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A

LETTER TO LORD MORPETH,

ON THE SUBJECT OF

NATIONAL EDUCATION

IN IRELAND,

PRINCIPALLY WITH REFERENCE TO RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION.

BY

AN IRISH CATHOLIC.

BELFAST
JOHN HODGSON.
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Houses of the Oireachtas

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Houses of the Oireachtas

A LETTER, &c.

My Lord,

Your Lordship's official position might in itself subject you to have the following observations obtruded on you. But I am influenced by other and stronger motives in addressing you. I am no political partisan, my Lord. The condition of my country is too fallen, her immediate elevation or redemption too hopeless, to give any inducement to a man, whose political views do not extend beyond her prosperity and happiness, to have much care for abstract principles of government: while her real, or at least her permanent interests can be so little advanced by the practical measures of any existing party either here or in England; they are so little understood, or form so small a portion of the ultimate objects of any, as to determine me to attach myself to none. But for your Lordship personally I have a high respect; and it is more as the warmest and most sincere of Ireland's friends, whether in the councils of her Majesty or amongst the English Members of the House of Commons, than as Secretary for Ireland, that I presume to solicit your attention to the subject of this letter.

It is not often that Ireland has to regret the too hasty adoption of any Government measure, professing to have her improvement for its object. Unlike the enactments under which, some sixty years ago, our short-lived Constitution sprung into existence, the progress of almost every Imperial act of justice has been weary and heart-sickening, and affords, even in retrospect,

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that painful characterestic consequent upon "hope deferred." The unflinching and unparleying struggle, which for half a century was made in Ireland for Catholic liberty, no doubt reflects honour on the Catholic body; and the discovery of a new and irresistible power in propelling freedom's cause, has won undying fame for the great Thaumaturgist by moral force: yet, were the history of that struggle traced by the pen of a Clarendon or a Hume, no Irish Catholic of the present generation would turn the page. It is too painful, too humiliating, though it may appear paradoxical to say so. It is like the circumstantial narration of the adverse fortunes of a brave and ill-fated man, embellished throughout with instances of the exercise of one of the finest and most heroic of virtues, but the recollection of which, with him, produces sensations not easily to be distinguished from those of remorse and shame; therefore does he eagerly banish it from his memory, or recur to it as to that of his ill deeds, or as to the lessons of experience from which he learns mercy. The party virulence, too, with which the slow progress of these measures was tainted, makes the oblivion of them still more desirable. Charity and policy alike call upon us to forget.

But there were two questions, and two only that I remember, which occupied the attention of the Imperial Legislature, and the discussion of which, independently of the effect of it upon the measures themselves, was productive of much good, and may be at all times reverted to with satisfaction and benefit. I allude to the Irish Poor Relief Bill, and the question of National Education. Of the former it is not my present purpose to speak; but whatever the ultimate effects of the adoption of that measure may be, there is no man who took a part in, or had an opportunity of observing its brief discussion in Irish society, divested as it was of all rancourous and party spirit, and productive of kindliness and fellow feeling, which had been, for so long a time, unhappily and unnaturally suppressed amongst us, who must not regret that the agitation of it was not of longer continuance. Of the same nature, though very different in degree, was the latter measure; and it may acuse surprise that I should mention the subject of National

Education as one on which the full rancour of party spirit was not brought to bear. But though I willingly admit that some violent partisans did throw themselves into the discussion of that measure, and supported or opposed it from party motives alone, yet were there many, by far the greater number, I think, of those who took a prominent part in it, whose course was directed by the purest and most upright principle, which, however mistaken their application of it in this instance, entitles them to respect, and which it were well to see their guide in every legislative measure. The three nights' debate of the Session of 1839 on Lord Stanley's motion on English Education, was similarly characterized; and however party prejudice may have unconsciously biased the opinions of many, and however the warmth of debate may have coloured on the one hand, or misinterpreted on the other, the expression of those opinions, it forms a strong and a pleasing contrast to too many parliamentary encounters.

It is unnecessary to revert to the history of Irish barbarism, so called: and in passing, I may observe that those who are loudest in their denunciations of it are the practical supporters of the system which produced it. But we "mere Irish" know that scholastic education once flourished in our island. We know it so well that we can afford to be silent upon it; nor boast the tribute the world paid to the learning as well as to the holiness of our sires. And I make use of the word *scholastic* emphatically here; for it was scholastic education alone which England had the power of driving from our shores: and I will venture to assert, my Lord, that the people of Ireland never ceased to be the best informed population of these western isles; and that that portion of them who have never availed themselves of any state provision for education, are still possessed, independent of the religious instruction they have received, of sufficient traditionary knowledge to distinguish them from the moral and enlightened inhabitants of the sister island. I know how monstrous this assertion will appear to many; but let it be regarded merely as an incidental one. I wish to enter into no controversy upon it. I repeat, we can afford to be silent upon the subject. I state it

not as a matter of opinion but of fact, and the proof of it is within the reach of every man who will take the trouble of personally observing.

But England *was* successful in extinguishing scholastic education, as a national system, in Ireland. It needs not to be told here how she accomplished her unhallowed task. The monument on which it stands recorded, though dark, is discernible in the gloom which still prevails; and the lesson which it teaches, is too salutary for us to seek to obliterate it. That literary enlightenment will speedily revive amongst us, we confidently hope; and the only satisfaction which our rulers can now afford the "wronged realm is," to fan the flame which, *Deo volente*, will blaze at any rate.

Upon your Lordship, I am satisfied, I need not urge the immense advantages of National Education. It is, necessarily, amongst the first and most important of the works of good government. It is the most direct, the most efficient, the only secure means of accomplishing the end thereof. All other systems should be regarded as mere adjuncts to this great and paramount one. The prospect of wealth and honour, which a free government holds forth, may encourage, or the dread of punishment may deter men, in the achievement of virtue, or the commission of crime; but moral and intellectual depravity and enlightenment are the sources whence crime and virtue flow. We have but to revert to the past history of our country, to prove the assent of statesmen, wiser then they were just, to the truth of this theory. How fine was the system of policy adopted by our rulers. The end was to make Ireland weak and wretched; the means to make her less wise, less good—to stultify, to barbarize. So henceforth the end will be to make her strong and happy, (for a system which proposes any other end will not be endured,)—the earliest and most serious attention, the most energetic and unremitting exertions of the government must be directed to National Education.

It may appear, that in treating of National Education as an instrument in the hands of government, for the purpose of promoting National happiness, I propose a different end, and one which

is inferior to that which is aimed at by the accomplished author of "EDUCATION REFORM." Mr. Wyse in his "General Position," rejects the theory which makes happiness the end of education; and assuming, rightly, that happiness on earth cannot be an absolute or fixed quality, that it is a mere motion to happiness beyond it, goes on to prove, that the perfection of our being, in another world, through the faithful discharge of our duty here, is the ultimate end which we should have in view; and that the development of our physical, intellectual, and moral powers, as the means by which that perfection is to be attained, becomes the immediate or secondary end of education. With neither the philosophy nor the logic which leads to this refined theory, do I quarrel; but I think Mr. Wyse will admit that it is one which the civil government cannot hold in view: and this for two very strong reasons: first, because the subject of it is beside as well as above their duty; and next, because, to use Mr. Wyse's own words, "whether this principle be established or not, being of deep importance," the adoption of it in a system of National Education here, or in any other country, which has the misfortune to want an unity of religion, influencing as well the governing as the governed, must lead to consequences disastrous and fatal to that system. Indeed, it is evident that Mr. Wyse proposes this exalted end to those only whose office is of a more dignified and sacred character than that of civil governors; whose duty it is to save from sin rather than from crime, whose rights, arising from and correlative to that duty, *must* be respected by the state, and whose influence in education, it is to be hoped, we shall see at all times paramount — to parents, namely, and to the Pastors of the people. Having disposed of the question of education generally, he commences his preliminary observations on the subject of Public or National Education in the following words:—

"We live in an age and country in which the true principles of national glory and security are no longer questioned. We place them on the only basis capable of supporting them—on the national liberty and happiness: these again on the foundations of national intellect and virtue. If the character and conduct of the individual be only the expression of his education, or 'dernier resultat;' so also, but far more strongly, is the national

conduct, the expression or result of National Education. It is surely, then, a matter, not only of interest, but of safety—of duty; the paramount interest beyond all others, to every nation, to every individual of every nation, but, above all, to its rulers, to whose guardianship what the nation is, and what the nation may become, is confided, to see that the education of the nation shall in all things be such as most to favour the national intellect and virtue."

