THE RELATIONS EXISTING BETWEEN CONVENT SCHOOLS AND THE SYSTEMS OF INTERMEDIATE AND PRIMARY NATIONAL EDUCATION.

BY

MOST REV. T. NULTY,

Bishop of Meath.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED BY BROWNE & NOLAN, NASSAU STREET.

1884.

ONE SHILLING.

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DEDICATION.

TO THE MOST EMINENT AND REV.

HENRY EDWARD CARDINAL MANNING,

Archbishop of Westminster.

MY DEAR LORD CARDINAL,

I venture to take the liberty of dedicating to you the accompanying Essay on the existing state of popular Education in Ireland. Your Eminence can hardly fail to take a deep interest in this subject. No Prelate living could do more than you have done for the education of your flock, and the great majority of that flock are my countrymen. You had abundant opportunities, therefore, of witnessing the extent to which their education has been neglected at home. Centuries ago, we educated in Ireland the flower of the youth of Europe in the sacred and secular sciences, and in the philosophy and literature current in those ages. Since then, cruel and unjust laws made it impossible for us, until a comparatively recent period, to educate our own youth even in the principles of our religion. In my own boyhood, I frequently heard old men glorying in the ingenuity of the stratagem by which they were smuggled as merchandize, in wagons covered with tarpaulins, to the hiding-place of the Bishop who Confirmed them. They were conveyed back again, as "goods unsold," without exciting the suspicion of the Authorities. Mental culture and progress in sacred or secular knowledge were rather difficult operations under conditions like these. The unjust and bigoted intolerance which would not allow Catholics then to educate their children on any terms, continues to interdict them still, unless they surrender their

claims to the education which they prefer, and submit to the secularism which they abhor. The great object at which the secularism of the present, as well as the intolerance of the past, seems to aim, is to make every form of true education practically impossible for Irish Catholics. Your Eminence has, therefore, always generously excused our educational defects; and you have ever asserted that, in strict justice, we could hardly be held responsible for them.

In the learned and elaborate analysis you have made of the prelates of the Vatican Council, you proved that bishops of Irish birth or of Irish extraction formed an enormously large proportion of that august assembly. That fact proves that our ancient intellectual vigour and brilliancy have not as yet departed from us; and that Irish missionaries and preachers still instruct a large and an influential section of the Christian world in the principles of our religion.

Throughout the whole period of the Vatican Council I enjoyed a considerable amount of intimate and familiar intercourse with your Eminence. The knowledge I had thus acquired of you obliged me to regard you as the highest, the noblest, and the truest type of your race and country, your character embodying all the distinctive qualities and peculiarities that characterize the genuine Englishman. The fact, therefore, of seeing your heart filled to overflowing with warm, generous, and enthusiastic love for my countrymen, often forced on my mind the conviction that, if the masses of the English and the Irish people only knew each other to be what they really are, they would, even without the Divine precept of fraternal love, naturally and spontaneously love one another. The bitter race hatreds, the national animosities and antipathies of centuries, must have, then, all originated in a mutual but fatal misconception of each other's real character.

As a mark of the admiration, the affection, and the gratitude which my countrymen, as well as myself, feel for your Eminence, I beg leave to dedicate this essay to you. In its

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opening pages it deals with some popular misconceptions, in which it seems to have been unfairly assumed that something like a general decline had paralysed, to some extent, the efficiency of our Convent Schools. The essay then undertakes to prove the utter incompetence of the existing systems of Irish National Education to realize the great objects and advantages of true education. This is undoubtedly a serious indictment of two systems of education which are rather popular just now in this country, and I am fully conscious of the responsibility it implies. Nevertheless, I make it, in good faith, and in full persuasion of its truth. I do not say that the arguments which I adduce individually sustain it in its entirety; but I do say that the accumulated result of them all, taken as a whole, is clear and unanswerable proof of it. Fairly to feel their full force, they should be read consecutively through.

I remain,

My dear Lord Cardinal,

Ever respectfully, &c.,

✠ THOMAS NULTY.

Mullingar, January, 1884.

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The Relations existing between Convent Schools

AND THE SYSTEMS OF

INTERMEDIATE AND PRIMARY NATIONAL EDUCATION.

A number of Communities of various Religious Orders are now engaged in the education of the female Catholic youth of the middle and higher classes in this country. These Conventual Boarding Schools are scattered over the land in all directions. There are few dioceses that do cot enjoy the advantage of having at least one of these institutions, while in some dioceses there are as many as three or four of them. As a rule, they are all individually distinct and independent of one another, each possessing its own private property, and subsisting on its own resources and earnings. A fair and honourable rivalry is, from the very nature of the case, necessarily maintained amongst them; all compete for the confidence and patronage of Catholic parents, and each strives to secure its fair share of the honour of having entrusted to its care the mental, moral, and religious training of the Catholic female youth of our country.

But, though this rivalry is undoubtedly keen and active, and although the antagonism of the different interests is genuine and real, it would, nevertheless, be hardly accurate to say that these educational establishments feel the full force or enjoy all the advantages of free, open, and effective competition. The competition that is really maintained amongst them is not that which directs them to look to their own resources alone, and bids them rely exclusively on

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their own efforts, industry, and skill as the only practicable as well as the only honourable means, both for the advancement of their individual interests and for fair and legitimate superiority over their rivals. The conditions under which those Conventual Boarding Schools actually exist in this country are incompatible with genuine competition of this kind. They are all isolated and independent of each other, and no form of practical educational intercommunion exists among them. There is no common ground on which they can individually display and measure their intellectual strength; and no opportunity ever occurs for observing and comparing the various gradations of merit and of superiority in the habits of order, of industry and self-denial which the pupils acquire in each of them in a given time. The character and merit of the work which each performs, and the educational results which it produces, are entirely unknown to all the other communities and to the public. Under existing circumstances, no motive is held out for increased exertion or sacrifice with a view of raising the standard of their teaching; and no reward is ever given for superior merit, even to the extent of publishing and making it widely known. It can hardly be said, therefore, that these schools are on anything like a footing of fair and effective competition. And yet, free and open competition is the most powerful and irresistible of all moral forces to raise the studies and teaching of a school, and to maintain them at a high standard of efficiency. The spirit of rivalry and emulation which competition engenders, is all that is wanting to enable our Conventual Boarding Schools to develop into models of perfection as educational institutes. There is no form of educational improvement and no degree of educational perfection above or beyond their reach, when they are once

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stimulated by competition to exert all their energies and skill in the effort to seize and appropriate them. Let the managers and teachers of these schools clearly see that the educational results they produce will entirely depend upon, and be always proportioned to, the efforts they make and the pains they take ; let them, further, understand that the results they produce can be measured, and their exact value fixed, with all but mathematical accuracy ; that the merit and excellence of these results will constitute their sole and exclusive claim to the confidence and support of Catholic parents, and that in them too will be found their title-deeds to a place of precedence in the honour roll of distinguished schools—and then, nothing that enlightened, persevering effort and sacrifice can accomplish, will be left undone, to raise the character of the schools and the standard of education given in them. To indolent, self-indulgent or unmortified teachers of the world, the sacrifices which keen competition exacts must appear excessively severe—yet they willingly make them. But to ladies who have voluntarily and irrevocably nailed themselves to the cross of their Lord by their vows of chastity, poverty, and obedience, they will seem absolutely trivial and insignificant. Why, then, should not the education of perhaps the most important and influential section of Catholic youth be favoured with all the advantages that flow from free and open competition, seeing that the sacrifices which it implies cost so little and will be made so cheerfully ?

Again, human ingenuity has not yet devised a system of education that is absolutely faultless and perfect, and incapable of further development. Grave and mischievous defects may also insensibly creep into every system, and into the method and manner in which it is administered. The Sisters may be looking at these defects all their lives

long, and none of them may have succeeded in detecting them. An important department of every educational programme—correct spelling, for example—may, from its very simplicity and assumed facility of apprehension, come to be taught negligently or imperfectly. The subject is supposed to be so plain and elementary that it is assumed that the pupils cannot possibly fail to know it thoroughly. But, as a matter of fact, they do sometimes escape knowing it at all, to their own great detriment, and, perhaps, subsequent shame, should their ignorance happen to be exposed. Numerous secret blemishes and defects, such as this, may continue for years to impair and even to spoil the effectiveness of the teaching, while their existence is never even suspected. An experienced stranger would detect them at a glance, and to detect them would almost amount to remedying them. I think it was J. J. Rosseau, who observed that it was the highest philosophy to detect and interpret the important truths that lie at our feet and under our eyes all our lives long. It is because even the most intelligent Nuns do not always possess this high philosophical faculty, that they do not notice these secret blemishes in their teaching. The moment, however, that their attention is directed to them, they see them at once, and feel astonished that they had not themselves observed them earlier. Now, a single competitive examination would bring out all these defects prominently; it would point out distinctly those departments of the programme in which the teaching was weak or faulty; it would reveal to them, and familiarize them with, those invaluable improvements in the art of teaching made by the discoveries of science, or by the enlightened experience of the great teachers of the age; and thus it would infuse renewed vigour, freshness and strength into their teaching for the future.

