in others to be established.

There are many other points of detail, both as regards the Bill, and the Endowed Schools, which have been left without notice, from want of time and space.

In the matter of the Bill, it would have been well to ask, who in the case of the Royal and other Endowed Schools, are to be considered the Managers, of such schools under the new Act, should it come into operation.

It may be supposed that these schools will not be excluded from the competition, and that if they are admitted, they will, for some years to come, supply a considerable quota, of the "happy few," who according to my view, could possibly qualify for the examination proposed. Will the Commissioners of Education or the Head Masters, pocket the fees earned by successful candidates?

In respect of the Endowed Schools, it is only possible to jot down at random a few of the points which have not been touched upon, to wit;—the system of management and of instruction pursued; the questions of examiners and examinations and prizes, and of school hospitality, that is of receiving, at certain times, and entertaining persons on behalf of the School; expenses, all of which are most unfairly, at present, borne by the Head Masters, and which in the few cases, where liberality and efficiency are exhibited, involve a heavy expenditure. Then again the relations of the various schools with Trinity College, Dublin, and other Academical Institutions, which are at present most unsatisfactory, and much else must be reserved for future consideration.

These remarks have been put together most hastily during the last two or three days, at such intervals as I could snatch, in the midst of a very busy and fully occupied life. In order to save time, and to hurry publication, this pamphlet has been set up in por-

tions, just as there was time to supply the printer with copy, and there has been no opportunity afforded for a revision of the whole.

There is much in it that might be clarified condensed and corrected, were revision possible, at the present moment. Confused however and imperfect as it is, necessarily, under the circumstances, under which it has been strung together, it errs from understatement and not from overstatement of any fact that it exhibits.

It has been my wish to show that there is no urgent need, just at present, of a hastily devised measure.

That the result system has not been, in many respects, successful in England, as a means of sound education, and a stimulus to it.

That its application to Ireland, in the present condition of Higher and Middle Class Education, is virtually impossible, and if attempted, will inevitably lead to corruption and jobbery. That there is ample educational machinery in Ireland, at the present time, if it only be set in order and extended, to satisfy the wants of all creeds and classes in the country, except the Irreconcilables, who are not ripe for reconciliation, and who will not be reconciled by the measure proposed.

That there are ample prizes, at present, and incentives to the promotion of Higher and Middle Class Education, and of individual exertion, in the Universities and Colleges of the country, above all, in the Public Competitive Examinations for the Army and Civil Service, which are open to all denominations.

To conclude ; no one knows better than myself, how hopeless it is in the present state of public opinion to attempt to argue against Result Systems, or Competitive Examinations. The principle involved in all these systems and examinations seems to me one and the same thing, though it may vary in its mode of application.

As regards any remark made on the Endowed Schools, one word of explanation may perhaps be permitted me.

When people are snug and comfortable, they do not like to be disturbed, and it is difficult in dealing with matters which concern vested interests, to avoid treading on the corns of some individual,

whom system, or circumstance, may have associated with a particular abuse. I should be sorry however, to have said a word, which may unnecessarily wound the susceptibilities of any creature living. My object has been to state the truth, and not to attack persons. In one case, the case of the languishing School, plain speaking could not be avoided, but the abuse is of a most flagrant character.

In speaking of the Intermediate Education Bill, it has not been my intention nor wish to depreciate any religious or political party, and certainly not to deny my Roman Catholic brethren, for whom I have a profound respect, and among whom I have many personal friends, the justice, which is theirs by right.

The nature of my daily occupations does not afford me any facilities for either studying or writing on public questions, and this pamphlet, if it had any merit of its own, has from circumstances, which could not be controlled, appeared far too late to excite interest. But I have been goaded into an act of rashness by hearing the unsound and incorrect opinions that are constantly expressed about Irish Education. Roman Catholics and Protestants, School Masters and Place Hunters, are all rushing in to see what they can get out of the new Bill, and possibly none but the Roman Catholics, are really considering the probable results of the Bill itself.

These prowlers for pickings are most exasperating. I am no "Prophet of Ill," nor do I pretend to be able to see any farther than my neighbours. Yet, in no unfriendly spirit to the Government, I can now only express the hope, that they may not, under the semblance of a liberal and secular measure, be unconsciously bringing into operation a system of trickery and corruption, which will result in Denominational Education, in its most subtle form, being erected and subsidised, out of the spoils of the Disestablished Church.

AN USHER.

ARMAGH, *July 10th*, 1878.