Were the means, which are at your Lordship's disposal, at all commensurate with what I sincerely believe to be your will, to advance the interests of Ireland;—to speak plainly, my Lord, were the Imperial Parliament, I will not say conscious of their duty to labour with all their might for the development of the resources of this injured country, but not wilfully blind to the best interests of the Empire, for no other reason than because Ireland would be benefited by their advancement; it might not be altogether purposeless here to pursue this interesting subject, and having ascertained the end of National Education. to be the production of national happiness, of as much happiness, at least, as it is the lot of nations to enjoy, to inquire further, in what does the happiness of a nation consist? But, my Lord, would not such an inquiry here be altogether vain? Would not he who would seek to overstep the limits of the basest utilitarianism, to cultivate aught which could not be turned to gain, be regarded here as a theorist and a babbler? And yet are there qualities possessed by each class of our countrymen, perverted now to the weakness and degradation of their Fatherland, which, by truly National Education, might tend to its strength, its dignity, and glory. The intelligence, for example, and the fancy, the sensitiveness, the fire, and the reckless daring of our peasantry,—

"——— Solibus aptum—
Irasci celerem, *tamen ut placabilis esset.*"

and the pride and spirit of the distracted class which should constitute our aristocracy—materials for the brightest and most virtuous characteristics—have led on to the perpetration of the darkest crimes. But does the most sanguine look for the direction of these to public happiness in Ireland, or dream of a system of National Education which would include all classes

The police tax may, indeed, be lessened, if you make the people moral; and the standing army reduced, if you educate the Irish poor. It is well! my Lord. Public morality is, at least, the *first* requisite to public happiness: this will be best effected by the education of the bulk of the people; and, at length, we find it provided for, under what is called, although constituting but one branch of what should be so called, THE NATIONAL SYSTEM OF EDUCATION.

In proceeding to direct your Lordship's attention to the nature of this Institution as it is established in Ireland, (for I shall not stop to examine the nature or the objects of the systems which previously existed, or rather of the societies, which, under pretence of affording instruction to the people, received such sums of the public money as were nominally appropriated to that purpose,) I must premise by admitting, which I do willingly, that the difficulties to be encountered, both by those who devised the system, and by those who undertook to put it in practical operation, were in any other country, perhaps, unprecedented. The most formidable were the difficulties of a religious nature, and to these I mean to confine my present observations. They presented themselves, at the very outset—in the devising of the crudest theoretic speculations—and they attend the working of the system in its most minute practical details. It were unjust, therefore, not to make the largest allowance for defects, even in this most important matter, while the institution is yet young amongst us: nor for my own part, however I may censure, am I prepared to condemn, where defects, or more properly, deficiencies only exist. But an adherence to old errors, and still more, the introduction of innovations, at variance with what I may now assume to be the universally acknowledged vital principles of Irish education, should not be tolerated. I say universally acknowledged; for all parties now admit the paramount importance of Religion, as a necessary portion of public instruction; and the most zealous have abandoned all hope of proselyting by means of that instruction. But to work out these principles, here so briefly and so unemphatically stated, in their full, and, at the same time, their most severe operation, not negatively or generally, but

positively, strictly, firmly, and with all force, and in every detail, may be found to include much more than some careless or insincere assenters to them anticipate.

Mr. Wyse thus commences his observations upon this branch of Education: —

"They who would build the great work of human perfection without calling to their aid the chief instrument by which it is to be accomplished, attempt not merely an impossibility, and secure only a failure, but render dubious, and frequently injurious, those very acquisitions for which they have laboured with so much care. The education of the moral man is the education of the most essential portion of our nature. We shall find in the other educations which have preceded it, auxiliaries as long only as they are kept in subordination;—the moment they rebel they are its worst foes.

"Moral and religious education are essential to each other. Religion is not a mere sanction of morality; it is the highest order of morality itself. They are not to be separated—neither are they to be confounded. Religion, true to its noble name, is permanently 'OBLIGATION.' It is the law of DUTY. It is conscience taught by God in his Revelations, and in the human soul. It embraces 'in-nuce' all the obligations. It extends to the most intricate as well as to the most simple. But this *general* law requires its *particular* developments. New relations arise, new duties are imposed. Their specific character, their several shades, are to be determined. The social man, in reference to society at large—to the several masses of society—has numberless functions to fulfil. Then come the various subdivisions of these great classifications, each with its line of corresponding duties. The distinguishing and defining those duties is moral science—their practice, morality.

"But neither are religion and morality to be limited to the mere determination or performance of duties. They go much deeper both in individual and national education. Their great end is to form the *character* to such a temper, that the practice of each and all of these duties shall naturally follow. Under this aspect they are especially Education."

In the application of these just and philosophic remarks to the subject of our present inquiry, your Lordship will see the necessity of keeping the end, for which a system of public instruction should be instituted, clearly in view; and as it is the "*practice*" of the duties imposed by religion, and distinguished and defined by moral science, — as it is public "*morality*" alone that can affect public happiness—a right is thence acquired by the civil government, which no man who understands the true principles of liberty would otherwise acknowledge; a duty is imposed upon them to deal, *pro tanto*, with the religion of the people. Happily, my Lord, none will be found, in these days, to controvert the doctrine of Mr. Wyse,

that the only system of instruction, whether public or private, which may not be *positively injurious* to the great work of human perfection, to the advancement of human happiness, is that which affords a thorough religious education. The source from which this education is to be derived, he elsewhere shows. —"To none," he says, "can the religious education of youth in this advanced stage with more propriety be intrusted than to those who are, *ex virtute officii*, the religious instructors of youth. It is an important department of their ministry, from which they should not be excluded, and from which they cannot, without direct dereliction of their duty, retire." And without anticipating the conclusion to which I am desirous of leading your Lordship, I shall here venture to go one step further, and to submit, that as intellectual education is valuable alone as an auxiliary to the great work of the perfection of the moral man, and as the development of the physical powers, too, should be made principally subservient to this all-important end, it could not but be desirable to combine these various branches of education, to make their operation simultaneous, and their source identical. Not without reason is it urged that in a Christian land the Christian ministry should have the guidance and control of education. In Ireland, where habits of even primitive Christian piety are so sacredly adhered to, it is unnecessary to say how prized is the combination of religious with all secular pursuits. The severance of them is indeed a violation of the most venerated practices, of the most fondly cherished prejudices of the people; and great should be the compensating benefits of an institution, which requires such a severance to reconcile them to it. The pupil of the National School of to-day loves to hear the tale of "long ago," when his grandsire was a boy, and with his little "alien" fellows sought the forbidden treasure of mental lore in the secluded dell, where unrestrained as to time or place, they raised their youthful hearts to God, and combined their voices in his praise in accents which were forbidden and in a form which was proscribed; and still looks with reverence upon his father, ere he commences his daily toil, and

at every interval from labour, sign himself with the symbol of his faith, and, having fulfilled his task, —

> "————When he returns at even,
> And, at the blazing faggot, meets again
> Her welcome for whom all his toil is sped,"

join with the partner of his cares in offerings of thanksgiving or resignation. Surely then, my Lord, were it but on the principle of esthetics, it might not be altogether inefficacious for the purposes designed, did an enlightened Government sanction the continuance of those practices which were the solace of our peasantry in days of darkness and persecution; were the conditions on which the lights of worldly knowledge are to be afforded to them, not such as to require even the momentary removal of that one holy light which was "the only flame upon their hearth, when all beside was cold;" and which, after all, must continue their only guide, as well as the only security to the State, for the performance of those duties which are the end of National Education.

But to return to Mr. Wyse. Your Lordship will have already observed that I am careful to rest on the authority of this gentleman, and have availed myself of such extracts from his valuable work as give expression to the doctrines which I hold, and assert the principles which I advocate. You will also, no doubt, have surmised my purpose in this. He may be regarded as the apostle of liberal education in these countries, and especially, as the propounder of the principles on which was established the National System of Education in Ireland. These principles, the *first* principles, if I may use an inaccurate but well-understood phrase, the inflexible principles of all education deserving of countenance, have been already laid down; and it affords me singular pleasure to have been enabled to accompany this gifted and enlightened statesman even so far in his course. What I have further to call your Lordship's attention to, should be, properly speaking, but the modification of these principles; their adaptation to the age, to the country, to the circumstances, in and under which, they are to be carried into operation.

Were it no more, my Lord, I should be well disposed to accompany their able advocate in the adoption too of the operative principles of his system; and I am free to admit that in viewing his theory alone, I should have had difficulty in detecting the slightest dereliction. But the exercise of much ingenuity is spared, for the system is now at work; and I cannot resist the conviction that a principle pervaded it from the commencement, latent and unavowed, but inconsistent with the principle which Mr. Wyse most strongly and unequivocally advocates throughout his work, and calculated ultimately to defeat and triumph over it—in other words, my Lord, to render the theory he propounds impracticable. I shall, however, not weaken the arguments he urges in its support, by giving them in other language than his own. That these arguments are powerful, that they are important, that they are deserving of the deepest consideration, is quite certain. The only question is, whether or not they are conclusive; and this from their very nature, for they are drawn from expediency, is best tried by the test of experience. Happily we have that test at hand, and before I have done, my Lord, I shall apply it to them with what ability I may. The task is indeed one of little difficulty.