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These considerations seem so simple and elementary, that I feel almost ashamed for having lost so much time in stating them. The Sisters themselves have, I believe, anticipated me in them all. They feel so deep an interest in the reputation and success of their schools, that there is no change that could add to the effectiveness, or improve the character, of their teaching, that they have not considered and studied carefully. Free and open competition is a principle neither novel nor strange to them. They have thought it over and weighed well all its results ; and the conclusion to which the vast majority of them have come is, that, in the interests of the education of Catholic youth, it would be desirable that the Conventual Schools of the country should be henceforth conducted on that principle. A clear proof of this statement will, I think, be found in the promptness and eagerness, and, I might perhaps add, the somewhat undue precipitation with which they accepted the Intermediate Education Act, before they had time to fully comprehend the grave and mischievous defects of the Educational programme to which that Act committed them. Fair and open competition is undoubtedly the distinctive principle of that Act ; and on that ground alone they accepted it without inquiring minutely whether, in some other of its provisions, it might not prove dangerous and even pernicious.

Under this Act, then, and for the first time in the history of our country, the vast majority of our Conventual Schools entered the arena to measure their intellectual strength, to compare their ability, experience and skill in teaching—not merely with each other, but with the non-Catholic Schools as well, by submitting to the arbitrament of a competent and impartial tribunal the educational results which they annually produce.

In this diocese we could hardly look on as indifferent spectators of this intellectual struggle. We had grave interests at stake in the failure or success of our Conventual Schools, and particularly of our only Diocesan Boarding School—the Loretto Convent at Navan.

This Convent was founded many years ago at Navan, principally by two religious ladies. Both were prodigies of genius and talent, and their minds were, moreover, adorned by all the grace, the elegance, the intellectual culture and the high and refined accomplishments that the best schools in England and Germany could impart. Mrs. Finn and Mrs. Barrett were both converts, and had their hearts in the work which they undertook to accomplish. The system of education which they established in this school always appeared to me to be second to no other in the kingdom. It has gone on ever since steadily developing and improving.

Although intended and admirably adapted for the education of the respectable youth of the diocese, the Navan Convent School hardly ever enjoyed the amount of diocesan popularity, patronage and support to which it was fairly entitled. It was better understood and far more highly appreciated by intelligent Catholics at a distance. A large proportion of its pupils at the present time, as well as for years past, came from England, Scotland and Wales, or from distant cities at home, such as Dublin, Belfast, Tuam and Galway. Like a prophet in his own country, a really effective and high class school is not always duly esteemed and recognised at home. It required some striking and unquestionable proof of evident superiority and exceptional merit, to enable this school to raise itself above the oblivion to which unreasoning prejudice had consigned it.

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The prospect of elaborating such a proof from competition under the Intermediate Education Act seemed by no means hopeful and encouraging. The Convent could hardly accommodate more than seventy pupils ; and the candidates elected for competition should be chosen from less than one-half of these, as the remaining pupils, being "over age," would not be allowed to compete at all. Further, the Sisters could not hope that their own personal efforts would be supplemented by the valuable lectures of learned and experienced lay professors, for whose services they were unable to pay, and which, in any case, they could not accept. Nevertheless, relying exclusively upon their own personal experience and skill in teaching, they have competed for the last four years, with all the schools of Ireland, and with results of which they have just reason to feel proud.

In the Junior Grade they have carried their pupils not only to "passes," "prizes," and a number of "exhibitions," but to the very highest "exhibition" but one in the entire grade.

In the Middle Grade they did much more : they carried their pupils not alone to "passes" and "prizes," but once also to the highest "exhibition" of the entire grade, together with the Gold Medal; and once besides, in the same grade, to the second "exhibition" with the Silver Medal.

In the Third (or highest) Grade their success was more extraordinary still. In consequence of the increasing difficulty of the matter for examination in this grade, and the exceptional severity of the tests by which candidates in it are tried, its "exhibitioners" usually dwindle down into a mere few. In this year, as well as in the last, they numbered only *five*. Yet, the very first of these best five

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girls from all Ireland, last year, was a pupil who, from her very infancy, was trained in the Loretto Convent, Navan.

Subjoined is the Official Report :—

RESULTS OF THE EXAMINATIONS, 1882.

SENIOR GRADE.

Prizes, *value £40 each, have been awarded to the following Students :—*

Order of Merit	Student's Name and Address	Greek	Latin	English	French	German	Italian	Euclid	Arithmetic & Algebra	Plane Trigonometry	Elementary Mechanics	Natural Philosophy	Botany	Animal Physiology	Drawing	Music	Gross Total	Deduction under Rule 31	Net Total
	Maximum	1200	1200	1200	700	700	500	500	700	600	400	500	200	200	500	500	10,700		
1	Mary A. White, Loretto Convent, Navan [M. Ex. 1881]	—	666	640	577	408	363	—	—	—	—	270	95	—	395	370	3784	1500	2284
2	Mary A. Kennedy, Ladies' Coll. Sch., L'derry [M. Ex. 1881]	—	—	620	426	—	—	450	365	320	250	335	85	130	238	277	3496	1500	1996
3	Anne Grace Hogben, Ladies' Coll. Sch., L'derry [M. Ex. 1881]	659	546	500	530	384	—	385	—	200	—	—	—	—	—	365	3589	1650	1939
4	Alice Mary Lyne, Loretto Abbey, Rathf'nam [M. Ex. 1881]	—	—	630	605	519	366	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	285	350	2755	1025	1730
5	Lucy Katherine Horan, Loretto Convent, Wexford [M. Ex. 1881]	—	—	695	546	385	235	—	—	—	—	—	—	—	420	451	2733	1025	1708

In looking into this table, one can hardly fail to admire the prudence of nearly all these "exhibitioners" in confining themselves to some particular subjects on which they concentrated all their intellectual ability, and in which they seemed to have aimed at exceptional excellence. The Navan pupil, on the contrary, confined herself to no special subject, but went in indifferently for every subject which a woman ought to know. Although defeated by her competitors in their respective specialities,

yet even in them she ran closely with each, being never lower than a good second, and exceeded in some of these subjects by *three* marks only. Outside of their respective specialities, she was, on every subject, far before them all. Hence the aggregate total of "marks" won by her was 288 above those of the first of the remaining four best pupils in Ireland; 345 above the second best; 554 above the third; and 576 above the fourth. The fact of having scored 66 marks more than her successor (Alexandra College, Dublin), in the same "exhibition" in the present year, proves that in the Intermediate Education Examinations, she has had as yet no equal.

To put thus forward the character and undoubted success of this Navan School, unless under pressure of grave necessity, would, even on the grounds of good taste, appear just now questionable and uncalled for. But the truth is that the interests, not of one alone, but of all our Conventual Schools, and their ability to impart a high class education to Catholic youth, have been questioned and depreciated considerably in public estimation for some time past. Now, this unfavourable change in public opinion appears to me to have no solid foundation to rest upon; and it is therefore only discharging a simple debt of justice which every man owes to our Convent Schools, to discredit and correct that impression as far, at least, as his own personal knowledge enables him. My knowledge of these schools is so limited that I can safely speak only for my own.

A novel and indeed a rather interesting species of newspaper literature, entitled "Our Girls," appeared some short time ago in the columns of our great daily journal, and, for a whole month, or perhaps more, attracted a very large share of public attention. I am not in a position to form a fair estimate of the character of the contributions of which the

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great bulk of that literature was composed, nor of the consequences for good or for evil to which it was naturally calculated to lead. I happened then to have neither leisure nor opportunity to read these letters attentively through. Some of them, however, I have read with deep attention, and the only thing of which, in this anonymous pronouncement on our Convent Schools, I see reason to complain, is that, from its commencement to its close, it directed public attention, and kept it steadily fixed, on the exceptional success of one Protestant School in the Intermediate Examinations of 1883. These successful results were repeated, emphasised, and, in my judgment, magnified beyond their real worth; while, as far as I know, attention was but rarely called to the fact that, in the year immediately preceding, the Convent Schools were similarly successful. It appears to have been assumed throughout that the Convent Schools had proved so many failures, and it was insinuated that they declined to compete with Protestant Schools any longer, because they felt themselves unable to do so with any show of respectability or success. Hence the Bishops were advised to establish a few Convent Schools capable of providing for Catholic youth a high class education, such as was given by Protestant Schools to the youth of their own communion.

