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EDITORIAL CORRESPONDENCE OF THE REV. DR. RYERSON.

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What has been done and is now doing by the British Government for the elementary education of the hitherto neglected masses of the people in Great Britain and Ireland, deserves special notice and high admiration. I will give a summary view of it, as I find it in official and other papers which I have procured and examined during the last few days.

The national system of education in Ireland has been so frequently and largely referred to in the *Journal of Education*, that I shall not notice it here, except to remark that, commencing in 1832, by authority of a short despatch, and under the management of a liberal and judicious Board of Education in Dublin, it has accomplished more for Ireland than all the agitators and associations that have ever existed there. It has spread over the country thousands of well-trained teachers; it has aided and prompted the erection of many hundreds of schoolhouses; it has prepared and published a series of school books which for excellence and cheapness have no rivals in this country; its pupils are upwards of half a million;* its system of school inspection is efficient and admirable for the purposes contemplated; its spirit and its publications are soundly Christian, unpoisoned by sectarian bigotry, and undiluted by infidel indifference; the net work of its operations is spread over every county in Ireland; its books are used in the schools of every county both of England and Scotland, as well as Ireland; its resources from Parliamentary liberality alone now amount to the magnificent sum of £125,000 per annum; and the chief impediments to its wider diffusion and greater usefulness, are religious bigotry and ecclesiastical fanaticism—the two great modern antagonistic powers against true civilization and real liberty.

It was in 1833 that the public attention began to be particularly attracted to the subject of popular education in Great Britain; and it was in that year, under the government of Lord Grey, that the first practical step was taken on the part of the House of Commons by a grant of £20,000—a sum which was continued by an annual vote, until 1839. This sum was administered by the Lords of the Treasury, and was given in aid of private efforts, through the agency of two great Societies—the one exclusively Church of England, called the National School Society—the other embracing friends of education of different religious persuasions, called the British and Foreign School Society.

In the year 1839, the Parliamentary annual school grant was increased to £30,000 sterling; in 1844, to £40,000; in 1845, to £75,000; and at the present time it amounts to £120,000 per annum for England and Scotland, exclusive of £125,000 for Ireland.

When the grant was first increased in 1839, a special Board of management was created by the appointment of a Committee of Her Majesty's Privy Council on Education; and the administration of the Parliamentary School Grant was transferred from the Lords of the Treasury to that *Committee of Council on Education*. The office of a salaried Secretary was created, and a very able and most earnest educationist, Sir James P. K. Shuttleworth, was selected. School inspectors were also appointed, and steps were taken to establish some definite plan for administering the parliamentary school grant, and for establishing a system of elementary education among the poor, for it was to the education of the poor that all these efforts were and are still directed.

Among the first measures taken by this new Committee of Council on Education, were grants of £5,000 to each of the two great Educa-

tional Societies above mentioned, for the purpose of establishing and supporting Normal Schools, for the training of Teachers; and regulations making Inspection a necessary condition in all schools where pecuniary assistance was given. No objection was, of course, made by either of the Societies concerned to the grants for their Normal Schools; but considerable opposition was made to the proposed system of inspection, and the mode of appointing inspectors. The rights of the established Church were arrayed on the one side, and those of a voluntary association on the other, against this interference on the part of Government. They could accept of any amount of public money from Government, but they objected to the Government's seeing, by means of public officers, whether that money was accomplishing the objects of its appropriation. The differences were at length adjusted, by the Government agreeing not to appoint any inspector of the National Society Schools assisted by Parliamentary grant who should not be approved of by the Archbishop of Canterbury, and no inspector of the British and Foreign Society Schools aided by the grant who should not be approved of by the Managing Committee of that Society. From 1839 to 1847 the efforts of the Committee of Council on Education were unceasingly directed to devise and establish some general and comprehensive system of elementary education, based on Christian principles, but not exclusively sectarian. Its proceedings and inquiries into the state of education among the poor, and the best means of promoting its general views on the subject, are presented in successive volumes, two a-year, which reflect the highest credit on the zeal and ability of the Secretary (who was, in fact, the main spring of the whole movement), and on the Christian liberality and patriotism of enlightened statesmen. But the differences and opposition of the several religious persuasions presented insuperable obstacles in the way of establishing by legislative enactment any national system of elementary education. The Committee, therefore, determined to promote, as far as possible, by means of its own regulations, adapted to existing circumstances, this great object of national honour and common humanity. The conclusions suggested by their years of experience and deliberation were embodied in a series of Regulations in the form of Minutes of Council, in 1846, containing, as an able and liberal writer (Rev. Richard Dawes, Dean of Hereford) has remarked, "the only plan the present generation is likely to have the opportunity of trying; and, moreover, in itself a comprehensive system, which, if taken up and worked in a proper spirit, by those who take a lead in the education of the country, is likely to be attended with the happiest results."

The objects embraced in these Minutes of Council, finally adopted in 1846, are the following:

1. Grants in aid of buildings, and carrying on the Normal Schools for the training and instruction of Teachers.
2. Grants for building Schools and masters' houses in aid of local and voluntary efforts.
3. Grants for the augmentation of salary to schoolmasters and schoolmistresses who have obtained certificates of merit, according to the class of certificate, varying in amount from £10 to £30 per annum for the masters, and from £10 to £20 per annum for the mistresses.
4. Gratuities to schoolmasters and schoolmistresses for the instruction of the pupil-teachers; £5 per annum for the first, £4 for the second, and £3 for every additional one.
5. Stipends to pupil-teachers, from £10 in the first year to £20 in the last—the period of apprenticeship being five years.
6. Payments to monitors, in such schools as want assistance in teaching; but where the teachers are not competent to instruct pupil-teachers to the extent required, one half that of pupil-teachers.
7. Grants to aid in the purchase of books, maps, and apparatus.

Such are the main objects to which the parliamentary grant is devoted; and the way in which the Minutes of Council propose to accomplish these objects, and to guard the public funds against abuse, is as follows:

1. The inspection of both the elementary and normal schools, at least once a-year, by Government Inspectors.
2. Examination, by the same inspectors, of apprenticed pupil-teachers, and of paid monitors, before the stipend is paid, and at the end of each year of apprenticeship. At the same time, examination of the master or mistress, if not certified, as to fitness for instructing the apprentices the following year.
3. Examination of each school by the same inspectors, before the

* For summary of National School Statistics for 1849, see page 186.