

Three Centuries of Irish Education.

FROM HENCE."

had again upset the it had placed in fifteen years after men whose names with that gigantic d the entire attention , and a goodly portion of the Empire, ts have rolled on, e has come up; the last year and this, two thousand pages all that mass of that the name of Mackenzie, once Pre- was mentioned twice, A. Macdonald, se- those of Sir John Sir John Thompson- liers—not once. And the contrasts and wn and instituted be- great railway pro- of Mackenzie and have been enshrou- me oblivion as that and those of Abbott And yet all these Macdonald and the eye and the try in a manner sug- tal memory amongst all amongst political

calling these facts to statement that fifty very names of the men associated with be entirely unknown . What does it mat- things will be in fifty et it matters a ter- sh individual, how- ed in the world to ars from this: still orry him, it is the that occupies his

SE. — In this com- pome upon a few lines, of Teresa Beatrice Boston "Pilot," and y appropriately con- that was suggested all about this "fifty They run thus:

er in fifty years... joy or tears? who will care e were dark or fair, ed or whether wa

or what we found? opes or fears— ter in fifty years?

or our gold or dross, ed or bore our cross? ed or our hearts were

r the brilliant mind, s were wild or tame, ed for love or fame? or critics' sneers— after in fifty years?"

Francis Jerome, a well-th, the Ascension; gation; the thirteenth- the Silent, Bishop; St. Boniface, mar- to St. John Baptist sixteenth to St. the seventeenth to on, Confessor; the St. Winand, mari; the Octave of the twentieth, to St. Ber- the twenty-first, Hospitius, reclus; d, Pentecost; the Blessed Andrew Bo- a twenty-fourth to ery, Confessor; the St. Gregory VII., -sixth to St. Philip the twenty-seventh to merable; the twen- Augustine, Bishop; to the Most Holy ieth to Our Lady ans; and the thirty- la of Merici, virgin, on each day a par- special great feast or observe, and all to the general de- nth in honor of the

From the time of Elizabeth up to 1778 the Irish Catholics were, save during a brief period in the reign of James II., beaten utterly to the ground. I do not know that I can give a better picture of their state in the middle of the eighteenth century than by quoting the words uttered in 1758 by an Irish judge in his judicial capacity. A young Catholic lady who had been pressed by her Protestant friends to conform to the Established religion, took refuge from their importunities in the house of a Mr. Saul, who braved the law and sheltered her. For so doing Mr. Saul was prosecuted, and on the occasion of his prosecution, the judge, addressing him, said that "the laws did not presume a Papist to exist in the Kingdom, nor could they breathe without the connivance of the government."

In such a condition of affairs I need hardly state that there were no Catholic schools worthy of the name from Elizabeth's time until the relaxation of the penal laws. Prior to the reign of William and Anne one of four courses had been usually resorted to by Irish Catholics, for educational purposes. Those who were rich enough sent their children abroad—others furtively sought instruction from fugitive priests, or laymen on the roadsides, by the hedgeways, and in mountain passes. Many assembled at a neighboring gentleman's house, where a tutor was engaged to teach the children of the family, and whose services were frequently given, and eagerly accepted by the youth of the district. A few attended such of the Protestant government schools as offered some guarantees (as, for instance, the appointment of Catholic teachers) that their religious convictions would not be tampered with. But after the Revolution, government resolved to make the resort to any one of these expedients impracticable in the future. One of two alternatives was thenceforth to be presented to the Irish Catholics, viz., they must enter the Protestant schools to be educated as Protestants or remain in ignorance. It was decreed by Parliament that no Catholic should, under heavy penalties, go abroad himself or send another abroad, to be educated, or in any wise aid or assist in the maintenance of foreign educational establishments or of those who had gone to them. At home no Catholic was to be permitted to keep a school himself, or to instruct in private houses any children other than the children of such houses. Finally, without risking the penalties of high treason, for the second offence, no Catholic could act as usher or teacher in any Protestant schools in the country. In order that "no pretence" might be given to Papists for saying that there were not sufficient educational establishments in the country, for their needs, it was provided that additional means should be taken to render the schools of Henry and Elizabeth more successful than they had hitherto proved.

These statutes were effective in excluding Catholic assistant-teachers and pupils from the Erasmus Smith schools, and kindred institutions; but they were not effective in the accomplishment of their main object, namely, the destruction of the faith and nationality of the Irish people. They shrank en masse more than ever from English educational establishments, and resorted to every expedient in their endeavors to evade or have the laws that proscribed their religion and took away their liberties. Many a time, in those dark days, the smuggling craft which frequented the Irish southern coasts, carried as part of their freight, over the seas, Irish youths, who went to be "educated and brought up" in the "Popish" seminaries scattered throughout the Catholic countries of Europe. At home Catholic priests risked life and limb to stand by the faith and fatherland; often wandering through the country; sometimes disguised in the garb of herds, tending the flocks of Catholic farmers in the day, and, when evening came, seated by the fireside under the shelter of some friendly and sympathetic roof, teaching the peasants of the surrounding neighborhood to read, write, spell, and, perchance, telling them, what they were ready enough to believe, and had too much reason for believing—that Rome was their friend and England their enemy.