Now this assumed superiority of Protestant Schools I distinctly deny, and I maintain that the Intermediate Examinations have furnished no solid grounds for such an assumption. I freely admit that the Intermediate Examinations in the Senior Grade undoubtedly furnish a true and crucial test for trying and proving the relative superiority of high-class schools. But I contend that a system of education and a teaching staff that succeeded in bringing one of its pupils to the very highest "exhibition" in this

Grade would, with equal and even greater ease, bring a dozen more up to the same educational level—provided only that those pupils were endowed with equal intellectual gifts and animated by the same amount of application and industry. Teachers who, in Navan, Rathfarnham, and Wexford, succeeded, last year, in winning for their pupils three out of the five exhibitions in this Grade, would do the same this year, if they only had the same materials to work upon. The fact of the Navan pupil's having last year scored 66 marks more than her successor in the same exhibition this year, proves that that achievement would now be even easier for them all. No doubt, the Convents are not represented this year by a single Exhibitioner in the Senior Grade ; but, on the other hand, there is not a single Protestant School in this Grade this year that was not out of it the year before.

The truth is, that any system of education, and any teaching staff that have succeeded in bringing a pupil up to an exhibition in this Grade, must at once be admitted to be excellent ; but the task of bringing the girl up to that distinction will be found impossible under any system and to any teaching staff, unless she herself happen to be talented and industrious. The presence of one or more of these gifted girls in any school is often the result of accident or chance. These high-class exhibitions, therefore, can justly be regarded only as *accidents ;* but they are accidents that can happen only in first-class schools—while, at other schools, equal, or perhaps superior, to them, they may not, just then, have happened at all. A school that is rich, fashionable, and numerously attended ; that stands in the heart of the Metropolis, and recruits its pupils from the higher and wealthier classes, whose social position enables them to educate their children from infancy with

the greatest care—such a school will find its chances of "catching clever girls" multiplied immensely. If we add to this the fact (of which I have been credibly informed) that the teaching staff of this Dublin Protestant School is supplemented, strengthened, and guided by the enlightened experience of distinguished University professors, the phenomenon that really calls for explanation is, how Convents, in ordinary provincial towns, and having nothing beyond their own ability and skill to rely upon, have ventured to compete with it at all; and, further still, how, in the very last year but one, they could have so conspicuously defeated it.

The Intermediate Examinations, therefore, furnish no proof that our Convent Schools have degenerated in efficiency. We are under no necessity whatever of establishing new schools, for our old ones have been found fully able to hold their own in fair competition with the schools of any other religious denomination in the country.

But the Convent Schools have by no means as yet put forth their full strength; for it was entirely against their wishes and feelings that they could have competed at all under the present educational programme. This programme is crude, ill-considered, and unsuited to any true form of National Education for girls. It is, moreover, radically defective and dangerous. I fear I must add that it is even demoralizing to the youth who study under it. A programme which modifies and accommodates itself to satisfy, I will not say the irrational whims, but even the reasonable requirements of a mere section of the community, has no claim to be styled a programme of National Education. A true programme of National Education will wisely, judiciously and effectively aim at making due and sufficient provision for the educational requirements of at least the great majority of the Nation.

Now, the respectable middle class female youth of Ireland are the daughters, and will be the wives and mothers, of the farmers, graziers, merchants, manufacturers, and professional men of the coming generation of our countrymen. Not more than a small section of these will voluntarily embrace the calling of high class teachers or of fashionable governesses; of lecturers on social, literary, or philosophical subjects; of newspaper or novel writers; or will lapse into a class who occupy their leisure, and give vent to their surplus energies, in the pursuit of some form of literature congenial to their tastes and instincts. These are always a small, and sometimes a very wayward and erratic, section of the community. That modern type—or rather excrescence—of womanhood, popularly styled "strong-minded females," is recruited principally from this class. This is the type of woman that has raised the cry of the Rights of Women, that has claimed for her the privilege of carrying off University degrees and of competing with the sterner sex in all the liberal professions, more especially in those of Medicine and Law. But the most dangerous of all her questionable convictions is the ideal she has formed of the programme of a system of education for her own sex, and the energy and perseverance with which she believes herself bound to propagate it. In her view, the pagan literature of Greece and Rome in its original native tongues, the science of political economy, Euclid and the higher mathematics, are indispensable subjects in the programme of every sound system of female education. She advocates these views with great energy and courage. Women of this type are neither numerous nor influential, but they are noisy and determined. Although the vast majority of their own sex despises and feels ashamed of them, no one wishes to come into collision with them.

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People have even stooped to humour them. Weak and vacillating Governments, and temporising Educational Boards have pandered to their senseless follies, and have actually entered into compromises with them.

The present Intermediate programme, when attentively considered, will prove to be nothing higher or better than a weak and unworthy compromise of this kind. What else could have made Greek and Latin—not to speak of Euclid or Algebra—leading subjects in an educational programme for girls, with 1,200 marks for each; while Domestic Economy was deemed worthy of only 500, and the various home industries which good house-keeping supposes, and which every good woman must at least understand, are not alluded to at all?

I certainly cannot conceive any possible gain derivable from a knowledge of these dead languages, that can compensate for the enormous expenditure of time and labour which it will cost to acquire it.

It must be evident to any scholar, that if Irish girls devoted the whole three years of their Intermediate course to the study of these languages exclusively, they would hardly succeed in acquiring such a ready practical acquaintance with them as would enable them to write or speak in them correctly or even intelligibly. The great body of classic literature, outside of the passages they had actually studied, would still be a sealed book which they would fail to open without an enormous amount of fresh labour. It would be absolutely utopian to expect that they could thoroughly appreciate the graces and beauties with which this literature abounds. And, even if they succeeded in apprehending these languages thoroughly, I know of no author in that vast body of classic literature, from whom they would be likely to gather the smallest intellectual or

moral gain. The tone of pagan literature is so low, so degrading, and so sensual, that anything like familiarity with it would prove disastrous to the purity, the modesty, and high Christian feelings of Irish girls. We hardly fully appreciate in human actions the part played by the feelings. The principle that directly prompts men to action of every kind, is not always the cold dictates of their judgment and reason. Their actions are often indebted not only for their character, but for their very existence, to their feelings. Women are influenced by feeling to a much greater extent and in a higher degree than men. Their whole lives are scarcely more or less than their feelings in action. Women hardly ever go behind their feelings, in quest of a motive for action in their judgment and reason. If their standard of feeling be high and holy, they themselves will be chaste, modest, obedient, laborious and self-denying. If it be low, they are passionate, vindictive, selfish, indolent and sensual. The direct result of familiarity with pagan literature would be to blight and destroy all that is pure and holy and lovable in the feelings of Irish girls.

Take for instance, the Odes of Horace—one of the very books which the Commissioners require girls to read for competition in the Latin language. By putting that book into their hands without the smallest note of admonition or warning, they distinctly intimate that they are liable to be examined in any part of it. The fact of striking out three of these objectionable Odes from the programme of last year, may have even whetted the curiosity which, in girls of that age, is oftentimes naturally excessive ; it certainly held out an unauthorized and deceitful guarantee that those which were retained were harmless and innocent. The shrewd, practical common sense that breathes through all his writings ; the unrivalled grace and elegance of his diction ;

the fascinating sweetness and melody of his versification prove that Horace, as a poet, had few equals in any language. But these same writings also prove him to have been a self-indulgent voluptuary and sensualist. He abuses the divine inspiration of the poet to deify vice, to beautify and adorn it, and to throw a glittering charm and a fascinating attraction around the worst passions of the human heart, and the vilest and most unnatural forms of sensualism and sin. Some of the most dangerous and most voluptuous of all his sensual effusions are found amongst his Odes. The most exquisitely beautiful lyrics he ever penned, and which Scaliger assures us are as sweet as the ambrosia and nectar of the gods, are addressed to avowed and notorious harlots. The refined indelicacy and polished turpitude of these lyrics are as dangerous and as detestable as the coarse, obscene slang addressed to the "abandoned" by any vulgar sensualist. Fancy, then, an Irish girl of spotless innocence and purity, poring deeply into one of these indelicate Odes, and exercising her imagination as well as her reason in the effort to grasp and take in the nature of foul and filthy passions, and of strange forms of vice and sensualism, of which, till then, she had not the remotest conception. She is not on her guard, and she has no suspicion of danger; for she is not gratifying an idle or dangerous curiosity by reading a romance or novel; she is simply performing a laborious and conscientious duty. She is just at the age in which she is peculiarly impressionable to these dangerous feelings, because the beautiful instincts of modesty, bashfulness and shame by which those feelings would be restrained and controlled, and eventually subdued, have not as yet been fully developed. Will any scholar, having a fair experience of human nature, deny that the perusal

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and study of the Odes indicated at the foot of this page,* are not calculated to stain her imagination with foul and seductive imagery, to defile the purity of her heart, to give a low and a sensual tone to her feelings, and possibly to lead even to the wreck of her innocence ?

