

be necessary to pass before a harmonious system could be established. Can it for one moment be said that the subject matter is not of sufficient importance to require the services of a Minister? Have not governments more than once been put out on the Irish Education question, which is as far as ever from being settled? Is there not nearly a million of money expended between the various Irish education departments every year? Has not England two Ministers of Primary Education—the President and the Vice-President of the Council? And is not *education* which *prevents* crime as important a department of state as the *law* which *punishes* it?

I have every reason to believe, but unfortunately no time left to demonstrate, that there are equally strong arguments in favour of a Minister of Education for Scotland, and still stronger arguments in favour of extending the jurisdiction of the English Education Minister over the whole field of education instead of confining it to primary education. The arrangement I would suggest is not a very revolutionary one. It is simply this—that instead of one there should be three Vice-Presidents of Council—one for each kingdom, and the present seems a fit time for making such appointments, for it is obvious to all that the Irish Executive is overworked, and that for the despatch of business in Parliament the services of another Irish Minister are urgently required.

V.—*A few observations on the present position of the Irish National School Teachers, as regards Salaries, Pensions, and Residences.* By John Ferguson, President, Irish National Teachers' Organization.

[Read, Tuesday, 31st January, 1882.]

On the 5th March, 1875, Mr. Charles Henry Meldon, M.P. for Kildare, delivered a speech in the House of Commons which contains most valuable information regarding the then position of the Irish National School teachers. The honourable and learned gentleman summarized the grievances of the teachers under three heads, viz.:—insufficient salaries, the great want throughout the entire country of residences, and the absence of any provision for teachers when overtaken by old age or infirmity. He showed that the average salary of teachers, male and female, did not exceed £45 per annum; and he then pertinently asked—“What is this salary for men and women who spend their lives studying and teaching?”

I admit cheerfully that the position of the teacher has been since then considerably improved in many respects, but I am sure it will be allowed by every person who looks dispassionately into the facts that there is plenty of room for still further improvement. The case made out by Mr. Meldon was so conclusive and overwhelming, that Sir Michael Hicks-Beach, the then Chief-Secretary for Ireland, had a Bill passed in Parliament for the express purpose of remedying the state of things of which the Member for Kildare so forcibly

complained. This Act of 1875 proposed to divide the results fees earned by the teachers into three parts, The first part was to be paid unconditionally; the Poor-law guardians were to be permitted, if they were so minded, to contribute another third; and the government, conditionally on the guardians paying their share, would contribute the remaining third. It thus appears that two-thirds of the results fees to be paid to teachers were conditional on the guardians becoming contributory, and we shall now see to what extent they corresponded with the intentions of the Act. The total number of Poor-law Unions in Ireland is 165, and of this total the highest number which became contributory at any time was 70. This occurred in 1876-'7, owing to the fact that the government framed the Act so as that the Unions which contributed in 1875-'6 were bound to contribute in the following year also—

In 1875-'76	...	65 Unions	contributed	£27,918
„ 1876-'77	...	70	„ „	£30,500
„ 1877-'78	...	39	„ „	£21,687
„ 1878-'79	...	28	„ „	£16,791
„ 1879-'80	...	21	„ „	£12,804

And in the financial year ending 31st March, 1881, 13 Unions contributed out of the rates £8,324 for the purposes of education. It thus appears that the Act of 1875 has almost totally failed to accomplish the objects for which it was brought into existence.

In consequence of the failure of this permissive Act, Mr. Meldon, M.P., on the 7th May, 1878, moved a resolution in the House of Commons, which was passed unanimously in these terms:—

“That the National School Teachers' (Ireland) Act, and the other means adopted by the government, having failed to satisfy the just demands of the Irish National School Teachers, this house is of opinion that the present position of the Irish National School Teachers calls for the immediate attention of Her Majesty's government, with a view to the satisfactory adjustment of their claims.”

