

IV.—*On the Reorganization of Irish Education Departments and the appointment of a Minister of Education.*—By Arnold F. Graves, Esq.

[Read Tuesday, 13th June, 1882.]

THE control of matters educational in Ireland is divided between the following nine boards:—the National Board, the Intermediate Board, the Endowed Schools' Board, Erasmus Smith's Schools' Board, the Incorporated Society, the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests, the Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education, the University of Dublin, and the Royal University. These are all either government departments or else bodies possessed of large endowments and enjoying charters and other state privileges. Besides these, there are other important educational boards, but as they cannot any of them be considered public institutions, I shall not deal with them in this paper.

With the exception of two, all the nine boards above mentioned are composed of unpaid members, and on many of them there are a large number of *ex-officio* members—on one board alone there are twenty-five *ex-officio* members, on two others, seven.

The subject of unpaid boards and *ex-officio* trustees affords ample material in itself for a paper for your Society: I only ask you here to contrast the manner in which our other great departments are conducted by a few paid responsible officials, who devote their whole time and energy to their task, with a system under which the most important interests are governed by shifting bodies of men, whose energies are devoted to other pursuits, who cannot attend regularly, who have nothing to gain by discharging these duties, nothing to lose by neglecting them, and who are therefore practically irresponsible.

Unpaid commissioners are often unable to attend to their duties, but *ex-officio* commissioners, of whom there are a very large number on these boards, seldom feel that it is incumbent upon them to undertake work which they never bargained for. On consulting last year's "Directory," I find that the then Lord Chancellor was a member of six public boards of education; the Archbishop of Dublin of five; the Provost of Trinity College of four; the Primate of all Ireland of four; the Chief Justice of Common Pleas of four; the Chief Baron of four; the Chief Justice of Ireland of three. When we add up the component parts of these nine boards we arrive at a gross total of about 250 members. If all these forces were pulling in one direction wonders would, no doubt, be worked; but unfortunately each board having been created without regard to other boards, acts independently of its brethren, and the resultant force is small compared with what it might be.

I will deal first with the *National Board*, which is charged with the primary education of the poor. The powers entrusted to this board are large, the state grant amounts to £756,000, and the Census Returns, just published, prove that they have discharged their duties admirably. Unfortunately between the point at which

the National Board are constrained to leave, and the point at which other boards take up education, there is a great gulf fixed. The National Board do what they can to bridge over this gulf by the establishment of model schools in our few towns, and by paying for the teaching of extra subjects in their primary schools; but unfortunately the mixed principle on which these model schools are per force conducted prevents them from being made much use of in the south and west of Ireland. But even if these schools were countenanced by the Catholic clergy, only a small fraction of the population would be able to make use of them, for the town population is but a small fraction of the population of Ireland.

The Intermediate System was started for the purpose of promoting intermediate secular education in Ireland—of bridging over this gulf between primary and university education. It established exhibitions and prizes for boys, who pass in a variety of subjects, a due knowledge of which can only be obtained after some years of hard study in grammar schools. The cleverest of the National School boys may as well cry for the moon as strive to gain Intermediate Exhibitions, which are just as hopelessly beyond their reach, for in the *country* national school, only the elements of the subjects of examination for the intermediate are taught, and with such disadvantages the greatest genius would have no chance against a boy of moderate ability, carefully prepared at an intermediate school in a dozen subjects.

I do not advocate the wholesale higher education of the masses; but I think it will be conceded here as it is in England, where this problem is now engaging general attention, that every brilliant boy, no matter what his station in life, should be afforded an opportunity of climbing, step by step, until he reaches the topmost pinnacle of learning. In Scotland many years ago it was the custom for the parishes to maintain select pupils at intermediate schools, and afterwards at the universities—an admirable way of meeting the difficulty. However, the recent attempt to enlist the Irish Poor-law Guardians in the cause of education does not encourage us to look for help in matters educational from parochial authorities.

I do not propose to establish an impossible examination for the purpose of selecting the most *industrious* out of the million national school pupils: I prefer to rely on a combination of examinations and selection as a cheap and at the same time a safer means of securing genius which often fails at examinations. We have in our inspectors a body of men well qualified to make a *selection* of the fittest boys of each district, who might then compete for exhibitions, tenable at *any* school selected by the exhibitor and approved of by the National Board.

