

increase these by about 7*d.* on the pound. Referring to this estimate, Mr. Mundella stated that it appeared to him a fair average for the country, but he did not think the rate-payers, even when relieved of school fees, could bear the addition which would make a workingman rated at £8 10*s.* a year pay 2*s.* 6*d.* a year for the privilege of free schools. In Mr. Mundella's judgment, "general taxation must be the means by which free education shall be given." Mr. Mundella also reminded his hearers that when the fees are abolished, the cost of investigating cases of delinquency, which is now borne by the rates, would be done away with. In London, the number of these cases amounts to some 30,000 annually; and as to the rural parishes, in which there are very few school-boards, Mr. Mundella asserts that "in the main, the whole machinery of education is in the hands of the boards of guardians."

The most serious difficulty, however, in the way of abolishing fees is not that of making good their loss, but the effect the measure is likely to have upon voluntary schools. The whole number of efficient elementary schools in England and Wales is about 19,000, of which more than 14,000 are voluntary, accommodating about two-thirds of the three and a quarter million children that make up the average school attendance.

The building and material of these voluntary schools are owned by the several religious denominations, and in addition to this property investment there are the annual subscriptions, which provide for a very large portion of the current expenses. In 1885 these subscriptions amounted to £734,000,—about one-fifth of the total expenditure. As a rule, fees and voluntary subscriptions provide for fully one-half of the expenses of voluntary schools. Serious fears are entertained that the abolition of the fee will prove fatal to this class of schools. As one writer expresses it: "The abolition of school fees will not only mean giving up close upon two millions of school income, but it will also mean the adoption of some system of local representative control; and that unexplained entity bears a strong family likeness to a school board. And with the establishment of school boards voluntary schools and voluntary subscriptions would soon vanish." It was the fear of such a catastrophe that caused a sudden collapse of the enthusiasm excited by Mr. Chamberlain's bold declaration for free schools in the opening of the recent campaign. All parties