In partial fulfilment of the terms of that resolution, an Act was passed in the closing days of the session of 1879, setting apart a sum of £1,300,000 to form the nucleus of a pension scheme for Irish National School teachers. An increase of about £4 per head was also made in the teachers' salaries; but still, considering the failure of the Poor-law Unions to become contributory, and the deductions in salaries on account of the pension scheme, the position of the teachers, as regards salary, is scarcely better than it was in 1878, when the resolution proposed by Mr. Meldon was passed unanimously by the House of Commons.

According to the latest returns it would appear that the annual average incomes of teachers in England, Scotland, and Ireland, were as follows:—

	England.	Scotland.	Ireland.
Males,	£121 2s. 7d.	£138 12s. 2d	} £57 9s. 0d.
Females,	£72 12s. 8d.	£70 16s. 9d.	

The returns available in the case of Irish schools do not supply sufficient data for furnishing the separate incomes of males and

females; the amount just quoted (£57 9s.) is the average salary paid to all grades of teachers in Ireland—male and female. The teachers of Ireland are engaged in similar work with their brethren in England and Scotland, and as this work is done, according to the statistics of education, quite as effectively, they think it only fair that they should get similar remuneration for their services.

When in 1875 Sir Michael Hicks-Beach was told that the measure he was then proposing for the relief of the teachers would be a failure, he stated distinctly:—

“We do not intend this to be a permanent measure. We consider it would be highly important to get the Board of Guardians to contribute, and we would like to train them up to it; if it succeeds, well and good, the teachers will be reasonably remunerated; if not, the government will take such steps as will secure that the remuneration now intended will be paid to them.”

It is now nearly seven years since these words were spoken, and, notwithstanding the expectations held out, no earnest attempt has been made to give the teachers the remuneration then promised them, or to make good the losses sustained through the failure of the Act of 1875.

The teachers of national schools suffer very great hardships for want of suitable residences in connection with their schools. The total number of schools in connection with the National Board on the 31st December, 1880, was 7,590, and it appears that the number of “free residences” provided throughout Ireland, without aid from the state, was, at the same date, 1,280. Since 1875, 235 residences were built in connection with the National Teachers’ Residences Act, so that on the 31st December, 1880, 1,515 residences were provided for teachers in connection with their schools. Most of these “free residences” are of such a nature that no person, who could possibly avoid it, would think of living in them, as they are, with few exceptions, most unsuitable as places of abode for teachers, while a very large proportion may be regarded as unfit for human habitation.

Mr. Meldon, M.P., speaking in the House of Commons on the 5th March, 1875, stated that nearly 80 per cent. of the teachers were unprovided with residences; and one of the most experienced head-inspectors of National Schools, says in his report on the state of education in his district in 1874:—

“The teachers in numerous instances suffer great inconveniences for want of residences near their schools. Many of them are obliged to walk six or more miles daily in the discharge of their duties, and it is evident that this labour, more especially in the case of females, must exercise a depressing influence on their energies in the school.”

Mr. Hynes, inspector of schools, says in a recently published report:—

“Twenty-nine schools in my district have residences attached, but very often the residence is a miserable apartment adjoining the school-room, and is both uncomfortable and unhealthy.”

Mr. McDonnell, another inspector, observes:—

“The want of residences near the school is a great hardship to the teachers. Only seven have residences in this district. I know of more than a dozen cases where the teacher has to walk from eight to twelve miles a day, to and from school, to the great injury of the school.”

It can be easily seen from these quotations that we are making little improvement in the way of providing suitable residences for teachers. A special Act of Parliament was passed in 1875 to meet this difficulty; and yet, in the five years ending 31st December, 1880, 235 residences were built in connection with its provisions. The Commissioners of Public Works in Ireland are empowered by this Act to grant loans for building teachers' residences on very liberal terms. A maximum sum of £250 may be borrowed for this purpose, and practically, a payment of $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent. per annum on the money borrowed, or a yearly reimbursement of £6 5s. for thirty-five years, clears off the entire debt. When it is understood that, in the majority of instances, the teachers themselves are perfectly willing and ready to make the annual repayments, it is astonishing that more satisfactory progress has not been made.