The principle of endowing denominational institutions in this indirect fashion having been already adopted by the Intermediate Education Act, there appears to be no insuperable obstacle to obtain the consent of Parliament to some such scheme. I cannot but think that when a sum of nearly £800,000 is voted annually for primary schools, a comparatively trifling sum spent in completing the education of genius would not be thrown away. But if funds are not

forthcoming from the Treasury, there are in existence funds which are doing but little in the cause of education, and which would go a long way towards accomplishing the object I have in view. Any one who consults the admirable Report of the Endowed Schools' (Ireland) Commission of 1858, in the compilation of which our learned President took so prominent a part, will find that there are an immense number of small educational endowments which were then doing little or no good. There were at that time 2,828 endowed schools, with endowments amounting to £76,463 per annum or an average income of £27. The Report of the Endowed Schools' Commission for 1881 proves that during the interval between the two Reports small endowments have not, and as a matter of fact never can, in this age of high prices, carry out the almost invariable intentions of the founders, viz. : the maintenance of schools for the children of the poor of particular districts. I believe that these intentions would, in a large number of cases, be carried out *cy pres* by applying them as I have suggested—in completing what the National Board has begun. At present endowments for maintaining free schools are frequently applied in supporting schools at which the children of the poor are conspicuous by their absence.

Even with their present limited powers, the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests could, in a large number of cases, direct the application of school endowments in some such manner as that I have suggested; but in order that good results should follow, the scheme should be carried out as part of a general movement, and on some harmonious plan. The hope of gaining these exhibitions would be a powerful incentive to study, and to regular attendance to every clever boy in the country, and those who succeeded in gaining them would be so much added to the mental power of the nation—so much intellectual soil reclaimed and saved from that melancholy process of going back to bog which is the order of the day.

Having now examined into the relations between the National and Intermediate Boards, and shown that there lies between them a great gap in the educational ladder, I will pass on to the subject of endowed schools.

Endowed Schools.

In the management of endowed schools the unnecessary multiplication of boards, referred to at the commencement of this paper, is most apparent. There are no less than three large independent boards engaged in controlling endowments which, together, do not much exceed £30,000. The first of these is the Board of Education for regulating endowed schools—constituted by 53 George III. cap. 107, “for the purpose of visiting, regulating, and superintending the management and due application of the funds of Endowed Schools.” The Erasmus Smith's Schools and the Incorporated Society's Schools were expressly exempted from its jurisdiction.

With your permission I will read an extract from the Report of the Commission for 1878-'9, which shows pretty clearly the position of this Board, and the need for its reorganization, and exemplifies the necessity for the appointment of a minister of education.

Recommendations with a view to Legislation.

“The Board desire to call attention to their position since the year 1858, the date of the Report of a Royal Commission to enquire into the Endowed Schools of Ireland.”

“In order to remove all questions, and remedy admitted defects, and (as they express it) ‘reconstruct and place upon a broader basis the system of educational endowments,’ the Commissioners made a series of recommendations for the purpose of proposed legislation. Among these were the following:—

“1. That it was essential to establish a system of efficient periodical inspection by a well-trained and adequately paid inspector, or, if necessary, several inspectors. 2. That the Board should have power to redistribute the revenues, to consolidate or divide the schools, and to remove them to different localities. 3. That the Board should, so far as is consistent with the existing rights of private patronage, have the appointment of the head masters of schools vested in them, and should, in addition to this, possess a large measure of control over and a power of dismissing the teachers in such schools for inefficiency or other sufficient cause shown, although no actual misconduct might exist or could be proved. 4. That they should be empowered to regulate the salaries of the teachers and assistant teachers in such schools, to promote them, and in case of faithful service to grant retiring pensions. 5. That the Board should have authority to regulate the course of instruction in all schools within their jurisdiction. 6. That the Board should be empowered to make regulations as to the admission of free pupils in endowed schools, vested in them. 7. That the Board should have power to make agricultural leases for twenty-one years, and building leases for long terms; and, 8. That the accounts of the Board should be audited at least once a year by a proposed board of audit in Dublin.

“The Commissioners also recommended alterations in the constitution of the Board; and, in particular, that there should be a paid Commissioner, who should personally examine the schools, and be selected with a view to educational interests.