But, although she may be intelligent and even clever, yet if she relies solely on her own resources, she will hardly ever apprehend these Odes clearly or thoroughly, in consequence of their exceptional difficulty. In the consciousness of her intellectual weakness, she will naturally look out for some one who shall be able and willing to aid her. Amongst those of her own sex she will scarcely find one competent to do so. This educational programme, therefore, creates a necessity for the appointment of a supplemental teaching staff of gentlemen, who would be fully competent to instruct the pupils in the interpretation of the classics, and in the study of the sciences which it requires them to know. Lecturers therefore, I am informed, have been actually employed in non-Catholic schools ; and indeed it is not easy to see how any school that is anxious to succeed, can, in justice to itself, dispense with their services.

Now, a lecturer and his class of pupils soon understand each other, and will very naturally begin, especially in a case like the present one, to feel more than an ordinary interest in each other. There is an undefined amount of freedom and sometimes even of laxity, in the intercourse that is necessarily maintained between them. There is not the slightest appearance or approximation to criminality in that intercourse ; yet, to continue innocent and free from danger requires a degree of care and caution and distant

* Odes : Book I., Odes 5, 13, 19, 25. Book II., Ode 5. Book III., Odes 7, 9, 10, 11, 20, 26. Book IV., Odes 1, 10, 13.

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reserve which is not always scrupulously attended to. Sometimes it is not even thought of. Imagine the results that may follow from a series of lectures on those soft and indelicate Odes, delivered by a gentleman of high intellectual culture, of refined tastes, and of polished and agreeable manners, to a class of young, curious, and impressionable girls. The meaning of the passages he interprets will be fully conveyed to the minds and—I am afraid—to the hearts also of his hearers, with clearness, elegance, and delicacy, without ever requisitioning a single coarse or offensive expression or using a word that could wound even the most sensitive susceptibilities. While, however, he charms and delights the ears of his pupils with the beauty and grace of his diction, he is, I fear, conveying to their hearts a subtle, refined, and penetrating moral poison.

Any Catholic who has read what learned and experienced spiritual authors have written on the necessity of keeping a strict and vigilant guard over the senses, and of the care with which we must fly from the occasions of sin, as well as of the rigid, inflexible severity of the caution which the sexes must maintain in their intercourse and conversation with each other—will see at a glance that this fear is neither imaginary nor groundless. Is it any wonder, then, that enlightened Christian mothers have refused to allow their daughters to study under a system of education which, without any counterbalancing gain, wantonly leads them into such grave and imminent danger?

Everyone will freely and cheerfully admit that a clear and comprehensive knowledge of Arithmetic is an essential element in the acquirements of a well educated girl. But, surely, any one may also fairly ask the startling question: What earthly gain can Irish girls ever expect to derive

Hoges Figgis Rare Books

from the study or knowledge of Euclid and Algebra? I honestly confess that I can see none. If the vast majority of Irish girls, or even a reasonably large proportion of them, were destined by Providence, or had voluntarily resolved to devote themselves, to the profession of civil, military or marine engineering; if they were under the necessity of earning their living by making designs, or by taking measurements of line-of-battle ships or of ocean-going steamers; by constructing bridges or railroads; by sinking canals and tunnels and harbours, or by laying down parallels around besieged cities—then a knowledge of these sciences would be necessary, or, at any rate, exceedingly useful. But Irish girls have no inclination whatever for those or such other of the high and learned professions in which geometrical measurements or algebraical calculations are of vital importance.

The measurements which it will be the duty of the average Irish woman to take, and the calculations she will be obliged to make, though not technically scientific, are nevertheless complicated and difficult, and will tax to the utmost the highest efforts of her genius, ability and skill. She must measure with accuracy and precision the full extent of the annual income on which she will be obliged to maintain her family; and she must calculate the operations and the results of the causes that may modify that income, that may increase it, or possibly even diminish it. Assuming that the cost incurred in the education of her children is "given"; that the prices of the food, the clothing and the various requirements of her household are "known"—she will be required to calculate what is the best, the most profitable, and the most economical expenditure possible, of a limited income, on the decent and respectable maintenance of a "given" number in family.

Hunt Museum Archives

Or again: the market prices of bread-stuffs, of beef, mutton, bacon, eggs, tea, sugar, coffee, and of provisions of every description being "given"—she will be required to determine what specific articles of dietary must be selected, and what process of cookery must be adopted, to prepare them for immediate use, in order to obtain the largest possible amount of wholesome, agreeable and nutritious food, in exchange for a "given" sum of money at her disposal. Interminable social problems like this will be perpetually coming up for consideration, and pressing her to find a solution for them. The economical and successful management of her household will entirely consist in the judgment and skill with which she will hit off the true and correct answers to these problems. Sounder mental culture, higher and more valuable intellectual improvement, will be gained by the deep and attentive study which the solution of these problems demands, than by poring deeply into the speculative theorems of Euclid, or into the ingenious and hazy riddles which Algebraical calculations alone can solve. Mental culture, acquired by studies like these, is natural and congenial to the inclinations and instincts of woman; and, besides its immense practical usefulness, will gradually lead up her tastes and her feelings to the highest degrees of refinement and elegance.

The study, therefore, of the sciences of Algebra and Geometry is not only precious time and labour fruitlessly wasted, but positively misapplied in the tendency it has to make girls speculative and impracticable theorists. The study of these—or indeed of any of the exact sciences—does not civilize, soften, elevate or improve the feelings or the manners of girls. It rather does the very opposite, making them coarse, rude, and intractable. Some of the most eminent and highly gifted geometricians and mathematicians

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have, in their social intercourse, proved themselves to be exceptionally rude and uncourteous.

But the truth is that those self-styled "scientists," through whose influence those subjects have been engrafted upon this ill-considered programme, aim at nothing short of a radical and unnatural revolution in the habits, manners, pursuits and duties, of women, as they existed, not only under Christian civilization but even under the pagan civilization that preceded it. The wise and virtuous woman "whose price comes from the ends of the earth," and who is exhibited by the Holy Scriptures as the model which the women of every age and clime are exhorted to imitate, is introduced to us—not with a slate in her hand and a pencil in her fingers, but with a distaff in her hand and a spindle between her fingers: she has before her, not diagrams of circles or triangles from which to extract some speculative theorem, but flax and wool to be manufactured into comfortable clothing for her family and domestics. A venerable Christian tradition informs us that the seamless garment of our Lord, for which the Roman soldiers cast lots during His Passion, was spun and woven by the hands of the Blessed Virgin. He complained, through the mouth of His prophet, of the indignity of casting lots for that garment, centuries before it had been actually offered to Him. *Super vestem meam miserunt sortem.*

The occupations of women were nearly the same, even under pagan civilization. Penelope and Lucretia, the most illustrious matrons of Greece and Rome, were distinguished alike for their industry, as well as for their chastity. The admiration which these matrons—and still more, which Christian matrons of the Scripture type—won from mankind in every age, proves that to bring woman to those heights of

real greatness which she is capable of reaching, she must be educated and trained, not in Greek or Roman Classics, nor in the sciences of Algebra and Geometry, but in the practice of virtue, and in the exercise of those useful and practical arts which will make her self-denying, laborious, and industrious. The great business of woman's life, and the chief usefulness of her existence, lie in the very industries and occupations which these sophists decry, and which they will not allow her to study or understand.

And yet, the knowledge which she acquires by the study of these practical arts and industries, is certainly the most precious and important that woman can possess; because it will prove to be of the highest practical advantage to her—not only at particular times and on rarely occurring occasions—but at all times, and on all occasions throughout her whole life. There are forms of knowledge which she cannot dispense with, although the gain derivable from them is confined to certain specific occasions; but a knowledge of these industrial arts is applicable on every occasion that can arise, and therefore it is, as it were, of universal utility. Small as may be the portion of their lives which Irish girls are expected to spend in writing or speaking in German, French, or Italian, yet, a ready and familiar acquaintance with these languages may be, on certain occasions, of supreme importance. This arises from the enormous development of the international exchanges of commodities, and the vast personal intercourse that has sprung up, and is now actively maintained, among the different countries of the world. Drawing, painting, and music, are also congenial, and, indeed, I might add, indispensable elements in the acquirements of a well-educated girl; yet, in the maturer years of her womanhood, how uninteresting they become to her, how quickly she grows

weary of them, and how often—except to keep her hand in practice—does she virtually abandon them altogether.

But the great occupation and business of woman's life, and of which she never tires ; to which she devotes all her talents and attention ; on which she expends all her energies, and employs all her time, are the domestic industrial arts, because all her duties as a wife and mother are comprised in them. No doubt, the circle of woman's usefulness is continually enlarging itself, and the class-industries and trades which she now embraces, and by which she earns her livelihood, are every day increasing. Shop and factory girls, saleswomen in warehouses, teachers and governesses, milliners and dressmakers, telegraphic and post-office clerks, disperse themselves among the numerous class-industries, and trades, which require a special apprenticeship and entail peculiar duties. But these trades, though they may modify, can never supersede, the great fundamental duties and occupations of the wives, the mothers, and the daughters of a nation.

