

II. COMMISSION TO INQUIRE INTO THE CONDITION OF THE GREAT ENGLISH PUBLIC SCHOOLS.

Mr. Grant Duff gave notice that on Tuesday, April 23rd, he would move an address praying her Majesty to issue her Royal Commission to inquire into the state, discipline, and revenues of the colleges of Eton, Winchester, and Westminster, as well as all the endowed schools of England and Wales in which the Latin or Greek languages are taught, with a view to ascertain whether the great resources of these institutions may not be made more serviceable to education and learning.

With reference to this Commission, the *Daily News* makes the following remarks :—“The probable intention of Mr. Duff is to ascertain the condition of the great public schools, such as Eton, Westminster, Winchester, the Charterhouse, and of the numerous other endowed grammar schools—to investigate the precise amount of educational work they are doing, and to devise means for the purpose of extending and utilising to the utmost these valuable endowments. It should be remembered that the income of the grammar schools in England and Wales amounted some thirty years ago to a sum of £152,047, which has now been greatly increased.

These schools are distributed throughout the different counties and cities, and therefore everybody is more or less interested in the administration of this large fund, and in deriving from it all possible advantages. Hitherto the grammar schools have escaped that spirit of inquiry which has penetrated into all other educational institutions. Years ago the Scottish universities were inquired into and reformed—later the same fate befel the English universities, and we are told that in the course of the present month the Education Commissioners will publish their report, which will no doubt embrace the endowments appropriated to popular education.

“If there were reason to suppose that at present the grammar schools did their duty, the inquiry proposed by Mr. Grant Duff might seem superfluous. But the contrary appears to be the fact. Of all the public schools, there is none more eminent than Eton ; the number of boys now being educated there exceeds eight hundred. These are the youths who will some day not only fill seats in parliament, but become our judges, our bishops, our generals, and our admirals. It might seem tolerably certain that the parents of such boys would insist upon their sons receiving an education worthy of the place, and commensurate with the sum expended in procuring it. But, according to the opinion of Sir John Coleridge, one of the most illustrious of Eton men, and of others who are well acquainted with the system, it is far from being so efficient as it ought to be. Again, only a few months ago, a meeting took place of Westminster men for the purpose of considering what could be done to revive that decaying institution. Nor would it be difficult to mention other great schools, which, from some reason or other, present a melancholy contrast to their former magnificence. But, besides these great schools, there are hundreds of other endowed schools throughout the country, which at present are comparatively useless. The master is either totally incompetent and practically irremovable, or the free scholars are of such a character that they cannot take advantage of the classical education furnished. In fact, the whole system of free education as applied to the higher branches of knowledge, demands the most thorough investigation ; for at present it is certainly the opinion of many that such a system is mere waste and extravagance.

“These reasons would probably suffice to show the necessity of such a commission as that which is proposed. But there are others even more cogent. The changes in the mode of appointment to places in the public service and to emoluments in the Universities have rendered it more than ever necessary to place education within the reach of every citizen. It is quite true that, although appointments to India, to the army, to the civil service, to scholarships and fellowships, are thrown open to general competition, all lads will not have an equal chance of sharing in the prizes unless the means of education are placed within the reach of all. Under any circumstances the interest of the state is to obtain the man who will best fulfil the duties imposed upon him, and experience has shown that such a man is best secured by open competition. It is, of course, impossible to prevent men of wealth from giving their sons the advantage of a good tutor. But it becomes the duty of the state to see that the aids provided by the liberality of individual benefactors for those who have not the means of paying for these advantages should be turned to the best possible use. For this purpose, the first step should be to open the foundations of the public schools to general competition. It is quite true that at Eton and Winchester this has been tried with the most eminent success. Since this change at Eton it has been remarked that the collegers or foundation boys show themselves very superior to the rest of the school, although in old times it was far otherwise. But if this alteration has succeeded so thoroughly at Eton, why should not the same be done at Charterhouse ? At that school it is notorious that a place upon the foundation is in fact the right to a gratuitous