“Notwithstanding the weight justly due to the recommendations of the Commissioners, no legislation has since taken place; whatever admitted or suggested defects in the jurisdiction or constitution of this Board existed in 1858, still continue to exist. The disadvantageous position in which they were placed, and the difficulties thus thrown in their way, induced the Board from time to time, to express in their Reports to successive Lords Lieutenant their opinion in favour of legislation in connection with the subject. They refer in particular to the Reports for the years 1869, 1870, 1871, 1872, 1873, 1874, 1875, 1876, and 1877.”

The second Board of Endowed Schools is the Erasmus Smith's Board of Governors. The 6 grammar and 105 English schools under their control are all of private foundation, and the result of one bequest; for the history of that bequest I beg to refer you to the Report of the Endowed Schools' Commission, which reported in 1858, p. 64. Though of private foundation this institution has gradually become a public one. The Commissioners of Endowed Schools who reported in 1791 gave it as their opinion that though originating in the intentions of private individuals, it might, nevertheless, from the repeated interpositions of the legislature and the Crown be considered a public institution. If this be so, then, *a fortiori*, the Incorporated Society, the third of these boards, may be regarded as a public institution. This society was incorporated by Act of Parliament in 1733, the trusts of the charter being to apply the funds in bringing up Roman Catholic children in the Protestant faith. In

addition to private bequests for carrying out this purpose, the society received annual grants from Parliament for one hundred years. We all know that these grants have ceased, and that the schools of the society are conducted as purely Protestant schools, and, I may add, on a sound and enlightened system.

The incomes vested in these boards arise almost exclusively from landed property, and are approximately:—

Commissioners of Education,	£10,000
Erasmus Smith's Governors,	9,300
Incorporated Society,	11,700
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Total,	£31,000

There can be no doubt that the action of each board is seriously crippled for want of funds. Masters cannot be pensioned, and too frequently schools are sacrificed to support worn out masters. There are difficulties too in the way of grading schools, and there is little or no provision made for training teachers. Among those who have given their attention to the subject, there are many who are of opinion that it would be for the interests of education in Ireland to amalgamate these three boards. Apart they can do but little. United they would be in a position to carry out with vigour a thorough system of education.

In order to enable the work of these three boards to be done by one unpaid board, above all it would be necessary to empower them to sell their estates, or else to hand them over to the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests. We have all heard of *cutting blocks with a razor*—surely there never was a greater instance of this wasteful process than here, where three boards of pundits are appointed to look after the education of the rising generation, and yet we find that most of their time is taken up in deciding matters of estate management, which the clerks of the Land Commission appear to be equally well qualified to determine.

The present Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests were appointed by 7 & 8 Vic. cap. 97, in order to prevent the misapplication of, and to recover misapplied trust funds. Subsequently donors or trustees were empowered to transfer funds to this body to be held by them in trust, but power to vest land in them was not granted—an unfortunate exception. Under these powers the funds of several schools were vested in this board, but no power having been given to interfere in the management of the charities, the duties of the Commissioners consisted in remitting the dividends to local administrators. Sec. 6, 34 & 35 Vic. cap. 102, enables this board, in case of endowments of less than £300 capital, or £30 annual amount, and when it is found unlawful or impracticable to carry out the intentions of the donors, to frame schemes for the application of the funds *cy pres*, and in cases of larger amount to apply in a summary manner to the Court of Chancery for the settlement of schemes, after full notice to all parties concerned. Unfortunately powers of inspection or of auditing accounts of charities were not conferred on this or any other board. Without such powers how are they to set

about to discover whether funds are misapplied? Whenever the bare mention of the word inspection is made, an outcry is raised, and the ugly epithet "inquisitorial" is freely applied; prejudices are aroused, and in the general dislike of government interference of every kind the real question is lost sight of. That question is, whether is it best that gross abuses should continue unchecked, or that abuses should be removed with the minimum amount of interference?