These home industries are numerous, difficult, and complicated ; and it requires a long and studious apprenticeship to comprehend them thoroughly and master all their details. Butter, for example, is an indispensable commodity in the maintenance of every family ; and the art of butter-making is one of the most useful and important of these domestic industries. A large class of Irish women are engaged, to a greater or less extent, in this industry ; and every Irish woman ought certainly to know more of the character and qualities of good butter and of the process of its manufacture, than is necessarily acquired by consuming it. Lectures on the taste, colour, and other properties, of good butter ; on the various stages through which it passes in its preparation for immediate

use; on the cleanliness, ventilation, and other precautions that must be taken in manufacturing it into an article of first-class quality, will never convey to the student a clear and practical conception of the art of making butter. This art cannot be taught in the school-room; it can be studied only in the dairy. It is only by watching it closely in the successive stages of its preparation, from the time it had been milked from the cow till it is taken from the churn, that it can be clearly and practically comprehended. Ignorance of this important art, besides entailing an enormous pecuniary loss on the producers, involves a serious detriment to the consumers too; for they cannot dispense with it as an article of food, and are thus obliged to put up with an inferior, and perhaps an unwholesome commodity, simply because they can get no better.

Again, the washing of linen, woollen, or cotton fabrics, or of any article of clothing,; the wringing, drying, mangling, smoothing, and "making up" of these textiles into new forms of cleanliness, elegance, and beauty, in which they minister to the comforts and enjoyments of man, is another of these useful and indispensable domestic industries. It is evident that it is chiefly by close and attentive observation, and by actual experience in the laundry, that anything approaching to a useful acquaintance with this art can be acquired.

Cookery is another, and perhaps one of the most important, of the domestic industries. Any one who has spent a considerable period of time in foreign countries like France or Italy, can hardly have failed to be struck with the character of some of the commodities that are utilized and served up there as wholesome and agreeable articles of food. Owing to the superior knowledge, experience, and skill of the people of these countries in the art of cookery,

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they extract a much greater variety and a vastly larger amount of wholesome, nutritious food out of a given quantity of the ordinary articles of dietary than we do—simply because we have never applied ourselves to the study of this art, with the serious attention which its importance deserves. Irish housekeepers, it must be confessed, are not unfrequently wasteful and extravagant, and have formed only the crudest conceptions of thrift and economy. Owing to the unskilful method of cooking which they follow, they sometimes send up to table valuable articles of food, in a state in which they have lost all the qualities that make them savoury, tender, and nutritious, and have acquired those that render them insipid and unwholesome. Cookery, as they understand it, is a mere mechanical process, incapable either of improvement or of change. They have never clearly grasped the conception that cookery, being a practical art, founded upon observation, experience, and common sense, is continually developing, progressing, and improving ; and that it has already made many valuable discoveries which have extracted from a given quantity of God's gifts a much larger amount of nutritious food than it ever yielded before. A clear and comprehensive knowledge of this useful art is sadly needed by Irish women : but it is pure utopian folly to expect that lectures, or clever and interesting treatises on domestic economy—unsupplemented by practical teaching—will ever diffuse that knowledge successfully amongst them.

The endless variety of a nation's domestic industries can hardly be enumerated. Providence has destined the women of a nation to labour and earn their livelihood in them. These industries are all congenial to their tastes and sympathies ; and women have been exceptionally gifted with natural aptitude, dexterity, and skill to toil in them

with fruit and success. The aggregate amount of useful commodities produced by the labour of women in these industries, contributes enormously to the wealth and social well-being of a people. It is, therefore, the highest interest of the State to enlighten and educate them in those domestic industries, and thus make their labour intelligent and productive ; but it is still more important to encourage them to apply themselves with yet greater earnestness and zeal to those industries, by remunerating merit and excellence in them by the highest honours and rewards it can confer.

A practical and judicious programme or scheme of National education would be amply sufficient to realize these objects with ease and success. It should, however, be always borne in mind that the teaching and study of these practical arts, like those of the practical sciences, must always be essentially empiric and experimental. Lectures on the sciences of Chemistry, Electricity, Magnetism, and Geology are literally wasted, except when delivered in Laboratories or Museums, where the student can see with his eyes and touch with his fingers real specimens of the igneous, aqueous, or plutonic rocks whose formation the lecturer is explaining —where he can make himself acquainted, by actual observation, with the gases, the metals, the earths or primary elements whose compounds, whose analysis, or chemical affinities he is tracing. In like manner, the practical arts have their kindred and congenial laboratories in the laundry, the dairy, and the work rooms, in which alone they can be studied with profit and success. It has long since been observed with deep acuteness and good sense, that—

> Segnius irritant animos demissa per aurem
> Quam quae sunt oculis subjecta fidelibus.—HORACE.

Only let these arts occupy, in the programme of a

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system of National Education, the place of honourable precedence which their importance demands, and let the teaching and study of them be encouraged and stimulated by suitable honours and rewards, and these industrial laboratories will spring up, as if by magic, throughout the length and breadth of the land.

And here I may be permitted to observe, that the marked sterility of the system of *primary* National Education, its singular incompetence to do anything like a reasonable amount of real practical good in the interests of true education, or in the culture and improvement of the social and industrial habits of the masses of the nation, are distinctly traceable to a similarly vicious defect in the programme of its teaching. This system of National Education is now a practical fact, of more than half a century's duration in the history of our country. It commenced its career with an annual subsidy of £30,000. It has gone on ever since actively expanding—virtually on the lines of a denominational system—and with a constantly increasing annuity to support it, until it has at last grown into its present colossal proportions, with a Parliamentary grant of £722,000 a year. This enormous sum does not come down from the clouds: it is extracted in hard cash from the industrial earnings of the ratepayers of the kingdom. It is therefore quite within anyone's rights to inquire, whether the amount of real practical good it does for the nation; whether the results it produces in the interests of education and civilization, or in the improvement of the social and industrious habits of the masses—are anything like fair value for the enormous sums given in exchange for them. To what extent, then, do the results which it produces contribute to the prosperity and social well-being of the nation?

The rise, the progress, and the final development of this system of National Education into its present huge proportions, synchronize very curiously with the decline, the rapid decay, and apparently final dissolution of all our national domestic industries. The character, the mental culture, the social and industrial habits and occupations of the Irish girl, of the period prior to the introduction, or, at any rate, to the general acceptation of this system of National Education, would form a curious and an interesting study. If the inquiry were not entirely outside the scope of this paper, it would be instructive and even edifying to prove the unquestionable fact—that, if the average Irish girl of that period was not very highly educated and enlightened, she was by no means ignorant, rude, or uncultivated ; further, that her entire life was busily and incessantly occupied, and that she herself was singularly laborious and self-denying. There was no industry then known in which she was not well versed, and there was no form of labour so rude, so severe, or so uninviting to which she was not inured, and in which she was not exercised from her infancy. It was the rare and invaluable habits of industry, endurance, and self-denial which she imbibed in this domestic training—coupled with her honesty and spotless chastity—that created that wonderful and world-wide demand for the services of Irish immigrant girls in Australia, Canada, and throughout the vast territories of the United States. The extent to which these services were appreciated, and the liberality with which they were remunerated, can be learned from the extraordinary fact to which Bishops, Archbishops, and the late Primate of America bore grateful testimony in my hearing—namely, that the churches and cathedrals of the United States were erected mainly from the generous

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contributions of Irish servant girls. But our Irish national industries are now all gone; and with them, I fear, have departed the nerve, the energy, and the self-denial that shed such a lustre and imparted such a high value to the character and services of Irish girls. English cottons and calicoes, English tweeds and broad cloths, have long since displaced the friezes, the serges, the linens, and the flannels manufactured in our native industries. The coal we burn; a large proportion of the bacon, and most of the corn and bread-stuffs we use for food—indeed, almost every commodity we consume—is now imported from abroad, instead of being produced at home. In fact, beef and mutton are the only commodities we produce at all, and the amount of human labour which the production of these commodities requires is so excessively small, that, strictly speaking, it cannot be called an industry at all. The total annihilation, then, of our domestic industries left Irish girls without any occupation. The ready, skilled, and practical knowledge of the various industries in which girls could hitherto earn an independent living by their labour, have literally died out from amonst us. An average Irish girl who has just completed her course of education at a National School, and is nearly full-grown, cannot "cut out" or "make up" even her own clothing. She cannot knit or sew or spin. She cannot milk cows or make butter. She is totally unskilled and inexperienced in the art of cookery. In fact, through her utter ignorance of the useful industries, she can render no service which any one wants or cares for: she can produce no commodity for which there is any demand. Until she has been trained and practically instructed in some useful industry, she is literally not worth the cost of her maintenance.

