

education at a cheap rate, except in the thinly-populated Highlands can be had within a very few miles of any family by means of the burgh, parochial, and latterly the Free Church schools. It is easy to see how many promising and clever lads must be intercepted by the want of a connecting link between the common school and the college, who otherwise would find their way to the places of apothecary, surgeon, solicitor, or to the bar, or the ministry of the various churches. But the government has created another reason for its interference here. To Lord Stanley the country is indebted for the existing primary schools, and to Sir Robert Peel's government is it indebted for the three Queen's Colleges, each with a staff of 20 professors giving instruction in medicine, law, agriculture, and arts. In these kingdoms no higher standard of education is set up than in these colleges, and the university which they constitute; and that this standard is attained as fairly as elsewhere is proved, to the great credit of the energetic and thoroughly competent but poorly paid staff of professors, by the competitive examinations. But whence are the pupils to be drawn to the Queen's Colleges? Throughout the country there are diocesan schools and endowed schools—by no means numerous enough for the wants of the country, and in which, owing to various causes, the course of preparation is adapted to the elder university. In making reference to Trinity College, it is be distinctly understood that no jealousy towards her is felt, for no true friend of Irish Education would tower her proud position, or limit the usefulness of the distinguished men who sustain her reputation. He would not give her less, but the others more. His argument was, that the legislature having affirmed that there should be primary schools at the public expense, and that there should be Queen's Colleges and a Queen's University at the public expense, and the empire having as a whole accepted the arrangement—for, be it borne in mind, no succeeding government has touched but with a helping hand the systems originated by Lord Derby and Sir Robert Peel—it is necessary to connect the two, and to feed the latter by a system of schools in advance of the primary schools, and preparatory for the Queen's Colleges. Otherwise the educational legislation of the country, as Dr. McCosh has shewn, will be like a costly house with two storeys, each roomy and airy, but in which the builder overlooked the connecting staircase. That the Queen's Colleges have succeeded so well, with the only schools that could have been feeders to them incidentally diminished by the National Board, was a striking, in his mind a most impressive and encouraging, proof that a growing thirst for knowledge, with a laudable ambition to rise by enlightenment, pervades the great mass of the Irish nation. How the schools should be organised or sustained, we do not deem it wise to attempt to discuss in this paper, further than to say that local efforts should be stimulated, not superseded, and that the system should be separate and distinct from the National Board.

ERASMUS SMITH'S FOUNDATION.

The Rev. Professor Gibson (of Belfast) read a paper "On the Foundation created by Erasmus Smith for Educational Objects," with a view to shew that it was originally designed for the elevation of the middle classes in Ireland. Of the personal history of the founder little was known, except that he was an alderman of London who lived in the seventeenth century, and of whose intentions the late Commission of Inquiry had no other documentary evidence than that supplied by the charter granted by Charles the Second. The original indenture, however, by which Erasmus Smith made over certain of his estates for such objects had been since discovered in the Birmingham Tower in Dublin Castle, and had been transcribed by him (Professor Gibson) entire. This deed, dated 1657, made over upwards of 13,000 acres of land in several counties for the formation and endowment of grammar schools, vesting the same in trustees, of whom six were leading Non-conformist ministers, and the others were the chief officers of state under the commonwealth. The clerical members were the same as had been selected by Cromwell for revising, with a view to their confiscation, the entire episcopal revenues in Ireland, and for introducing other sweeping changes; while the non-clerical were men after Cromwell's own heart, enjoyed his fullest confidence, and prepared to carry out all the measures of his government. They were, in short, Cromwellians out and out, about whose religious profession and standing there could be no question. Read in this light, it was not difficult to account for one provision in the deed, otherwise inexplicable, namely, the founding of scholarships in connection with Trinity College, Dublin, by one who was himself a zealous Puritan. Of the first fellows of our national university, two were Scottish Presbyterians, of whom one was tutor to Archbishop Ussher; and Cromwell, when he assumed the reins of government, seemed to have resolved to restore the constitution of the College to its primitive model. Hence the designation of the two trustees, Winter and Mather, to its highest honours. When Erasmus Smith placed his schools on the basis of such a deed, and made in it, as he did, provisions for having it ratified by Act of Parliament, "according to the true in-