The Commissioners of Education for Endowed Schools, to whom I have before alluded, were also appointed in consequence of the misapplication of educational endowments, and for the purpose of visiting, regulating, and superintending the management of Protestant and *mixed Endowed Schools*. But they too have no power of appointing inspectors, or of auditing accounts. So that there is not even one pair of eyes between these two bodies. In order still further to blind the eyes of these last-mentioned Commissioners, care seems to have been taken to omit an obvious proviso—that notice of proceedings in applications by trustees for framing new schemes for charity schools should be given to them. The result is that such schools are frequently regulated by the Court of Chancery or by the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests, behind the back of a board especially appointed to regulate them. The only means at the disposal of the Commissioners of Education for detecting abuses are cumbrous and costly visitations, and if as the result of these visitations it appears that there has been gross mismanagement or misapplication of funds by the trustees, they may then in cumbrous and costly fashion apply to the Court of Chancery to enforce the trusts. As the great majority of these trust funds are too small to justify the cost of visitations or Chancery proceedings, visitation is seldom resorted to. It would seem to be reasonable that the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests should be empowered to decide such cases in their cheap and summary fashion, and instead of waiting for visitations to be held, or for sleeping trustees to awake and criminate themselves, I would suggest the expediency of enabling them to initiate proceedings on the report of inspectors appointed by themselves. But this is not the only direction in which the powers of the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests ought to be increased. My contention is that this board should form, as it does in England, an integral part of the educational system. A reference to the Report of the Endowed Schools Commission of 1881, p. 149, indicates that it should be given larger powers of adapting ancient bequests to modern requirements, instead of being confined by the narrow and technical doctrine of *cy pres*; and an obvious inference from the Report is, that it should be empowered to frame schemes for endowed schools irrespective of amount—that in fact it should be given the same powers as are enjoyed by the English Charity Commission.

This same Report tells us it was proposed that the Charity Board should receive and audit the accounts of charities—a most admirable suggestion—for is not prevention of misapplication better than cure? The only objection raised to this proposal was that the existing staff of the Charity Commission was too small. If the appointment of a

couple of auditors would secure us for all future time against the misapplication of charity funds, I am disposed to think that the Treasury might be induced to sanction the increased expenditure; and even if they refuse, would it not be possible to arrange so that the auditors should be paid out of charity funds by an *ad valorem* charge. In consequence of the non-existence of any such powers of audit in the Charity Commissioners, the accounts of the Commissioners of Education for Endowed Schools are not subject to any government audit, and they are therefore constrained to submit their accounts to the audit of a private firm. The proposition to increase the staff of the Charity Commission, so as to enable them to audit charity accounts, appears a more economical and equally efficacious plan than the suggestion contained in the Report of the Endowed Schools Commission of 1858, "that a board of audit should be appointed."

The same Report suggested the establishment of an office for the compulsory registration of title-deeds affecting charity estates—it having been ascertained that an immense number of such deeds had disappeared. Would it not be even a wiser arrangement to make the offices of the Charity Board the registry for such deeds? I am aware that under the 11th sec. of 30 & 31 Vic. cap. 54, trustees may deposit title-deeds with the Board, but I believe that up to the present time this provision has been all but a dead letter.

The suggestion has been made that as successive Royal Commissions have reported against the management of estates by education boards, their lands should be transferred to a new department whose sole duty it would be to manage estates. Would it not be a more harmonious arrangement to devolve these duties upon the Charity Commissioners, who have at present no power to hold land?

One more suggestion, and I shall have done with this board. Mr. Gernon, speaking to me unofficially, has expressed his own strong view of the advisability of conferring on them power to appoint new trustees to charity estates. Their appointment by the Court of Chancery is an enormous tax upon charity funds, and as such appointments are, as a rule, mere matters of form, it appears a reasonable suggestion that they should be made almost free of charge by the Charity Board.

In order to enable the Commissioners of Charitable Donations and Bequests to discharge all this extra work, it would be necessary to strengthen their staff. It would be necessary to empower them to appoint inspectors and auditors. But with such a Charity Commission to recover misapplied funds, to manage estates and funds, and generally to decide all legal matters relative to charity estates, and with an Endowed Schools Commission possessed of ample powers and funds, whose duty it would be to decide all matters educational, there would be no need to appoint, at enormous expense, a Royal Commission every twenty-five years to enquire into the mismanagement of endowed schools by trustees.

The Science and Art Department of the Committee of Council on Education has invaded the domain of Irish education. The Royal College of Science in Stephen's-green, and the Science and Art Department in Kildare-street are under its control.