I object, therefore, to this system of National Educa-

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tion on the ground that, in the existing circumstances of our country, it is too theoretical and speculative, and not sufficiently practical and utilitarian. For : 1st. It instructs Irish girls in those arts which are merely the *accidents* of life, and leaves them in utter ignorance of those which constitute life's essential elements. That is to say : it teaches them reading, writing, arithmetic, &c., &c., or the arts which adorn and embellish life and make it enjoyable ; while it neglects those arts on which life itself essentially depends, and which alone can support and maintain it. Why not begin with instructing them in the industries that will enable them to sustain life, and *then* teach them the arts that will make life ornate and agreeable ? Instead of this unnatural inversion of order, why not teach them *both*, since a knowledge of both is sadly needed ? *Fac hoc : illud vero ne omittas.* 2nd. The direct and practical result of its teaching, as daily experience but too clearly proves, is to educate Irish girls into a feeling of contempt and positive abhorrence of hard manual work, and to make them recoil from those necessary and honourable employments by which Providence has appointed that they should earn a respectable and independent livelihood. A complete and successful course of National Education hardly ever fails to inspire Irish girls with a firm conviction, that their literary acquirements ought to raise them above the necessity of earning, like other women, their bread in the sweat of their brows. That girl may be a pauper by birth, and in her circumstances she may be a pauper still—yet she is quite satisfied that her education by the National Board has made a lady of her, and she therefore feels that stooping to the drudgery of manual labour would unnaturally lower and degrade her. She is quite willing to become a school-mistress, a governess, a nursery maid, or, indeed, anything

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else respectable ; but she will not submit to the indignity of becoming a vulgar drudge like her uneducated mother, who had nothing but manual work to look to for a living. 3rd. In the existing arrangements of Divine Providence, the only way open to the vast majority of Irish girls, by which they can earn an honourable and independent livelihood, is hard, sustained, and self-denying labour. This is a great practical truth ; and Irish girls who may happen to emigrate to Australia, Canada, or the United States will very soon, on the testimony of their own eyes, cease to have any doubts about it. Now, the severity of the strain which hard labour puts on our energies and physical faculties is irksome, fatiguing, exhausting, and sternly tests our powers of sustainment. If, however, we have been inured to hard work and exertion from our childhood, our physical powers become, by exercise and training, invigorated and hardened into habits of endurance, that will make them fully equal to the strain which any amount of hard labour can demand. The powers of the body, like the intellectual faculties, are capable of being developed, strengthened, and very highly improved, by education and training. They are capable of being educated up to a point at which the severest forms of labour become not only tolerable, but easy, natural, and agreeable. We can even acquire a relish for labour; and actually find an enjoyment in it. I have seen girls so thoroughly trained that they seemed never so cheerful, so contented, so happy as when engaged in the most arduous work.

Now, an ordinary National School girl is never trained in the practice of hard labour. She has scarcely anything to do at home, and she is not required to do anything at school. She has no hard and exacting tasks of severe and exhausting toil to perform in either place. If she attend to

her books, study her lessons, and present herself punctually at school during the appointed hours, in the existing state of public opinion, it would be regarded as a pity and a shame to require her to perform any manual drudgery whatever. As a matter of fact, therefore, she is not expected to do even so much manual work as is sufficient to keep her physical and muscular powers in a state of healthy activity, and save them from settling down into a state of wasting stagnation and inaction. Hence, her faculties, instead of being developed and strengthened by the exertion and effort which hard labour demands, are enervated and relaxed by the consuming process of habitual torpor and inaction. They become, therefore, physically incapable of standing the strain of that sustained endurance which hard work always involves. Soft, enervated, and languid as she has become—when exposed to the cold chilling atmosphere of hard labour and toil, she, like a hot-house plant, shrivels up, withers, and dies. Had she never gone to school, she would have been obliged to labour and "rough it" at home. She might have remained comparatively ignorant, but she would have been trained and experienced in some rude industry or other; and the work she would now be able to perform—though perhaps neither intelligent nor in high demand—would be, at any rate, robust and vigorous, and for some purpose or other, useful too. If we assume that, with all this, she had been educated at home to the extent of being able to read and write and cast accounts; that she understood her catechism and could say her prayers, she would still be hardly up to the standard of the average Irish girl before the National System was even heard of. But this system, by devoting itself exclusively to the high and elaborate culture of her intellectual faculties, on the one hand; and

by not alone neglecting, but actually preventing, the development and improvement of her physical powers, on the other, has practically disqualified and incapacitated her for the efficient discharge of the duties of any state of life, but more especially of that state in which Providence has placed her.

I have seen scores of Irish girls who completed a full and successful course of education under the National Board. To the best of my belief, the vast majority of them, through their utter ignorance of any practical industry, could render no service which anyone would care for; could produce no useful commodity for which there was any demand or which had any value. The great bulk of them scornfully looked down upon hard manual labour as a degrading drudgery, and seemed to me not only unwilling but physically incapable of earning their bread by hard, honest work, although they had nothing else to rely on. What has happened them? Why, they dissappeared and vanished completely from my sight and knowledge. I was told they had emigrated; but as I knew that they were neither willing nor able to work, I confess that I had very painful misgivings regarding the fate that possibly awaited some of them.

If these girls had been, during their school life, thoughtless, indolent and improvident of the future; if they had not frequented the schools of the National Board continuously throughout the period of a full course; if their attendance at school had been only intermittent and during broken fragments of that period, and, even then, fitful and irregular; if, in fine, they were incapable of that serious application, labour and study that are essential to success under any system—the National Education system would not be responsible for the deplorable results just

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enumerated. But they were the very reverse of all this. They were intelligent and talented, and, during their school days, both studious and industrious. They read a whole course under this system, and read it brilliantly and successfully. They made the most of the system, while the system did its utmost for them; and, therefore, I cannot see why it should not be held responsible for the results it produced in them.

If such be the results which this National system annually realizes, not in the idle, the thoughtless, or the neglected waifs and strays of our poor children, but in the very flower of the female youth of the nation; if the knowledge which it imparts to Irish girls be knowledge that makes the very best of them practically worthless and unprofitable—will any honest man point out what great public benefit and service, what grand gain and advantage does the country receive in exchange for the £700,000 and more which it now pays every year for its maintenance?

Until, therefore, these two systems of National Education are pruned and purged of the noxious and unhealthy excrescences of useless dead languages and superfluous sciences, on the one hand; and are supplemented, on the other, with a large addition of practical instruction and training in the industries in which Irish girls can earn an honourable living by their labour, I cannot help regarding them as National Nonentities for all purposes of good, or, in fact, as National evils.

That the grave intrinsic defects of these systems can be remedied, I have no doubt: I think I would be able to show that they could be improved into National blessings. For the present, however, I will content myself with offering one suggestion which frequently presented itself to my mind, whilst looking with my own eyes upon the enormous

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amount of good that one school, in this diocese, is just now actually doing.

This Industrial School—or House of Mercy, as they themselves call it—is conducted by the Sisters of Mercy at Navan. It possesses, firstly, a magnificent Dairy with all the mechanical appliances that have been devised by modern ingenuity, experience and skill, for improving the art of butter-making, and carrying out dairy-farming with profit and success. Here the girls are instructed in every form of dairy industry. They learn to milk cows; they are taught the various approved systems of *setting* milk for the productіon of cream; they test, by actual experiment, the relative advantages of skimming off the cream and churning it separately, and of churning milk and cream together, whether by hand or by steam-power. They are also instructed in the use of the "Separator" which requires no setting for cream at all, and which yields delicious fresh butter in little more than half an hour after it has been milked from the cow. This Industrial School has, moreover, a spacious and elaborately-furnished Laundry, in which the girls are taught to wash—sometimes by machines worked by steam-power; sometimes by machines worked by the hand; and sometimes by the hand alone. The washing, mangling, smoothing and "making-up" are skilfully and judiciously conducted, and the various textiles and fabrics, when "finished," are invariably neat and beautiful. Further: this school has a thoroughly well-appointed Bakery, in which the girls are trained to bake all sorts of good bread, from the wholesome brown loaves used by themselves up to the highest quality of good bread as manufactured anywhere. A great deal of time, attention, and labour is devoted to the feeding of calves and swine, as well as to the rearing, feeding and fattening of all sorts

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of poultry. They manage, besides, to have an abundant supply of fresh eggs at all seasons of the year.

The girls on being first admitted into this Industrial School, are, as a very general rule, rude, illiterate, and almost wholly uncultivated; some of them seem to have been entirely neglected. So unpromising are these specimens of womanhood that you could hardly conceive how "raw material" of that sort could, by any process of culture, be educated into the smart, intelligent, respectable, and presentable girls they become, when their training has been completed.