Mr. Wyse proceeds:—

"If religious and moral teaching could be strictly confined to the generalities of Christianity, no difficulty could be apprehended, even where various sects of Christians were assembled together, from the general perusal of the Scriptures. But where this is impracticable, there is no alternative but to separate the different persuasions, or to leave the reading of the Scriptures to separate or out-of-school hours, under the direction of the pastors of the respective communions. Each of these expedients has been adopted, according to the temper of the people, or the peculiarities of the case, in different countries. In these countries, but especially in Ireland, where forgetfulness of sectarian distinctions, and brotherly union of all persuasions, is so desirable, for the cause of a common country as well as a common Christianity, any arrangement which tends to perpetuate these distinctions, or to preclude this union, is undoubtedly to be deprecated. To class our national schools under partial designations of Protestant, and Catholic, and Presbyterian, is a contradiction. By becoming sectarian they cease to be national. By thus parcelling out our people in lots, by thus keeping them *parqués* in their respective pasturages, we recognise a sort of inherent incompatibility: we tell the child that it is in his nature and in his duty to live apart and hostile; we grow Protestants and we grow Catholics for future conflicts; and lest, if confided to their own untutored feelings, they should seek in religion only that in which all agree, we take care to point their attention to that in which each differs.

We convert into a law of hate what heaven gave us as a law of love, and degrade seminaries for the universal mind of the country into rival garrisons for a faction. Half our animosities arise from ignorance of each other. We imagine every thing evil, for we are not allowed, either by our own passions or by those of others, to discover what is really good. 'We hate,' as Schiller says, 'until we love.' The moment we come into contact these phantoms disappear. We find that we are each of us much about the same kind of human beings, and British citizens we should have been had we been born under opposite creeds and opinions. But it is some time before these discoveries are made; and of how many evils, and of what evils, is this separation and this ignorance in the interval productive! What years of distrust and dissension, how many generations of misery and crime, has it not sent forth from its prolific womb. We have seen these things, but seen them very late. We have attacked the consequences, but the causes are not yet extinguished. It is easy to pass the spunge over the statute book, but not so easy to pass it over the human heart. The sufferers and the combatants are still alive; it is to those who have been neither—to that generation who were born free, and not to the freedman—to that yet untainted generation which is now springing up about us—that the country has chiefly to look. But this will be in vain if the legislature anathematizes the principle and yet permits the practice. It will be a vain task to preach the union of manhood, if we continue to teach children separation. If we would make the country one, we must begin by gathering up its fragments while they are yet soft. Thanks to our original nature—unsectarian, unpolitical, unsophisticated as it always is, until corrupted by man—this is not difficult. Children if left to themselves will naturally unite; their animosities and prejudices are not theirs but their fathers'. Such mixture of sects and classes is the true discipline by which these pernicious tendencies should be counteracted. There is no place like a school to teach universal sympathy, unadulterated Christian benevolence—I will not say (for it is a very unchristian word) toleration. Separate at present our children, and the next generation will exhibit all the errors and passions of the old race over again. The Protestant school will turn out its annual show of Protestants—the Catholic school its rival batch of Catholics; just in the same manner as an aristocratic school shapes its Exclusives, or a corporation school begets its aldermen and police magistrates. The age and country want Englishmen and Irishmen. Nationalism, not sectarianism, should be the first article of our common charter."

Here, then, my Lord, a new difficulty arose. Children of all persuasions were to be educated together, while the most important portion of the lessons they were to be taught was faith in contradictory if not hostile creeds. The end to be accomplished may be indeed the same with all; but how different must be the means! On the subject of the duties, especially the social or public duties, imposed by religion, and distinguished and defined by moral science, and the practice of which is morality, there is happily but little difference of opinion amongst Christians. But on that of the religion which imposes—the conscience, taught by God in his revelations and in the human soul—the obligation,

in fine, for the performance of those duties—" the wisdom which teaches the whole duty of man," there is indeed much.

Mr. Wyse himself relieves me from the necessity of touching upon the plan he hints at of confining religious and moral teaching to " the generalities of Christianity," by unequivocally denouncing such a system throughout his work. The only course left was, to divide the religious and moral branch of education totally from the literary; accurately and strictly to define the distinctions; and while the latter should be afforded to children of different religious persuasions in common, to make provision for their *separate* instruction in the former, and associate their respective clergy in the direction of it. I shall offer no apology to your Lordship for inserting one more extract from his book. It is fully explanatory of his plan, and is consequently the last I shall feel it necessary to refer to:—

" But are the especial tenets of each particular faith to be sacrificed or neglected?—that which is their Christianity—that by which they are what they are? God forbid! Each believer should believe what he likes, and as much as he likes, (belief is not so common that we should quarrel much about the quality or quantity,) nor is it less fitting that he should know what he believes and why he believes. A period in education not only admits reasoning on such subjects, and inquiry, but demands it. Enough of this by all means; but at the proper time—in the proper place—above all, in the proper manner. Common sense and common charity will not seek to Protestantize, no more than it would relish to be Catholicised itself. Reciprocity—but true and downright reciprocity—Catholico-Protestant reciprocity—no universal liberty all on one side. As much of your own food for your own taste as you like, but no forcing it upon that of others, unless you can give with it your own taste also. Remember the fable of the fox and the crane: they both gave good dinners, but not for mixed company. As to the good which has been done, is to be done, and must be done, by this compulsory benevolence, I only ask, can benevolence be compulsory? Hence, all attempts at compelling, or insidiously smuggling in your pet interpretations should be denounced. You have no right to set your polemical spring guns and soul traps in this way on the manor of another. The prohibition of all interpretation is just as bad. It is an absolute misnomer. Instead of none it means any. When no rule is laid down, it does not follow there will be none; on the contrary, it leaves it in the power of the teacher, or, what is still worse, of the pupil, to take up the very first interpretation he meets. The very absence of interpretation may be proselytism; the simple reading of the Scriptures may be downright sect. All this may be defended; but it will be defended in the sense of the aggressor. It may be explained away; but nothing in an instruction of children should require explanation. I dare say it is supreme in religious tactics, but I am not for proselytism but education.

" *Let every child, then, have the Christianity which he demands and can digest, and let him have it frankly as well as abundantly.* This is his right; he is

a man and a Christian. But this cannot be given by our common schoolmaster. He is incompetent, intellectually and religiously. We all know too well the sort of man-of-all-work he generally is, to expect from him any thing beyond the straightforward task-hearing of the cathechism; we all know his church creed. All goes on very liberally as long as he keeps to true no-meaning, to generalities—but the moment he descends to particulars—to dogmas, the teacher disappears and the partisan starts up. Do I blame the man? Not at all. I cannot conceive him otherwise. I cannot imagine that perfect stoic between contending faiths, neutralized to inflexible impartiality by their well-balanced opposition—that semi-Catholic, semi-Protestant—that *concordia discors* of establishment and dissent, which, like the Demos of the ancient painter, unites in the same person all diversities, and is equally indifferent to all, which the existence of so perfect a monster would imply. If such exist in human nature he is a very abstract personage; for I doubt much whether he is to be found in English, Scotch, or Irish. The man cannot suspend his creed: he cannot put off his mind. Each faith has undoubtedly a right to apprehend the experiment; each church has good motives to look to other pastors 'for the feeding of its lambs.' These pastors are to be found—each church provides them; they are the constituted guardians of their respective beliefs. Education qualifies them for the duty; and Christianity, whatever be its form, inculcates the performance.

"To none, then, can the religious education of youth, in this advanced stage, with more propriety be intrusted, than to those who are, *ex virtute officii*, the religious instructors of youth. It is an important department of their ministry, from which they should not be excluded, and from which they cannot, without direct dereliction of duty, retire. Nor can I well conceive what legitimate objection can be made to this division of religious and intellectual education,—this apportioning of special hours and places to scriptural instruction. What is studiously sought after in other studies, why should it be avoided in this? The very essence of all well-ordered education is strict and minute classification of labour. I might go farther and say, that to this division and regularity, intellectual labour is in all cases chiefly indebted for its acquisitions. Reading Scripture at particular hours is only additional security that the reading will be conducted with attention and punctuality. Allowing other studies to mingle with it, must necessarily neutralize and confuse. So far from limiting the extent of gospel education, or in any degree curtailing its salutary effects, such arrangements eminently tend not only to remove all obstacles arising from difference of persuasion, but add materially to its weight and efficacy, which every well-wisher to true gospel instruction must assuredly have in view."

So far, my Lord, for the principles laid down in Mr. Wyse's work. As before remarked, I think I am justified in assuming that they are the principles upon which the National System of Education was understood to be established in Ireland; and their propounder was, in this, at least, fortunate,—that the official duty of directing their operation devolved, in the first instance, upon no vacillator, but a true and fearless man—no friend to Ireland, now, my Lord, and I am sorry for it. In the year 1831, the present Lord Stanley, then secretary for Ireland, addressed an

official letter to the Duke of Leinster, in which, after informing His Grace of the determination to which the Government had come of empowering the Lord Lieutenant to constitute the present Board of Education; of the parliamentary grant which was to be placed at their disposal; and of his Excellency's desire to appoint the Duke president, he proceeds to say:—

"I have it further in command to lay before your Grace the motives of the government in constituting this board, the powers which it is intended to confer upon it, and the objects which it is expected it will bear in view and carry into effect."