A sum of £6,869 is voted annually for maintaining the Royal College of Science, which is possessed of fine laboratories and lecture rooms, has a large staff of professors, and is endowed with large scholarships. What have we to show for all this money expended? — a paltry score of students, properly so called, and a couple of score more of pupils in attendance upon a larger or smaller number of lectures. The professors are not to blame for the barrenness of this institution. They do all in their power to render their lectures attractive. I am disposed to think that if the professors had a greater share in the government of the college, far more satisfactory results would be obtained. The reason why this college is left thus deserted is that it has no connection with any other educational department, and because it is governed from too great a distance.

There are some who hold that it would be of importance to bring our education system under the English Educational Department as at present constituted, but the comparative failure of the College of Science is to my mind strong evidence of the inexpediency of adopting such a course.

I have heard on indisputable authority that for fourteen years the council of professors of this college continued to make a series of most important representations, calling for changes in the original arrangement of the college curriculum. For fourteen years nothing was done; and it was not until the appointment of our present viceroy (who lived for many years among us, and mastered the Irish problem), as President of the Council, that the necessary changes were made. So long as he holds the reins of the department we may look forward to a wise administration of its affairs. But a time will come when a king will reign who will not know the educational wants of Ireland, and then again fourteen years more may elapse before the most obvious wants of the Royal College of Science are attended to.

With regard to the working of this department, as part of a system, and in connection with other departments, I may suggest the founding of exhibitions out of the funds of intermediate schools tenable at this institution. There are in our schools plenty of boys of scientific turn of mind, and with no classical ability, to whom such exhibitions would be an enormous boon. At present no provision is made for enabling such boys to advance themselves in life. By this means alone we might double the number of students in attendance. I would suggest also for the consideration of our minister of education, whenever he is appointed, the possibility of so arranging that the students of the Royal University might make use of the lectures and laboratories of the Royal College of Science.

These are but a few of many suggestions which occur to me. I am sure that a careful survey of the whole question of technical education would elucidate some plan for making this institution the centre of a system of technical education for Ireland, and perhaps one of the means of enabling her hereafter to assume a place as one of the manufacturing communities of the world.

Irish Universities.

With reference to Irish universities, I have time to say but little. I should be sorry to suggest that the independence of these great bodies should be in any one particular interfered with ; but I have no doubt that any suggestions made by a minister of education to the governing body of the university, would be carefully considered. And undoubtedly one of his first recommendations would be—that *the university should establish a chair of pædagoggy*. A university is the one and only place where the art of teaching can be taught, and until our universities recognize that it is their duty to teach at least the principles of this most difficult art, our grammar schools must continue as best they can to teach by the rule of thumb.

I think I have said enough not only to prove the necessity for re-organizing our education departments, but also to establish the proposition that it is expedient to appoint a supreme education department, presided over by a *Minister of Education*. I have pointed out the unsatisfactory nature of the control of our Education Department by unpaid Boards and *ex-officio* governors. I have shown that between primary and intermediate education there is a great gap. I have shown that in consequence of a want of proper division of labour, three or four bodies are doing the work of one; and I have only to refer to late Reports of the Queen's Colleges to prove that colleges are doing the work of schools, and, I may add, high schools the work of dame schools. Recent returns show that our grammar schools are only half full, although the cry is all for a larger number of intermediate schools. I have pointed out the necessity for introducing various important reforms in the departments whose duty it is to control educational endowments. I have shown that our Royal College of Science is almost deserted, although there is a universal outcry for technical education ; I have shown that the art of teaching is neglected ; I have shown that recommendations with a view to legislation are disregarded by the Irish government, which is absorbed in executive duties ; I have pointed out that hitherto primary, intermediate, and university education have been legislated for as if each were a subject complete in itself, instead of forming parts of one great whole, and that consequently there is an entire absence of unity in our education system, which is destructive of all healthy growth.

These are all the strongest arguments in favour of a supreme department of education, so strong that I do not think it necessary to labour the point further. The question remains—How should that board be constituted? I venture to suggest that it should be composed of representatives from the various departments under its control. By this means we should secure that the suggestions of each department would be listened to, and, further, we should be secure against the chance of dealing with any subject without considering its bearing upon every part of the educational system.

Without a Minister at the head of this department it would be impossible to secure a hearing from an overworked government to recommendations with a view to the many measures which it would

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