I can hardly imagine any work of mercy that has higher claims on the charity and generosity of the faithful than this school, which saves scores of poor girls from ignominy and shame, and forms them into innocent, respectable, and most industrious members of society. Yet its managers, through a feeling of self-respect and independence, have never stooped to the expedient of sending round mendicant representatives, or circulars, soliciting alms for its support. The noblest feature of this Institute is, that it professes to be self-supporting, and that the girls must maintain themselves on the fruit of their own labour, in the various industries in which they are trained. Hitherto at least, for nearly twenty years, they have so maintained themselves, honourably and independently. The great principle which this Industrial School recognises, and on which it is really founded, is—"*Prius esse quam Philosophari:*" first, to train and instruct Irish girls in the useful industries, and thus enable them to earn their living by their labour; and, next, to teach them the Three R's, and the liberal arts, as far as may be possible and practicable. On the other hand, both systems of National Education falsely assume that the great majority of Irish girls can live honourably on the

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earnings of others; and that therefore they do not require to be taught how to earn their living by their own labour. Hence the programme of these systems confines itself to the "*Philosophari*" alone.

Throughout the entire period of their training, the girls in this Institute are sustained, encouraged, and cheered on, by the constant presence and genial society of the nuns, who watch over them, instruct them, and direct them with the interest, solicitude, and tenderness of mothers. And they have in reality a genuine maternal feeling for them, and make larger and more generous sacrifices for their welfare and happiness than ordinary mothers. The girls perceive this very quickly, and reciprocate their affection with warmth and gratitude. The purest pleasure and the highest enjoyment these girls ever feel, is when they succeed in pleasing and satisfying them. Stimulated by the generous and self-denying example of the nuns who instruct them, and living in an atmosphere of stern and exacting industry, from which no one seeks an exemption, they are soon reconciled and inured to the severest forms of labour. Rising every morning in winter at six o'clock, is trying on their natural feelings of self-indulgence; but, seeing that the nuns have already risen before that hour, they would feel ashamed at not making the sacrifice of early rising, with cheerfulness and generosity. All the day long their duties are severe and exhausting; and yet they are always contented and happy. Their physical powers and faculties become, by constant exercise, invigorated and strengthened; and the natural activity of these powers is so wondrously improved by the habits of endurance which they acquire, that labour altogether ceases to be irksome and disagreeable to them. Indeed they acquire a zest and relish for it; and, owing to their admirable training, they

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actually find in it a sort of diversion and enjoyment. Their industrial energies gradually become, as it were, irrepressible; and their restless activity would make them positively discontented, if they failed to find constant occupation in some useful work or another.

In the meantime, their religious, moral, and intellectual education is being attended to with the greatest care, and is conducted with efficiency and success. At the close of the full course of training, they have learned to read and write well; they have acquired a ready and practical knowledge of the leading principles of Arithmetic; they can pray piously, and they thoroughly understand the doctrines and practices of religion. They leave the House, finally, modest, religious, intelligent, and respectable girls. The hard and laborious sacrifices exacted from them by the very nature of their training, have made them healthy, vigorous, and robust. They go into the world fully competent to fill any useful and respectable position, with credit to themselves and satisfaction to their employers. They are fully equal to any form of labour, and there is no useful or industrial work which they do not understand and which they cannot perform with judgment and skill. Girls trained in this Institute are now scattered all over the world. They are in England, in Australia, in Canada, in the United States of America, as well as at home. Cheering and encouraging reports are being constantly received from them, announcing the singular good fortune of many, and certifying that all are "doing well."

Now, these are the ordinary results produced by a school which the State has never recognised, and which has not been duly appreciated and sustained even by the faithful. I do not say that the Commissioners of National Education ought to provide schools like this for

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themselves; for I believe that they would be mismanaged, and finally turn out failures. But I do say that the principle on which this school is founded, and the results which it produces, are entitled to their most serious consideration. A great principle or system of education like this, one which is capable of developing in the masses of the nation a ready and cheerful willingness for labour—nay, which inspires them with a passion and an enthusiasm for labour; which strengthens and enhances their physical faculties; which supplements these faculties by habits of toil and endurance, and thus adds enormously to their effectiveness and capacity for work; and, finally, which renders their labour intelligent, skilful, and productive, cannot fail to contribute immensely to the wealth and prosperity of a nation. A principle like this is unquestionably entitled to receive the approval, the encouragement, and the practical support (especially where no serious risks are necessarily incurred) of any system of education which claims to be National. A formal recognition and an authoritative approval, coupled with an engagement to remunerate them liberally for the industrial as well as the educational results which they should produce, would be quite sufficient to make these Schools of Industry increase and multiply over the land. These voluntary Industrial Schools, side by side with the State National Schools would mutually supplement and complete each other; and both combined would be something like an approximation to the true ideal of a system of National Education. I do not say that the system would even then be faultless; but I do say that a great step would have been taken in the right direction.

It appears to me that nearly all the grave and seriously detrimental defects of the existing systems of National

Education, spring from a strange misapprehension of what true education really means. Till we have grasped a clear, distinct, and thoroughly accurate conception of the great principles on which the true education of youth is founded, we cannot fully understand the departures from reason, experience, and common sense with which our present systems of National Education abound.

The time allotted by Divine Providence for the education of female youth, even in favourable circumstances, covers a period of hardly more than seven years. That time is so short, and the intellectual faculties of the child, during a considerable part of it, are so weak, so volatile, and so unsteady, that it is physically impossible for her to learn, within that period, all that it would be desirable, or, perhaps, even all that it would be necessary for her to know. A judicious programme will, therefore, always confine itself to those subjects the study and knowledge of which are most necessary and profitable to her. To require her to spend her time and to devote her intellectual faculties to the study of subjects that are wholly irrelevant, and that can have no practical bearing on the state of life for which she is destined, would be to require her to misspend the precious time of youth, and to waste and fruitlessly squander her toil and labour. She commences the period of her school days like a person entering upon the term of an apprenticeship with a view of acquiring an expedite, skilful, and practical knowledge of some art or trade, by which he expects to be afterwards able to earn his living. Her school life, therefore, is a close, attentive, thoughtful and laborious apprenticeship of self-culture, of physical and intellectual self-improvement, with the view of duly qualifying herself for the efficient discharge of the duties of her after-life. Simultaneously then with the

development and culture of her intellectual and physical faculties, a skilful programme of education will direct (as it can then easily) her instincts and feelings and predilections towards what are likely to be the great obligations and duties of her maturer years. It will awaken, foster, and cultivate in her what I may term the *spirit* of her future calling. In the culture and improvement of her faculties, the programme will, therefore, wisely restrict them to the studying of such subjects, and the training in such arts, as are of a kindred nature with those which are likely to be the great and prominent realities of her actual after-life.

By close, attentive study and constant exercise, her faculties gain strength and power, and keep growing in vigour and energy, till they become marvellously keen and penetrating. But deep, laborious study, when prosecuted, not fitfully and intermittingly, but steadily and perseveringly, are painful, irksome, and fatiguing, and require something more than ordinary fortitude and self-denial. If, owing to the excessive indulgence of her parents, to her own innate indolence, or to the cowardly and criminal connivance of her teachers—the child refuse to overcome herself and will not rise to the height of that self-conquest and sacrifice which hard study and labour involve, then the cultivation of her faculties cannot, by any possibility, be real and genuine ; and her education becomes a mere mockery and a sham. True education demands personal application and self-sacrifice. A girl cannot be educated vicariously, through the toil and study of another. If, however, a spirit of study and industry pervade the school and reign in it ; if the great majority of the pupils apply themselves with energy and zeal to their literary and industrial pursuits ; and, above all, if they are stimulated and sustained by what are the most powerful and, at the

same time, the gentlest incentives to toil and study—namely, mutual rivalry and emulation, there is no amount of obstinacy or aversion to labour that can long survive in such an atmosphere. A girl who has the good fortune of finding herself in such a school, and sees clearly, on the one hand, that her teachers feel deeply interested in her welfare ; and is stimulated by gentle, charitable, yet inexorable firmness, on the other, will feel ashamed not to make the sacrifices which laborious study requires. The struggle with her natural disposition to indolence, ease, and self-indulgence may, indeed, be at first sharp and trying : but it will be of short duration. How strong soever may have been her aversion to hard study, she will very quickly be familiarized with it : by and by, she will insensibly begin to feel some interest in it : a little further on, it will cease altogether to be repulsive and disagreeable—it will even become attractive : finally, she will find in it a pleasure and an enjoyment. Oftentimes girls who began with an utter abhorrence of hard study, end by conceiving an ardent passion for it.

In what, then, does education *in fieri* (as they say), or in the state of action, consist ? What is it *in facto esse*, or in the permanent effects which it produces ?

Education *in fieri* simply consists in the application or concentration of our intellectual faculties with all the attention we can command to the study of the subjects of a programme, with the view of thinking them thoroughly through, for the purpose of ascertaining and clearly comprehending the whole body of truth which they contain. Further, it is the application of our physical faculties and powers, under the guidance of our judgment and reason, to the performance of useful and industrial works, with the view of discovering and understanding the shortest, the

readiest, and the most effective methods of performing them with the minimum amount of labour, and with the maximum degree of finish, excellence, and perfection. By constant exercise and training in those industrial occupations, our powers are educated into practical habits of, as it were, instinctive dexterity and skill, which add immensely to their efficiency, and diminish, in a proportionate degree, the amount of effort and labour which the performance of these works requires.