The secretary proceeds to give a detailed account of the recommendation of the parliamentary commissioners in 1812, for the appointment of a Board to superintend a system of education from which should be banished even the suspicion of proselytism, and which, admitting children of all religious persuasions, should not interfere with the peculiar tenets of any,—of the government intrusting the distribution of the national grants for this purpose to the care of the Kildare-street Society,—of the *system of combined religious instruction* practised by that society, viz. the plan of enforcing in all their schools the reading of the Holy Scriptures, without note or comment, "a determination which was undoubtedly taken," says Mr. Stanley, "with the purest motives, with the wish at once to connect religious with moral and literary instruction, and, at the same time, not to run the risk of wounding the peculiar feelings of any sect by catechetical instruction or comments, which might tend to subjects of polemical controversy,"—and, finally, of the necessary consequence, "when *this vital defect* began to be noticed, and the Roman Catholic clergy began to exert themselves with energy and success against a system to which they were on principle opposed, and which they feared might tend in its results to proselytism, even although no such object were contemplated by its promoters. When this opposition arose, founded on such grounds, it soon became manifest that such a system could not have become one of national education." A plan is then alluded to, the failure of which should not have been forgotten:—

"The Parliamentary Commissioners of Education, in 1824–5, sensible of the defects of the system, and of the ground as well as the strength of the objection taken, recommended the appointment of two teachers in every school—one Protestant, and the other Roman Catholic—to superintend separately the religious education of the children: and they hoped to have been able to agree upon a selection from the Scriptures which might have been generally acquiesced in by both persuasions."

Mr. Stanley thus concludes:—

"But it was soon found, that these schemes were impracticable; and, in 1828, a committee of the House of Commons, to which were referred the various reports of the commissioners of education, recommended a system to be adopted which should, if possible, AFFORD A COMBINED LITERARY, AND SEPARATE RELIGIOUS EDUCATION, and should be capable of being so far adapted to the views of the religious persuasions which divide Ireland, as to render it in truth a system of national education for the lower class of the community."

Such were the objects which it was expected the Board would bear in view and carry into effect; and the principal regulations by which these objects were to be most effectually promoted, instructed them to require "that *the schools be kept open for a certain number of hours*, on four or five days of the week, at the discretion of the commissioners, *for moral and literary education only;* and the remaining *one or two days in the week to be set apart for giving separately such religious education to the children as may be approved of by the clergy of their respective persuasions.*" And they were also instructed to permit and encourage the clergy to give religious instruction to the children of their respective persuasions, either before or after the ordinary school hours, on the other days of the week.

The announcement of this system, my Lord, was regarded as a most auspicious event in Ireland. The thirst for knowledge which prevails amongst our people is known to your Lordship. It is only less intense than their love for the faith of their fathers. And in the province to which I belong, where every effort was made, first, by the cruellest persecution, to deprive them of both, and again, by perhaps well intentioned but certainly mistaken zeal, to induce them to risk the latter as the only condition upon which they could partake of the former, the temptation was, in some instances, too strong to be resisted, and confident that the

love alluded to would serve as an antidote, they drank of the presented cup, though they believed it to contain poison. But the new system involved no such condition, and it was hailed as an unmixed blessing. The Catholic clergy, in particular, were eager, on the part of their flocks, to avail themselves of its benefits. "When they knew the system only as a theory," say the Commissioners in their last report, referring to a number of that body, who have lately withdrawn themselves from any connexion with the Board, "they embraced it as a means of good."* "They do not state," continues the report, "that it has disappointed them in practice." To attempt to prove this, my Lord, if a total abandonment of the theory be a disappointment, is the task I have undertaken; and if I shall succeed, the conclusion is obvious;—that that theory is altogether impracticable: for I totally disclaim any intention of implying (the only alternative)—that the Government and the Board have designedly broken faith with the people.

First, then, the New System was to afford a combined literary and a separate religious education, and while it guarded "with scrupulous care," in the words of the letter, against interference with the peculiar tenets of any description of Christian pupils, it virtually promised that every child should have the Christianity which he demanded and could digest, that he should have it "*frankly as well as abundantly.*"

In contrast with this stood the System as practised by the very Board which received these instructions, soon after its establishment. It is thus described by the Rev. James Carlile,

* "The terms," says Dr. Doyle, "on which the funds placed by Parliament at the disposal of the Lord Lieutenant, will be dispensed, had been long sought for, by repeated applications to Government, and by petitions to Parliament, and have at length, with much difficulty, been obtained. They are not, perhaps, the very best which could be devised, but they are well suited to the especial circumstances of this distracted country. They provide for the religious instruction of children by their respective pastors, or persons appointed for that purpose by them, as often as their pastors can deem it necessary. This instruction shall be given on one or two days in the week, and may be given, as I hope it will, every day."

(Extract from a circular letter, addressed by the Right Rev. Dr. Doyle to the clergy under him, upon the first announcement of the National System of Education, and published in the Appendix to the Sixth Report of the Commissioners.)

one of the original members, and, until within the last 12 months, the resident Commissioner and "Professor of Education:" —

"On the other hand, then, a system of education has been formed upon the principle of introducing so much of religion as all parties concerned can agree upon. This, also, will appear to persons of every religious denomination, to be defective; because each will find excluded something of what he regards as necessary to a complete religious education. It is, however, by no means so defective as a system founded on the opposite side of the alternative would have been.* As all professing Christian denominations receive in common a large portion of revealed truth, and that portion elementary, precisely that which persons of all denominations would first communicate to their children, and without which the peculiarities of the different denominations could not be understood, the system of introducing as much of religion as all can agree upon secures to all their children a considerable portion of religious instruction, which all the parties acknowledge to be necessary."

Had Mr. Stanley in communicating the objects which the Government professed to have in view, and the principal regulations by which they thought those objects might be most effectually promoted, not referred at all to the different systems of education previously existing in Ireland, his letter would appear to me to be sufficiently intelligible. But when we find a considerable portion of it occupied with a description of the "vital defect" of the plan pursued by the Kildare-street Society, and the evident tendency of the entire condemnatory of the principle of combined religious instruction; when we find the logical result of his facts and reasoning a total renunciation of that principle, followed up by an express assertion of a contrary one; when we find him laying down an arbitrary rule by which to carry this latter into operation, and instructing the Board to "set apart one or two days in the week for giving separately such religious education to the children as might be approved of by the clergy of their respective persuasions;"† it is not easy

* The alternative to which the rev. gentleman alludes is the adoption of a system "which, for the purpose of avoiding all religious compromise, would have banished religion, and confined itself to the furnishing to the scholars the means of obtaining information, by teaching them to read, or perhaps adding some portions of information on secular subjects, leaving religious instruction entirely to the parents of the children, and those religious instructors whom they might choose to employ."

† The following is the characteristic rule of the Board, corresponding with the above instruction. "One day, *at least*, in each week, *or part of a day*, (independently of the Sunday,) is to be set apart for the reli-

to conceive a more faithful adherence to Mr. Wyse's principle. The difficulty is to conjecture how this important condition was to be evaded. The responsibility it involved was, no doubt, an awful one. But the Commissioners must have been aware of the extent of their obligation. They undertook to afford instruction in the peculiar tenets of their respective faiths to children of all religious persuasions; to teach, for example, the Catholic to believe in the infallibility of his Church, the doctrine of the Real Presence, and the invocation of Saints, and the Arian to deny the Divinity of Christ. They might have declined the trust. They had a perfect knowledge of the principle which was to govern them—and they did not disavow, but they wanted courage to enforce it. They suffered the material regulation to remain a dead letter, and they "modified" and "explained" a comparatively unimportant one. The first official document which they published explanatory of conditions "which had been misunderstood," contains the following: — "By encouraging the pastors of different denominations to give religious instruction to the children of their respective flocks out of school hours, the Board understand merely affording to such pastors facility of access to the pupils at the time specified, and not employing or remunerating them." * This was an unimportant explanation in itself. It gives, perhaps, the real meaning of Lord Stanley's

gious instruction of the children, on which day such pastors or other persons who shall be approved of by their parents or guardians, *shall have access to them* for that purpose, whether those Pastors have signed the original application or not." But even this modified regulation would appear not to be enforced. And see third section of sixth report, especially the concluding paragraphs.

* Mr. Carlile says, in reply to the indecent attacks of an assailant of the Board—"He (Mr. Colquhoun) further states, that we encourage Roman Catholics to teach their doctrines in our schools. The word *encourage* was certainly used in Lord Stanley's original letter, but was afterwards officially explained, at the suggestion of the Board, to mean nothing more than allowing them the use of the school-rooms for that purpose. Now, the National Schools are, in this respect, precisely on the footing of any public establishment in the empire. The priest has as free access to teach his doctrines, and to use, without animadversion, those very books which Mr. Colquhoun describes, in all hospitals, workhouses, prisons, bridewells, infirmaries, supported by public funds, as he has in the NationalSchools."

instruction, but it evinces a tendency to shrink from the principle of the system; and, connected with the neglect of the prior regulation, seems an effort to "keep the word of promise to the ear" while they "broke it to the hope."