tent and meaning of these presents," with the sanction of "His Highness the Lord Protector, under the great seal of England," there could be no reasonable doubt of his intentions. Additional evidence of his non-conformity was to be found in the fact that he was elected alderman in 1659, the ninth year of the Commonwealth, a time when the Independents were in all their glory. But shortly after the original indenture was executed, Cromwell died, and all things were changed. With the restoration came all sorts of edicts against Nonconformity, Acts of Uniformity, Conventicle, and Five-mile Acts, in consequence of which none of the six clerical trustees might shew himself within five miles of a corporate town or city, while the rest were *ipso facto* disbanded, and were no more heard of in the administration of any civil or religious trust. Twelve years after a charter was obtained, vesting the administration in far different hands, requiring that every schoolmaster and usher in the schools should be approved by the episcopal authorities, and that a lectureship should be founded in connection with Trinity College. One important provision remained, namely, that the scholars should be regularly taught the catechism of Archbishop Ussher, a broadly evangelical formula, similar in structure to that of the Westminster Assembly, of which Ussher was himself a member. The principle of making laws or regulations for the schools was also secured to the founder. The charter had not been in operation more than fifty years till new legislation was adopted, and an act was passed authorizing the application of the surplus which had accumulated to charitable uses, empowering the trustees to found two lectureships and three fellowships in Trinity College, and ratifying an agreement entered into with the Blue Coat Hospital for the maintenance of twenty pupils. In 1791 the surplus had increased to more than £1,400 a year; and in 1807 there were in hand £35,000. £900 or £1000 annually were expended on Trinity College; an examination hall was built at a cost of £2500, and the College was presented with a library at an expense of £9,000. During all this period little or no attention was paid to the founding of grammar schools, "the primary object," as the late commission had once and again characterized it, of the trust. About half a century ago the trustees began to stud the country, north and south with English schools, amounting three years ago to 119 in all, and maintained at a large outlay, while on the four grammar schools only some £700 or £800 annually were expended. A suggestion had been made by a special commission in 1791, to erect a professional academy of a high class in Dublin, but it was not attended to. In one important respect also the intention of the founder and requirement of the charter had been disregarded, namely, in regard to the use of Ussher's Catechism, which was superseded by others. Upwards of £17,000 had been lost owing to the discontinuance of English schools, on which it had been expended. "Thus have the governors," said the late commission, "not only neglected the primary trust of the grammar schools, but have not managed prudently the secondary trust of English schools, which they have developed to an extent disproportionate to their resources." Much of the mismanagement was attributed, and was doubtless due, to the constitution of the governing board itself, seven of whose members were *ex officio*, and the remainder self-elected. An entire revision of the management was necessary, and demanded legislative interference. Intermediate instruction was the educational requirement of the day, and in the case of Erasmus Smith's schools, the net revenue of his estates, consisting of upwards of £7000 a year, which should have been applied to this important object, agreeably to the intentions of the founder, was a loss to the community. It was to be hoped that ere long the legislature, which had once again interposed with reference to this trust, would interpose once more, and place it on a basis on which, as originally designed, it would subserve the objects of the entire educational interest in Ireland.

The Very Rev. Dean Graves, as an Erasmus Smith Professor, and one of the commissioners alluded to in the paper, wished to say a few words without entering into the antiquarian part of the question. He thought that the funds were admirably administered, and the existing schools ably directed under the direction of the present governors, who were all episcopalians. At the same time he thought the governors would have acted more wisely if they had devoted a larger part of the funds to the encouragement of grammar schools, and had not given so much to elementary schools. But they did nothing illegal in acting as they had. He believed, however, that since the report of the commission had been issued, the governors had made great exertions to improve their schools by raising the standard of education and employing competent teachers. This was only one of the good results of the commission.

THE CHURCH EDUCATION SOCIETY OF IRELAND.

The Rev. A. M. Pollock read a paper "On the Educational position of the Established Church in Ireland." Among the agencies at work in Ireland for the education of the great body of the population, the Church Education Society deserves a prominent place,