The crude, detached, and oftentimes ill-digested fragments of knowledge which we have acquired from the study of the subjects of our programme, is not education *in facto esse*, but only one—and that, perhaps, the least valuable—of its results. The great leading result is the culture, the improvement, in a word, the *elevation* of our intellectual faculties to a state of higher perfection, by which they acquire an incalculable increase of light, penetration, and power, coupled with an increased readiness of applying them with the deepest attention to the consideration of any subject, till we have probed it to the bottom, and discovered the truths by which we must be guided in electing the most prudent course that can be taken in reference to it.

Education, therefore, does not consist in a knowledge of the fragmentary truths of a programme, but in an expert and discriminating *power of acquiring true knowledge* on any subject in which we have an interest. It is a power of discovering, seizing, and grasping clearly the great practical truths that will guide us in the wise and successful management of our business affairs, of our domestic and public interests, and of all the transactions of life. When this process of self-culture and self-improvement shall have been completed by the education of our physical and intellectual faculties, then the great apprenticeship of youth

ceases, and we enter upon the stern realities of manhood or of womanhood, fully qualified to discharge all our private and public duties with dignity, efficiency, and success.

In submitting this as the only true and rational conception of what Education really means, I am not advancing anything that can prove new or startling to any fairly informed scholar. The subject is, indeed, so simple and elementary that it hardly leaves room for enlightened difference of opinion on it. The light which it throws on the *two* programmes of the existing systems of National Education, tests them severely and tests them unfavourably too. The true nature and character of an Educational system, or indeed of any social organization, can in no way be brought into a clearer light, or tested with more exacting severity, than by examining it in the light of the *first principles* on which it professes to have been founded. The programmes of the Intermediate and Primary Systems of National Education, when scrutinized in the light of what true Education means, are found to be nothing better than an unnatural caricature, which comprises a great deal that is foolish ; a great deal that is superfluous ; a great deal that is dangerous and even pernicious, and not much that is of any real, practical utility, or that can be regarded as genuine education at all. Systems of education which, under their existing programmes, are gravely and intrinsically vicious—which are as recklessly expensive, on the one hand, as they are scandalously inefficient and worthless for practical good, on the other—can exist only whilst they remain concealed and hidden, and so long as they can parry off public attention from scrutinizing them too closely.

To cry out (no matter how faintly), inviting public opinion to look—merely to observe them, is tantamount to bringing them into the "region of practical politics."

Subsequently, a mere accident, some unexpected incident, may at any moment not only direct, but actually fix and rivet, public opinion on them in a deep, stern, and searching inquiry into their character, their operations, and their results. When public opinion shall have been fairly informed on the real character of these Educational programmes, their days are numbered. Mr. Parnell and the Irish Party would, at that stage of public enlightenment, demolish them in a single debate in the House of Commons. Whether the Commissioners and officials who administer these Educational systems wish it or not, a thorough reformation of their programmes cannot possibly be staved off much longer: it may become an accomplished fact much sooner than they expect.

In these circumstances, I can see no solid grounds for finding fault with the Convents which, last year, retired from public competition under the Intermediate Education Act. At the same time, I cannot help believing that they could not, with due deliberation and a proper sense of self-respect, have taken that important step, except solely on the presumption that the reformation of this programme was impracticable and hopeless. That, however, is merely a matter of opinion. Had the programme been suitable and judicious, public competition under it would have been equitable and fair; and to withdraw from fair competition without reason or necessity, would involve the painful and humiliating confession either that they felt themselves unable to compete successfully with Protestant schools, or that successful competition demanded such an increase of severer application, industry and study, as they were unwilling to undergo. Either of these would be, perhaps, as damaging an imputation as they could expose themselves to. Again: the true progress of youth in genuine Educa-

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tional culture; in the development and improvement of their intellectual faculties; in the acquisition of all the advantages of true education, will always be dependent on, and ever be proportioned to, the energy, zeal, and patient industry with which the pupils *personally* apply themselves to their studies. The great question, therefore, which the Educators of youth have ever to consider is, to what species of moral influence their pupils will yield the largest possible amount of close, diligent, and attentive application, and will yield it generously and cheerfully and with the least perceptible inconvenience to themselves.

Now, I repeat, that National competition with Catholic, and non-Catholic schools as well, is undoubtedly the most powerful moral persuasive we know of for influencing youth generously to throw all their energies, strength, and endurance into the intellectual application and study required, not alone for their own educational proficiency, but also, and more especially, for upholding the character and reputation of the school to which they belong. A wise and efficient school can never wantonly throw away the advantages and gain that may be gathered from open competition, when it is offered upon terms that are fair and just. What else, in the education of the youth of our country, have we been, all our lives long, petitioning for, agitating for, struggling for, but free, fair, and open competition?

But it will be said that parents will not allow their children to submit to the mental drudgery and toil that successful or even respectable competition requires; and that the Convents have therefore no alternative but either to submit to their wishes or have the pupils withdrawn from them altogether. But, as we never hear of such foolishly fond and excessively indulgent parents in Protestant, Presbyterian, or Methodist communions, one would naturally

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feel not a little ashamed if they were exceptionally numerous amongst Catholics. Is it certain that they are all obstinately incapable of being enlightened on this important matter? Foolish and excessive parental indulgence may undoubtedly become the prolific source of criminal and unnatural injury and even ruin to their children's highest and dearest interests. But, in that case, cowardly and accommodating compliance with their unreasonable demands, would be something very like direct and deliberate cooperation in the wrong and injustice which they unconsciously do to their own offspring.

Again, pupils who deliberately shrink from fair and open competition, are hardly capable of realizing the splendid results which our Convent Schools have hitherto produced, and which the public expect from them still. They are so cowardly, or indolent, or self-willed, that it will be next to impossible to induce them to submit to the intellectual labour and study that are indispensably necessary for their own successful culture. In repudiating public competition, they throw away one of the most potent moral influences that could rouse them into the energy and the activity which successful self-culture requires; and personally they have little or no earnestness or genuine zeal for their own improvement. Indiscriminate accommodation for pupils of this character might lead to serious results for the Convents themselves. A Convent cannot descend from the rank and dignity of a *Boarding School* for the *education* of young ladies, to the vastly lower level of a *Boarding house* for the *accommodation* of indolent, self-willed, and self-indulgent loungers. It cannot become a residence for such as will submit to no responsibility for the good or bad use they make of their time; who will be accountable to no tribunal for the merit

or demerit of their studies; who will play or pray, or study or idle, just as their own wayward and erratic whims may move them; and who, in the end, will have nothing for their time, or for the money that had been lost on them. The Sisters' time would be wasted in the endeavour to teach them; the discipline and good order of the school would be relaxed in tolerating them; the industrious and studious would be disedified, discouraged, and retarded in looking at, and waiting for, them. The true nature and character of this travesty on education, and of the fatal fruits produced by it, would soon be apparent to everybody. The misguided parents themselves would be the first acutely to feel, and bitterly to deplore, the results of their own folly. They would also be the first to complain of, and to denounce, the Convents which, in a weak and cowardly moment, co-operated with them in the senseless waste of their children's time and their own money, simply and solely to spoil them.

Let the National Competition, then, be open and impartial; let the programme under which it is conducted be sensible and rational; let it fairly correspond to the existing requirements of our country—and the Convent Schools will, and in their own true interests must, take their part in it.

For myself, I look forward to the result with feelings of anticipatory triumph. We are not an inferior or a degraded race that has reason to shrink from fair intellectual competition with any nation in the world. We have undoubtedly our national faults and weaknesses; but the keenness, clearness, and brilliancy of the intellectual faculties, as well as the matchless eloquence and intrepid bravery of our race, have long since been acknowledged by the whole world. The very flower of the most generously gifted,

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the most highly accomplished, and thoroughly educated ladies of our land, have voluntarily devoted themselves, in our Convents, to the self-sacrificing vocation of educating the youth of our country. The retirement and seclusion in which they live, their complete detachment from the tumult and distraction and dissipation of the world, and their comparative freedom from the cares and anxieties of life, powerfully assist them in the recollection, the reflection, and earnest study that will place them at the head of the teaching profession. On the other hand, our children are endowed with an intelligence, quick, keen, and penetrating; while their innocence, simplicity, and stainless purity surround them, as it were, with a clear, serene atmosphere of light which adds keenness and power to their intellectual vision.

With such materials to work upon; with a reasonable amount of courage; with a modest but undoubting confidence in our own abilities, experience, and skill—nothing more is required to raise our Convent Schools to a higher level than even our Colleges have attained, and to secure, in fair competition, as large, and perhaps a larger, proportion of the honours and rewards held out by the State, for distinguished merit in National Education.

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