But the vacillations of the Board are not confined to omissions. Had we not the advantage of being intimately acquainted with the high character, with the moderation and liberality of the gentlemen who constitute it, we should be led to suppose, from one of their earliest essays, that they inherited a portion of the fanatical spirit of their predecessors, who, imagining "the gift of God" to be in them *without* the putting on of the Apostle's hands, understood the charge to "preach the word" as given expressly to themselves; and the efforts of each of these successive bodies to introduce the Bible in season and out of season recall to one's mind the ingenious devices of the ecclesiastical corporations in England, to evade the statutes of mortmain. We have seen what were the objects and the principle of the constitution of the Board. But the commissioners are intrusted with the entire control over all the books to be used in the schools.* The

* The adoption of this rule is, I think, the only deviation made by Lord Stanley from the principles of Mr. Wyse. The acute mind of Dr. Doyle at once detected the evil of this, foresaw the fatal effects which might result from it, and suggested the remedy. With reference to it he says,—"The Commissioners claim to have control over the books to be used in schools. This appears an assumption from which evil, as well as good, might follow. It is good that useless and immoral books be utterly, and by authority, excluded. This precaution is idle in our regard, but it may not be so elsewhere, and 'law,' says the apostle, 'is placed, not for the just man, but for the unjust.' It gives no trouble to the man who acts properly; it gives pain and brings punishment only to him who omits or transgresses his duty.

"This assumption would produce evil if the Commissioners sought to corrupt the education of the Irish people. We defy them to do so, even if they were so minded; but they are not. Their purpose is upright; their views are to promote education, religious as well as literary, and to preserve full and entire freedom of conscience. Should bad men succeed to the present Commissioners, and attempt to corrupt the education of youth, we are not dumb dogs who know not how to bark; we can guard our flocks, and do so easily, by the simple process of excluding the Commissioners and their books and agents from our schools. We might, by doing so, forfeit the aid which they would, if the supposition were realized, be entitled to withhold, but, in withholding it, they would be answerable to Parliament, to which we also would have access."—*Extract from Circular Letter, etc.*

Connected with this rule, I think we must regard, with some jealouy, the avowed anxiety of the Government to acquire an influence over the existing Catholic institutions for public instruction; while, on the other

following is from their first report for the year ending March, 1834:—

"An important part of the duty intrusted to us is the preparation of books for the use of the schools and school libraries. Besides the works (enumerated) on the ordinary subject of education, we have compiled and printed two numbers of a series of lessons from the Holy Scriptures, one from the Old and the other from the New Testament; and we propose to go on adding to them, until we complete a copious abstract of the narrative parts of the Sacred Volume, interspersed with copious extracts from the poetical and didactic parts of it. We proceed on the undertaking with perfect unanimity, and anticipate, from the general circulation of the work, the best results."

These extracts already include the Gospel of St. Luke in a somewhat mutilated form, the book of the Acts of the Apostles with passages from other parts of Scripture, and two numbers of lessons from the Old Testament.

hand, they expressed a wish (laudable in itself) not to interfere with the Kildare-place schools, but to suffer the Society to afford their scriptural education, wherever it was practicable, without aid from the Government. The education afforded to female children by the Nuns stands in no need of commendation. Wherever a Convent exists in Ireland, it is regarded as a blessing to the neighbourhood, by all ranks of society; and the wealthiest and the proudest in the land are as desirous of placing their children under the tutelage of these pious and accomplished ladies, as the poorest and most wretched, who are the peculiar objects of their care. My Lord Stanley might have reserved his anxiety on their account. I trust that they, at least, will be preserved from whatever is baneful in the influence of the new system.

The following evidence, as to the Society of Christian Brothers, was given before the Committee of the House of Lords:—

"There are very extensive schools at Cork, taught by the Christian Brothers, not under the National Board. I believe there are as many as from 1,000 to 1,200 boys taught there. I went there with a Roman Catholic clergyman, and inspected all the schools, and, certainly, the advance of the children in literary progress is very satisfactory.

"The Christian Brothers are a Society of about sixty, who bind themselves to the gratuitous instruction of the poor. They seem to be very skilful teachers indeed.

"The object of the establishment is the instruction of poor boys. The Brothers take a vow of poverty, (not to possess any thing of their own as individual property,) of chastity, and of obedience to their superiors; and fourthly, they vow to teach children gratuitously during their lives, and are not at liberty to retire from any part of their engagement, unless by dispensation from the Pope, or from their Bishop."—*Mr. Ingham*, before the Lords' Committee.

"Several national schools are taught by the members of this confraternity, and must necessarily remain under their superintendence, until the extension of the school for training and instructing teachers will enable the Board to supply their place with efficient masters."—*Digest of Evid. p.* 88.

"They may be used, and are earnestly recommended by the Board to be used, during those hours allotted to ordinary school business, during which all the children, of whatever denomination, are required to attend—"

and this, notwithstanding the assertion contained in the same report, which no Christian will controvert, "that the reading of the Scriptures is regarded as a religious exercise."

Now when we regard this early attempt to introduce a system of combined scriptural or religious education, (for though the Board disclaim the intention of substituting the extracts for the Sacred Volume itself, the tendency of the entire evidence brought forward in their support is to show the superior advantage of this system in spreading "religious truth,") and when we compare the plan with the "vital defect" of the Kildare-street system, I think we shall have no difficulty in perceiving that the advantages which the former possesses over the latter are unimportant or subject to change, while its peculiar evils may be permanent and fatal. The Kildare-street Society *enforced* in all their schools the reading of the Holy Scriptures without note or comment: the Board of Education only "*earnestly recommend*" the Scripture Lessons to be used during those hours when all the children are required to attend. This certainly affords an opportunity to local managers who may have spirit and intelligence and prudence enough to reject the earnest recommendation of the Board, of making the system available to the urgent wants of the children under their immediate care, without a sacrifice of principle; but is it a recommendation to a national institution to adopt so flexible and vacillating a rule on a matter of such paramount importance? or may not the avowed enemies of the faith of the Irish people, who are averse to the National Board as they were to the Kildare Place Society at its commencement on account of its leading principles, find the principles of the former, too, "so general as to enable them to convert a school (under the Board) into an engine, without infringing on those principles, of wide-spread dissemination of *religious truth* amongst the children?"*

* "My objection to the Kildare-place Society was to their leading principles, but the fact is, that those principles are so general, that if a

Again, although "the Kildare Place Society was the first institution which admitted persons of different religious denominations into the committee of management, that obtained the

Protestant clergyman had a school under that society, he really could convert it into an engine, without infringing upon the principles of wide-spread dissemination of religious truth among the children."—*Evidence of Rev. F. B. Woodward before the Lords' Committee.* The reader will judge, whether the following evidence does not show a similar flexibility of principle on the part of the National system.

"At Belfast, in the school of Mr. Dunning, (one of the two schools under the Education Board, (where there are eight hundred and fifty children, of whom one third are Roman Catholics, there was put up in the school room a notice that 'the Bible is read here every day from two to three o'clock,' which was in conformity with the regulations of the Board, being after school hours. I stayed there some time, and I was so much gratified with the school, that I returned to Belfast, and saw Mr. Dunning again, and inquired whether he had, in any instance, found any objection on the part of the Roman Catholic parents to their children remaining there during that hour. He said there had not happened a single instance of any child having been withdrawn. He mentioned that when he first commenced the Scripture reading, some of the Roman Catholic children rejected the Bible, and said it was an heretical book; but instead of punishing them, he produced their own version, and showed them how small the difference was; and he explained that they both intended to give the most faithful representation of the same revealed word; and he says that in practice, now the Scriptures are read in the authorized version, although if ever he comes to a passage where there is any particular variation in the translation, he has a copy of the Douay Bible in the school, and it is explained to the children to show them to how little extent the variation goes."—*Mr. Ingham before Lords' Committee.*

Mr. Cross, one of the present able joint Secretaries of the Board, gave the following evidence:—

"I will now state what has produced the present satisfactory state of the school, (Laggan village school, near Belfast,) which the committee will perceive is most prosperous. The master they had was removed soon afterwards, and another was appointed; he brought the parents to the school, and afforded every facility to come and see the scriptural part of the education of the children in operation—to observe the manner in which they read the Scriptures at stated hours"—"The children of both persuasions?" "Of all persuasions. But the Douay version is not used there; it is the authorized version." "Do the Catholic children read the authorized version?" "I believe they do." (This school contained forty-eight Episcopalians, forty-two Dissenters, and twenty-nine Roman Catholics.) "In the Ligoniel School, containing eighty-one Presbyterians, twenty-two Episcopalians, thirty-five Roman Catholics, and six Arians—the plan adopted is this: the whole Bible is read as a school book, from two to three o'clock every day, except Saturday, when it is read from ten till twelve. The Scripture extracts published by the Board are used during the ordinary school hours. The Committee is composed of ten laymen, principally Presbyterians, with the exception of two Episcopalians and one Methodist. "No Roman Catholics?" "There is no Roman Catholic on the Committee. The patron of the school is Mr. Blair, an Orthodox Presbyterian. The school-master is, I believe, a

support of the legislature, the consequence of which was, that till of late, it was discountenanced by all or nearly all the Prelates of the Establishment, and by the great body of the inferior clergy. Yet the chief point of difference between the present Board and the Kildare Place Committee is, that the parties are more equally balanced. The Kildare Place Society admitted Roman Catholics upon their Committee, but in so small a number that they had no effective influence. In the present Board, Roman Catholics are admitted to a share of influence

Presbyterian." This gentleman gave further, in evidence, on the authority of the Presbyterian clergyman of Dromore, that in that school the 'whole Bible, in the authorized version, is read for an hour after the termination of the ordinary school business, on two days in the week; children of all denominations being present. The Douay version is not at all used in the schools. The Scripture extracts published by the Board are read daily, during the usual hours of general instruction.' 'He does not state an instance of a Roman Catholic priest attending in the schools?' 'No: I believe that he states that religious instruction is not given in the schools on the separate day."