It is impossible that the pupils attending our schools, or their parents, can have that respect which is so desirable for the teacher or his office, while his domestic surroundings are of a squalid and uncomfortable character. This want of suitable residences for teachers, in connection with their schools, is a serious obstacle to the progress of education, and therefore, it is most desirable that a remedy should be found at once for the present unsatisfactory state of things.

I have pleasure in acknowledging that the Pension Act of 1879, is capable of conferring substantial benefits upon the national school teachers; but, when we consider the specially fatiguing and irritating nature of the teacher's duties, it must be admitted that the ages for retiring on full pension, viz., sixty-five for males and sixty for females, are entirely too high, and that if the present rigid conditions continue to be adhered to, the advantages to be derived from the measure will be of a limited character. As a rule, national teachers enter the service at a very early age, and a teacher entering the service at eighteen would receive a pension as may be seen from the following table:—

	First Class.	Second Class.	Third Class.
After twenty years' service,	£6 ...	£6 ...	£6
After thirty years' service,	£14 ..	£12 ...	£10
After thirty-five years' service,	£21 ..	£17 ...	£13
After forty years' service,	£31 ...	£24 ...	£19

The maximum rates of pensions for First, Second, and Third Class male teachers to be obtained at the age of sixty-five, are as follows:—

First Class.	Second Class.	Third Class.
£60 ...	£47 ..	£35

It thus appears that a teacher entering the service at eighteen, and becoming incapacitated for duty after forty years' service, would only receive a pension slightly in excess of half the amount to which he would be entitled after forty-seven years' service; or, in other words, the last seven years of a teacher's service are estimated more highly, by the present scheme, than the previous forty years, during which he might naturally be expected to render more satisfactory and efficient service to the State.

It is plain that, in order to make the scheme more satisfactory to the teachers and really beneficial to the public service, either the ages for obtaining full pension should be substantially reduced, or arrangements should be made for taking length and character of service into account in calculating the pension a teacher should receive, particularly in cases where he has been compelled to retire through physical infirmity.

There are some other matters connected with the great question of education I would like to bring under the notice of this learned and enlightened society, but I feel that I have already trespassed too much on your valuable time, and shall therefore, on this occasion, content myself by respectfully directing your attention to the subjects alluded to in this paper, in the hope that you may be able to assist in finding out a remedy for these grievances which press so heavily on the teachers and retard the progress of education in this country.

VI.—*On the extent to which the Principles advocated in "Bentham's Letters on Usury" have still to be adopted in the Laws of England and of Foreign Countries.* By A. H. Bates, M.A., Barrister-at-Law.

[Read Tuesday, 28th February, 1882.]

THE abolition of the Usury Laws may, by many, be considered complete in England, and to have removed them and their demerits out of the class of subjects of practical importance which this Society is accustomed to discuss. If this were so, I am aware that any antiquarian interest which an examination of them might afford, would, at least in the eyes of this Society, be a poor equivalent for the absent element of utility. It may be remarked, however, that even if it were true that all trace of the Usury Laws had been swept away from our laws, and from the laws of the countries in whose progress we are interested, all questions connected with usury might still, in a certain view of the present tendencies of social ideas, form a subject of future, if not present, importance.

The view to which I allude has been expressed by one whose eminence in the science to which he especially devoted himself is now universally acknowledged. I am sure that in any tribute of praise that could be offered to the memory of the late Mr. Cliffe Leslie, this society would eagerly join. It is impossible, especially in the first meeting since his death, of a Society of which he was formerly, and until his duties called him elsewhere, a most active and distinguished member, to mention his name without uttering some expression of deep respect for his mental powers, the usefulness of his labours, the singleness of his aims, and the strength of his claim to the title of a gentleman and a man of letters.

In his article on "The History and Future of Interest and Profit," published in the *Fortnightly* of November last, Mr. Leslie says:—