education, and, even after the boy goes to the university, he continues to derive very considerable emoluments. At present, the various boys are appointed by patronage, and the question which well deserves the consideration of a Royal Commission is—whether the mode of electing scholars at Charterhouse might not be assimilated to that practised at Winchester and elsewhere. Then there is the case of Merchant Taylors' School, where the boys are appointed by the members of the company. This school is especially connected with St. John's College, Oxford—a society which has earned a discreditable notoriety by being the only one in the University to resist the ordinance of the Commissioners. Narrow-minded as the Fellows of St. John's are, they have, however, boldly confessed that their body suffers by being connected with a school recruited as that of Merchant Taylors' is by pure nominees. Such instances might be multiplied indefinitely, but these must suffice.

It is clear, then, that whilst the endowed schools are the nurseries of the English youth, they are by no means in a satisfactory condition. But it further appears that the privileges which, in the case of the universities, have been swept away, are still retained by many of the largest endowed schools. This must be changed ; and the reform is the more urgent now, seeing that if they are retained at school after being abolished at college, a host of patronage lads will find themselves stranded at the opening of their career, having imbibed a taste for a mode of life in which neither their talents nor their means will enable them to indulge. In old times, when a particular place of birth, or a special genealogy procured a boy a provision for life, parents had no occasion to consider the talents of their son, or whether he had a turn for literary pursuits. But under a system in which a boy cannot obtain a scholarship or a fellowship after leaving school without proof of conspicuous merit, it becomes an important question for a parent whether he should keep his son at a public school or not. It is surely a doubtful kindness to tempt a father to send his boy to the Charterhouse by offering him an appointment on the foundation, unless the boy is likely to be able to qualify himself for advancing to the university. Moreover, it is a mere matter of justice that the educational endowments should be made as generally useful as possible—so that the boy who is most eager to benefit by them should be able to gratify his wish. The chief purpose of those who endowed the grammar schools was to furnish the means of education to those who had not the means within their reach ; and the effect upon the humblest man in society who sees the son of his neighbour rise to distinction by his own merit, will surely be to induce him to follow the example. Only let the small shop-keeper, the mechanic, and the labourer know that his son has the chance of rising to distinction by his own intellectual exertion, and an impetus will be given to education which it is impossible to over-estimate.

For this purpose, the endowed schools must be opened after the fashion of the Universities, and the great schools of Eton and Winchester. The facts, however, connected with the subject, are but imperfectly known, and it requires the aid of a commission to bring them prominently before the public.”—*English Journal of Education.*

III. Papers on Practical Education.

1. MAXIMS FOR TEACHERS.

By the Author of “Sunday School Notes and Sketches,” “Sunday School Gems,” &c.

I. *Be early.* In other words be punctual—be in time. If, teachers, you are not early in the school, where is your self-respect ? where is your solicitude for the children entrusted to your charge ? where is the beauty of your example ? where is your intellectual and moral power ? where, indeed, is your consistency ? Further than this, where is your sense of justice ? Besides, if you are late and irregular, the children in your schools will imitate you, and soon do it. Your irregularity will inevitably render them irregular also. You must move with the punctuality and precision of the well-regulated clock. Nothing must be out of order.

II. *Be well qualified.* Determine on this—that you will understand what you teach ; that you will have well-informed minds ; that your acquaintance with language shall be clear, correct, full ; that your tact and ability in the great work of education shall be obvious to all. Aim at superior attainments, and labour hard, that they may be acquired and unfolded. A well qualified teacher will invariably command respect, produce impression, and make his way ; but what can an ignorant, lazy, ill-qualified preceptor accomplish ?

III. *Be decided.* Think for yourselves—have your opinions—express and maintain them, if you have valid reasons for believing that they are sound and good. In the school, dealing with children and youth, do not be vacillating. Do not cherish unfixed sentiments.