I shall conclude this lengthened note, without any observation of my own, by the following extract from Letters on the State of Education in Ireland, which bear the venerated signature of I. K. L.

"It may be said that the version authorized by law does not differ materially from ours; but even if this were the case, it would be still objectionable, as nothing can be deemed immaterial in a thing so sacred as revelation; and St. John had so much reverence for its integrity, that he anathematizes in his Apocalypse whomsoever would add to or take from it. * * * * But the fact is, that the Catholic and Protestant versions differ not in a few places only, or on indifferent subjects, but in several hundred places, and almost on every subject which is controverted between the churches wherever these subjects occur, from Genesis to Revelation. * * * * * *

"These school books (of the London Hibernian Society,) give the English Canon or list of inspired books, different from that of the Catholic church, and mark as apocryphal or profane, writings which the church of God, as St. Jerome expresses it, has always received as inspired. Are these trivial things? Far be it from a Catholic to suppose so; to him who thinks he can believe a little more, or a little less, without prejudice to the will of God, it may be trivial; but to a Catholic, who reveres every iota of the law, even as he does the entire, nothing which regards it can be trivial." And none will presume to say that this enlightened Prelate was a bigot. "In general," he says, "we respect the Church of England on account of the rock from which she has been hewn, and the pit from which she has been digged; we prize her liturgy as only less perfect than that from which it has been principally extracted; we admire her translation of the Bible, with all its imperfections, as a noble work; we venerate her Hierarchy as the very image of the truth; for, we Catholics, give veneration to images on account of what they represent."—*Vindication of religious and civil principles of the Irish Catholics, by I. K. L.*

even in the primary arrangements, proportioned to that which they hold in the community and in the Legislature."* Further, although proselytism was strictly prohibited by the three fundamental rules of the Kildare Place Society, yet they were accused "of breaking faith with the public," and were eventually regarded as decidedly a proselyting society. The present board I am most willing to admit, my Lord, is composed of men whose public faith is above suspicion. But were proselytism any longer to be dreaded, which I do not think it is, is the constitution of the Board, necessarily, from its nature, subject to change and liable to be made at a future period, in part at least, as bigoted as it is at present liberal, as profligate as it is at present honourable and trustworthy, a sufficient security against an abuse to which the temptation must be permanent?

On the other hand, the children who were educated at the Kildare Street Schools, read the Scriptures, each from the version which was authorized and sanctioned by the church to which he belonged: the Catholic, from the Douay; the Protestant, from King James's Bible. This was, to a certain extent, adopting the principle of separate religious instruction; and it was adopting, in regard of the Catholic children, a much more sacred principle, and one which is strangely lost sight of, or at best only tolerated, by the National Board,—the principle of the authority of the Catholic Church, the recognition of the Divine commission which she holds, to be the depository of the Sacred Volume. In contradistinction to this, I can scarcely trust myself to treat of the Scripture Lessons. I do not presume to condemn the selection of portions of the Scriptures for the religious instruction of children, as well as adults: but, even with the most liberal sects, the office of making these selections would appear to be peculiarly the province of those to whom is intrusted the guardianship of religion: and that a secular Board should undertake to select, to reject, to translate, to mutilate, to comment on, the written Word of God,—that an uncalled, an unsent, an unor-

* *Carlile on Education.* The Board at that time consisted of five Protestants and two Catholics—was that proportioned to the community in Ireland?

dained body should do this, and then, usurping the office of the sacred Ministry, presume to offer their Scripture Lessons for the instruction of children belonging to the Catholic Church, is, indeed, beyond endurance. I am not disposed, my Lord, to undervalue the necessary sanction of these lessons by one of the Commissioners, who is a dignitary of the Catholic Church, and a Prelate eminent for his piety, his learning, and his zeal; for without this, and the power of rejecting them altogether by the local managers, who are, in some instances, of the Ministry, the rising generation of Catholics might as well be handed over at once for religious instruction to teachers claiming a privilege which the church rigorously denies. But these transitory and unstable checks upon so vital an abuse will not suffice. It is the principle that is to be contended for. *That* must be inflexible. "And why," says the revered Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin, in treating of a similar experiment—"why should religion, which holds her courts throughout the earth, whose forms of prayer and worship are consecrated by a usage of 1800 years, why should she strip herself of them, and expose herself naked to the gaze of her suitors? Why should she suffer the books of her authority, he volume of her statutes, the very form of her proceedings, to be despised, altered or neglected, as it might suit the caprice of the stripling, of the knave or the fool, who presumes to teach in her name?"

Immediately upon the establishment of the Board, four propositions were submitted by the General Synod of Ulster to the Government and the Commissioners of Education, of which the following is a copy:—

1st. That the ministers and the people of this Church, *without the necessary concurrence of the ministers or members of any other Church*, shall enjoy the right of applying to the Board of Education for aid to Schools, by a statement of the constitution and regulation of the Schools, accompanied with an engagement to adhere to them; but in this proposition recognizing the right of the Board to consider the regulations, and to decide accordingly.

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

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

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

The Commissioners having considered these propositions, were of opinion that they did not contain any thing inconsistent with the principles of the system of education! On this proceeding I shall make no comment: your Lordship will judge whether or not, if the second and third propositions mean any thing different from the published regulations of the Board, they do not mean a further infringement on the principle of separate religious instruction, while the adoption of the first was a practical departure, as far as it operated, from that of combined general education. Notwithstanding this concession, the negociation with the Synod did not terminate satisfactorily. Umbrage was taken—misunderstandings on various subjects arose. But *most* the Synod objected, that "the affording opportunities for inculcating the practical tenets of the Roman Catholic Religion would be taking an active part in the dissemination of error." They "*lifted up a testimony against the new system.*"

Next came the clergy of the Church of England. A report was drawn up by the clergy of the united diocese of Derry and Raphoe, an able and beautifully written document, which contains a statement of the terms on which they proposed to join the Board, and a recommendation to arrange a plan for inviting the clergy of the other dioceses to join in a negotiation with the government to effect their objects. The committee suggested "that in case the proposed negotiation should unhappily prove

unsuccessful, and their conscientious objections to the system be disregarded, an earnest and affectionate appeal should be made to their brethren, lay and clerical, who might have formed a connexion with the Board of National Education, to dissolve that connexion without delay, and to unite with them in unceasing and strenuous efforts with the legislature and the British public for the removal of a system which, while it remained unchanged, must ever present an impassable barrier to their co-operation with it, and must continue to exist as a fruitful source of jealousy and disunion in the land." The committee were of opinion, that the free use of the Holy Scriptures, and the due order of the schools, would be sufficiently guaranteed by the following regulations:—1st. That there shall be a Scripture class in all the National Schools, to be composed of those children whose parents or guardians wish them to read the Bible. 2nd. That it shall be part of the daily education given in the schools, and that such class shall read the Bible at suitable times during the ordinary school hours."

To meet the views of the Protestant clergy, the Board received the Lord Lieutenant's permission to revise their existing rule as to religious instruction; and it is now a rule "*that a Scripture class should be formed in every school where the parents desire it, and the exception to the rule is only in cases where parents or guardians disapprove of the Bible for the purposes of education !!*" *

At a general meeting of the Roman Catholic Prelates of Ireland, held in Dublin, on the 14th of February, 1840,

The Most Reverend Dr. Crolly, in the Chair,

"The following arrangement was proposed and adopted for the purpose of securing the unanimous co-operation of the Roman Catholic Prelates in diffusing the advantages of National Education; it was agreed on that the subsequent regulations be respectfully submitted to the consideration of his Excellency the Lord Lieutenant:—

* Digest, p. 151.—This permission appears, from the late reports, to be extended to the teaching of the catechism, and religious instruction generally.

1st. That in every National School for the mixed education of Protestant and Roman Catholic children, the Roman Catholic Bishop of the diocese, the parish priest, or the Roman Catholic curate of the parish in which such school is situated, may be a patron of such school, in order that he may prevent the appointment of any teacher whose moral or religious conduct should be found objectionable, and, if necessary, direct the dismissal of such teacher from so important a situation.

2nd. That no book or tract whatsoever, for the religious or moral instruction of the Roman Catholic pupils, shall be admitted into a national school without the previous approbation of the four Roman Catholic archbishops of Ireland.

3rd. That in every national school where the pupils are all of the Roman Catholic persuasion, the Roman Catholic bishop of that diocese, or the Roman Catholic pastor, in whose parish the school has been established, as patrons of such school, shall have power to appoint or dismiss the teacher or teachers, whether male or female, and that said bishop or pastor shall have access to the school at all times, for the purposes of giving religious or moral instruction to the scholars, such instruction to be given by the clergy themselves, or by persons appointed by them for that purpose; and further, that every book used in the school for the religious or moral instruction of the Roman Catholic pupils shall be composed or selected by the Roman Catholic bishop of the diocese.

4th. That in future, for the satisfaction of the Roman Catholics, and for the greater security of their religion, the Lord Lieutenant be respectfully requested to select two lay Roman Catholic members of the Board of National Education, from each of the four ecclesiastical provinces, and that, on the recommendation of the Roman Catholic bishops of each province, one of this body be appointed a member of the Board of Commissioners by his Excellency.

5th. That the lecturer in the model schools, appointed to instruct the Roman Catholic teachers of the national schools in the principles of religion, morals, or history, (which is capable of being explained in an irreligious or offensive manner,) should be a Roman Catholic, with satisfactory testimonials of religious and moral conduct, signed by the Roman Catholic bishop under whose spiritual jurisdiction he previously lived.

6th. That it would be very desirable to have a model school in each of the four provinces, when the funds of the National Board of Education might be found sufficient for that purpose, as such an establishment would inspire the inhabitants of the provinces with greater confidence in the system of National Education.

Signed,

✠ W. Crolly, D.D. Chairman.

The following is the material part of His Excellency's Answer.

"After the best consideration that I can give the subject, I am bound distinctly to state to you, that no changes, such as you desire, can, in my opinion, be made with advantage to the public,

either in the constitution of that Board, who have hitherto worked so harmoniously together, or in the general regulations under which they have acted !!! "

Thus, my Lord, have I endeavoured to trace in rapid outline the leading features of the system under its present aspect; and thus have I shown that a theory which was adopted after much inquiry and much experience, as alone applicable to Ireland for affording the ignorant and impoverished of her population the benefits of a religious and literary education, has been gradually abandoned by the Government and the Board to meet the objections of the spiritual instructors of a wealthy and *soi disant* enlightened section of that population; while the arrangement submitted by the venerable Hierarchy of the Church to which all the poor belong, which I have quoted at length, and which I therefore forbear to characterize, was totally and peremptorily rejected. And what are the results?—The Clergy of the Established Church remain unconciliated;* while a large body of the Pastors of the people have withdrawn their schools from all connexion with the Board, and totally denounced the system; the representative of a great Catholic constituency goes into Parliament pledged to oppose it; and, although the average number of schools in connexion with it continues to increase, many, I might perhaps safely say a majority, of such of the patrons of those schools as are Roman Catholic clergymen, receive the grant of the Board from pecuniary necessity alone, and are the enemies of a system which, when they knew only as a theory, they embraced as a means of good; but which has thus far disappointed them in practice—that the principles which entitled it to their support can no longer be regarded as its basis.

And now, my Lord, may I be permitted to ask what are the principles upon which the system rests? Alas! none. The

* It is but justice to the Board to admit that the modifications under which the Synod of Ulster have lately commenced to co-operate with them appear to be only illustrative of the concessions in point of principle made several years ago.

continued vacillations of the Board render it impossible for them to lay claim to any: to any, at least, of the avowed principles which originally constituted the theory of the system; (for a latent all pervading principle it had at the commencement, which has become gradually developed and has grown with its growth..) Do I wrong the Board by this assertion? Have they regarded any one of the avowed principles upon which the institution was established as sacred? Is a combined literary education—is secular instruction, afforded in common to children of all religious persuasions in each local district, while religious instruction is totally excluded from the school, a necessary condition for a grant from the Board? Is provision for a complete religious education afforded separately to children of each denomination of Christians in their peculiar tenets, and under the guidance and direction of their respective pastors, a necessary condition? *Is it the first condition*, my Lord, according to the original principle of the system? Or is it not impossible, amidst the numberless and contradictory deviations which have been made, to discover whether a knowledge of the generalities of Christianity—a knowledge of the Scripture extracts of the Commissioners—a knowledge of the whole Bible and nothing but the Bible—or a negative or permissive knowledge* of the peculiar tenets of the several persuasions of Chris-

* The following is the official announcement of the Board in the fifth report.

"N. B.—The principle of the Commissioners, as to religious instruction, is the same as that laid down for education in workhouses, by the act for the more effectual relief of the destitute poor of Ireland, 1st and 2nd Vict. chap. 56, sec. 49. The section is as follows:—"

"And be it enacted, that no order of the Commissioners, nor any bye-"law shall oblige any inmate of any workhouse to attend, or be present at "any religious service which may be celebrated in a mode contrary to the "religious principle of such inmate, nor shall authorize the education of "any child in such workhouse, in any religious creed other than that "professed by the parents, or surviving parent of such child, and to which "such parents or parent shall object, or, in case of an orphan, to which the "guardian or guardians, godfather or godmother of such orphan shall object: "provided also that it shall be lawful for any regular minister of the religious "persuasion of any inmate of such workhouse at all times in the day, on the "request of such inmate, to visit such workhouse for the purpose of affording "religious instruction to such inmate, *and also for the purpose of instruct-"ing his child or children in the principles of his religion.*"

ians, constitute the religious education provided for by the system?

It may be said that the "modifications" of the rules as to religious instruction, afford equal advantages to all persuasions. My Lord, of all the base expedients of utilitarian policy, a popular argument for the violation of principle is the basest. But it is the *deprivation* of advantage that I complain of, and what matters it that this be equal. And these modifications *do not* afford equal advantages. Your Lordship is aware that all loose instructions in religion, that all lessons "confined to the mere generalities of Christianity," are necessarily the most repugnant to the principles of a Church which is at the same time the most mystical and the most dogmatical. There is the reading of the Scriptures for example. It is the boast of Protestantism that the whole of a Protestant education consists in the reading of the Bible. (I speak of Protestantism generally; for in Ireland even the members of the Established Church, including the clergy, are nearly all of the Evangelical party, and totally reject the Doctrine of Dogmatic Authority asserted by the Oxford Divines.) The Catholic Church, with not less reverence for the Sacred Volume, maintains, first, the necessity of an assurance of its integrity as well as its purity, which can be given alone by an infallible authority: and, next that the written word contains not all the truths essential to salvation; that her children must learn "the things which" the immediate successors of the apostles "heard of them (the apostles) amongst many witnesses, and the same committed to faithful men who should be able to teach others also;" that they must "stand fast and hold the traditions which they have been taught, whether by word or (our) epistle;" and that while "All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: that the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works," *they* must "continue in the things which they have learned and have been assured of knowing of whom they have learned them;" and lastly, my Lord, for the purpose of my argument,

though first in the course of a religious education, she teaches that SHE is the sole depository of all truth written and unwritten —that neither can be received but upon HER authority—that neither can be supported but by HER testimony—that of both SHE is the " Pillar and the Ground.

It was a good maxim of French philosophism, my Lord, that no lie should be suffered to live ; and the prevalence of any falsehood, no matter how speculative, must have an injurious effect upon man. It was but the converse of an older maxim of Catholicism, that no truth should be let to perish—an axiom that it never can perish ; and the prevalence of every truth, which it has pleased the Almighty to reveal to man, is necessary for man's government here. Hence the anti-liberalism, so often misnamed bigotry, of all true Catholics, (*misnamed*—for bigotry cannot co-exist with the essential characteristics of their religion, Reverence and Love.) Hence the total inconsistency of the doctrines of that school with the doctrines of the Catholic church. Hitherto there could be no apprehension of the taint of liberalism here. Persecution and exclusion, while they severely tried the fidelity, formed a *cordon sanitaire* for the faith of the people. It is a necessary consequence of a milder sway that that safeguard is removed; and it becomes the peculiar duty of the Irish clergy of the present day, to guard the faith against what I must again call the all-pervading principle of the new system of National Education. The opponents of the system have been challenged to point out any injurious consequence which has arisen from it. From the very nature of the only injury to be dreaded this is impossible. I charge not the commissioners of education with any design of proselytizing. How could I ?—the Board being composed of men of all persuasions. Neither, I say it with all sincerity, do I charge them with any wilful violation of their trust. I have the honour of a personal knowledge of more than one of the body, and I know them to be men of tried honour. I may have severely, nay, petulantly, stigmatized their vacillations—but it is my deliberate opinion that they could not have avoided them. They were the necessary and gradual development of the latent principle—

the machine would not have otherwise wrought. It is not a demonstrative design of protestantizing the children of Catholic parents, which could be detected in the outset, and illustrated by individual instances, that is to be dreaded. It is the general *liberalising* tendency of the system, which may not be capable of proof for generations yet to come, when the work will have been fully accomplished, and the standard of infidelity raised where that of the faith was so long triumphant.

My Lord, I am the enemy of the worldly aggrandizement of the church to which I belong. I am opposed on the one hand to the state advancement or endowment; on the other to the political influence of its clergy. A regard for civil liberty would in itself induce me sternly to resist their acquisition of political power—to fight to the death against it. It could not, we all know it, be intrusted to more dangerous hands. Withhold from them the favour of the Court, and spurn the political support which they may tender to you. Bow them out of the Castle and frown them off the hustings my Lord. Their mission is to neither place.* And ardently do I hope, nay, firmly do I trust, that Ireland may never see the day when they shall be more roughly expelled. But withhold

* *Extract from the minutes of the proceedings of the Roman Catholic Archbishops and Bishops of Ireland, assembled at the Parochial House, Marlborough Street, Dublin, on the 28th of January,* 1834. *The Most Rev. Doctor Murray, presiding.*

"Resolved—That whilst we do not intend to interfere with the civil rights of those intrusted to our care; yet as Guardians of Religion, justly apprehending that its general interests, as well as the honour of the priesthood, would be compromised by a deviation from the line of conduct which we marked out for ourselves, and impressed upon the minds of our Clergy, in our Pastoral address of the year 1830; we do hereby pledge ourselves, on our return to our respective dioceses, to remind our Clergy of the instructions we then addressed to them, and to recommend them most earnestly to avoid, in future, any allusion at their Altars to Political subjects, and carefully to refrain from connecting themselves with Political Clubs, acting as Chairmen or Secretaries at Political meetings, or moving or seconding Resolutions on such occasions; in order that we exhibit ourselves in all things in the character of our sacred calling as Ministers of Christ, and dispensers of the mysteries of God."

✠ "D. Murray, Archbishop."

It is to be hoped that recent events will induce the venerated body to revive this truly apostolic resolution at their approaching meeting.

not from them their legitimate and undoubted rights. Suffer them to obey the mandate of their divine master—" to feed his sheep," to " feed his lambs." The education of youth is an important portion of their mission, from which they should not be excluded, and from which they cannot without direct direliction of duty retire. My Lord, they *will* not retire from it. The national system, to be effective and permanent, " must associate the clergy in the direction of education ;" a complete religious education must be the paramount object of that system, and the guardians of religion must have the entire guidance and control of it. The letter of Lord Brougham to the Duke of Bedford (1839), contains an important admission. This great champion of liberal education, " after," as he says, " a controversy of thirty years," strikes his colours, and tells his Noble associate that any plan of education in which the Established Church shall not be consulted, is impracticable in England. " Let us be well assured," he says, " that no government in this country ever can carry on a plan of National Education in which a perfect absolute equality between all sects of religious professors, shall be established, according to your principle and mine, according to what, I humbly presume to think the only sound and just principle." My Lord, the Catholic church is established in Ireland—not by law, but in the hearts of the people ; and without entering on the question of the justice or practicability of equality, we may, in our turn, be well assured that no government ever can carry on a plan of National Education here, which will not afford to the clergy of that church every privilege they may require to preserve the integrity and purity of the faith. I make no equivocal implications—I have no underhand objects. I am not for exclusion—I am not for proselytism on either side : but I am for the education, according to the principles already explained, of the poor of Ireland, who are, *en masse*, Catholic. I have carefully abstained from making any allusion to the painful controversies to which this question gave rise ; and my unwillingness to offer offence to the commissioners of education, must be apparent to your Lordship. But I cannot avoid cautioning you against forming an opinion as to the feelings of the Roman

Catholic Hierarchy and Clergy, from the several reports of the Commissioners, in which the subject is adverted to. The number of schools, having priests for their managers, which receive the grant of the Board, is no proof of their approbation of the system, but rather of the necessities of their flocks. *The most popularly cherished Catholic institutions, even in the metropolis, for the education of children, whether male or female, have refrained from connecting themselves with the Board,* though frequently obliged to have recourse to charity for their support. Ten Catholic Prelates have announced their decided disapprobation—none, their unequivocal approbation of the system. The 'arrangement,' adopted for the purpose of securing their unanimous co-operation, and rejected by the Lord Lietenant, may be regarded as inconsistent with Lord Brougham's only sound and just principle; but be assured, my Lord, the measure of influence and control they demanded under it is the very smallest, which must be conceded to them before that purpose can be effected: your Lordship knows it was acquiesced in by Prelates of extreme moderation. Inquire too, whether the wealthy, who have the option, make in their own cases, the sacrifice which is required of the poor for the sake of a liberal combined secular education. The Catholic gentlemen who support your system should do as they would be done by. Where are their own children educated? They care not in what country—France, Spain, Switzerland, Belgium, England or Ireland,—but invariably in Ecclesiastical colleges or convents. *Yes, my Lord, the very men who co-operate with you in liberalizing and enlightening the poor, hand over their own unfortunate sons to imbibe the dark dogmas of the Jesuits.*]

It is important to consider what portion of the privileges enjoyed by an established church are the essential rights which must be recognised in the church of a free people. Ireland knows her strength; she has begun also to know her rights; and it will be a vain effort to attempt to retard the advancement of the latter, while the former continues daily to increase. Were the moderate immunities won for her church by the sturdy valour of Scotland,—were even the vast constitutional privileges enjoyed

by the established Church in England necessary for the Catholic Church in Ireland, she should have them, my Lord. But such is not the case: and the fate of the Catholic religion in many countries, especially in England, has taught her to dread, more than the severest persecution, what she would regard as an unhallowed connexion with the state. It is true that every enlightened Irish Catholic must acknowledge the admirable uses of the Established Church in England. That, as a civil institution, analogous to our spiritual one, it effects, as far as a civil institution may, purposes similar to those which are effected by religion in Ireland. He sees your country, my Lord, a model of public decency and decorum, as ours is of domestic moral purity. He cannot be the enemy of the institution which makes it so. He may in his capacity of legislator deal with its revenues, and make it more tolerable to those who dissent from its doctrines; but he feels no less bound in the same capacity to maintain its stability. But his own Church rejects all secular interference; her Pastors have no claim to secular power. What rights, then, has she, which the state must recognise?—the recognition of which is essential to, or rather consequent upon the political freedom of the country which generally acknowledges her spiritual sway? The chief of these, my Lord, is the direction of the education of youth. This is, indeed regarded by a most philosophic Protestant Divine and steady Churchman, as the sole end, as the very essence of a Church establishment. But Coleridge's theories are often too subtle for practical application. As an establishment the Church of England has other ends, has another essence. It is as the church of the people that I do not think she will forego or transfer this right. I am quite sure she ought not. It is as the church of the people that any plan of education in which she shall not be consulted, is impracticable in England. The pious and venerable Catholic Hierarchy of Ireland claim no political power, no seat in the legislature or at the council board. They 'will not interfere with the civil rights of those intrusted to their care;' and, regarded as a state engine, they have nothing to do with National Education. But, the

ultimate end of all education, 'the perfection of our being in another world, through the faithful discharge of our duty here,' is within their peculiar and exclusive province. With this end the Government have no concern; but the people to whom they must make their system acceptable, the parents of the children to be educated, have it constantly in view, and will reject any system by which they are not satisfied it can be attained. How then, is this satisfaction to be afforded them? To whom would *they* entrust the formation of a plan for the development of the physical, intellectual, and moral powers of their children regarding it only as a means of arriving at future happiness? Surely to the Pastors of the Church. Their wants and wishes are not represented in the Government; they are not *politically free* if this trust be reposed in other hands. But morally free they are and will be; and any system of education in which the Catholic church shall not be consulted, is impracticable in Ireland. Her assent at least must be obtained—the unanimous assent and approbation of her Hierarchy.

I have already said that I am attached to no political party. I am certainly no Whig, my Lord. But the generous conduct of the leaders of that party, at a very trying period of my country's history, cannot be forgotten. And although (in opposition to strong prejudices, arising from hereditary gratitude, the natural result of that conduct,) I am forced to believe that the best security for constitutional liberty will be found in the prevalence of Tory principles; I cannot forget that the party professing these principles, were, for nearly a hundred years, our unrelenting persecutors, and that they still continue to legislate *against* us in the spirit of irritation and hostility. Nor am I quite insensible to the benefits we have received from the present Administration, nor to the admirable *policy* which induced the able Premier to select for the government of Ireland, some, at least, in whose attachment to her interests he knew that policy had no share, and whose exertions for her welfare would be a 'labour of love.' Your Executive has afforded to Ireland much valuable relief. Take the credit of bestowing a priceless boon, a permanent blessing

upon her. Make this important institution suitable to her wants. The necessities of the times demand this adaptation, and none will be found more ready to yield to those necessities than the able Leader of the opposition. He is, indeed, no *Grey*, to go before his age in propounding measures which even the class immediately to benefit by them, could only in a subsequent age appreciate. Still less is he a *Chatham*, to legislate for all ages and for all climes on the immutable principles of justice. He is no Tory, either in the best or in the worst sense. But he is the model of Conservative Statesmen. He knows how to act, as well as how to define, the "*Progressive Reformer*:"—to give largely—nay, with cheerfulness and good grace—when he can no longer withhold. Witness his ample measure of Catholic relief—how fully he legalized all our rights, and

> "——— gave us that with all his heart,
> Which, but we had already, with all his heart
> He had kept from us."

So will it be with National Education. It is quite plain that this necessary engine of government, the system of coercion having been abandoned, must be made unobjectionable to Catholic Ireland. Let Sir Robert Peel take the reins of Government, and he will undoubtedly effect this consummation. Anticipate him, my Lord. I do not presume to suggest the plan, but take the course to arrive at it which expediency points out, and the principles and the feelings of the people will approve—a course which will ensure for it their unbounded confidence,—a course which will earlier tend to its general efficiency, which will make it far more lasting amongst us than could the wisest counsels of the wisest civil governors,—a course which will perpetuate it in Ireland.

I have the honour to be,

My Lord,

With high respect,

Your Lordship's obedient humble Servant,

AN IRISH CATHOLIC.

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Houses of the Oireachtas