Coercion had done its work. At no period since the landing of the Normans down to our own times had the seeds of disaffection been so plentifully sown in Ireland, as during the reign of William III and Anne; and

we are all even now reaping the bountiful harvest which sprang from them. The history of the Revolution which to Englishmen brings back glorious and happy memories, still after the lapse of centuries, only stirs up bitter recollections in the Irish mind.

In 1781 the first step was taken towards the relaxation of the penal code with reference to education. An act was then passed, allowing Catholics to keep a school on condition of obtaining the license of the Protestant Bishop of the Diocese. But this act proved a dead letter. Catholic schools practically under the authority of the Protestant Bishop of the diocese naturally did not work.

In 1792 another Act was passed, allowing Catholics to keep schools without obtaining the license of the Protestant Bishop of the diocese and removing other restrictions. In 1793 the first Catholic College was founded in Carlow by Dr. O'Keefe, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The college was divided into two departments, one for the instruction of students intended for the Church, and the other for lay pupils. This college always enjoyed a good reputation.

In 1795 Maynooth College, entirely devoted to the education of students intended for the Church, was established and endowed by Parliament.

In 1802 a system of primary schools was founded by the Christian Brothers. The Christian Brothers, it may be stated, compose, not a monastic order, as is sometimes thought, but a congregation united by vows of poverty, chastity and obedience to superiors. In addition, they take a vow to teach children gratuitously, during their lives. Mr. Rice, the superior of this congregation, submitted to Pope Pius VI. a plan for the education of the Irish poor, and the Pope approving it, a number of schools were quickly opened for the instruction of "poor Irish boys." With reference to the principles on which these schools have been based and the manner in which they have been worked, I cannot, I think, do better than place before my readers the opinions of the Royal Commissioners of 1854-58 and 1878-81. "The knowledge communicated in these schools," says the former, "embraces not only reading, writing and arithmetic, grammar, geography and book-keeping, but also an acquaintance with such branches of mathematical science as are suited to the tastes and talents of the pupils, and to the stations of life they are destined to occupy. Geometry, mensuration, drawing, and mechanics, become special objects of attention. As to the manner of communicating knowledge, the most approved methods have been carefully reduced to practice. But it is to the communication of religious knowledge that this institution is chiefly devoted. To this object the members direct their main energies. The teachers are all under religious obligations; they are, in the first instance, carefully selected and trained, and they are placed under a strict system of organization and discipline."

In 1881 there were 170 Christian Brothers' schools in Ireland, attended by 31,614 pupils, of whom 31,596 were Catholics, fifteen Protestant Episcopalians, and two Methodists; there was one Presbyterian pupil. As to the state of efficiency of these schools, the Royal Commissioners of 1878-81 say: "While the Brothers devoted their principal energies to elementary education, they gave advanced instruction to boys showing special abilities, and many of their pupils were thus fitted for higher positions in after-life. . . . The programme of instruction, though differing in detail, was very similar to that of the National Board, where advanced subjects were taught, (Mr. Moore) found the boys, as a rule, well and intelligently instructed, especially in Euclid and algebra, which were much better taught by the Christian Brothers than in the National schools. The reading books contained extracts of a religious nature, unfitting them for use in a mixed school. The school buildings by far were the best which Mr. Moore inspected. The Brothers seemed to have studied the science of teaching. Their abilities as teachers were of the highest order and the discipline maintained was almost perfect."

From the days of the Tudors to the days of the Guelfs, the Ascendancy party in Ireland had practically their own way on the subject of

education, and indeed on every other subject, and the consequence was that the people were left in a state of woeful ignorance. Nor was this all: intense hatred of English rule, and of Protestantism, as an appendage of that rule, had been the unlooked-for result.

In 1811 there were Protestants in Ireland who not only regarded this result with regret, but strongly condemned the policy which had been instrumental in bringing it about.

Sufficient, they thought, had been done for conscience's sake in attempting to worry the Irish into the Protestant religion. The alternative of Protestantism or ignorance had been, they reasoned, presented to the Catholic quite long enough. Was it just? Was it wise it should be presented any longer? Was there the slightest chance that, having held out so long and in days when their fortunes were darker, and their hopes more overcast than now, the Irish Catholics would ultimately succumb to even the most sustained proselytizing efforts? And if they did not succumb, was their lot to be one of perpetual ignorance? The result of the liberal spirit shown by these enlightened Protestants was the establishment of the "Kildare Street Society"—an organization formed for the education of Catholic and Protestant children on the principle of combined moral and literary instruction, coupled with the reading of the Bible "without note or comment." This society received a grant of £30,000 from Parliament in 1815. O'Connell joined the society. Lord Cloncurry joined it, one representative Catholic denounced it from the beginning—Father McHale, afterwards, "John Archbishop of Tuam." He said that with a fair exterior the Kildare Street Society was at heart a proselytizing institution. Subsequent events justified his suspicions.

In 1820 it associated itself with three notoriously proselytizing societies—the London Hibernian Association, the Society for Discountenancing Vice, and the Baptist Society. Then O'Connell withdrew from it, Lord Cloncurry withdrew from it, the Catholic children withdrew from it, and it perished, and deserved to perish.

In 1831 another attempt was made on a larger scale, to establish schools for the education of Catholics, without outraging their religious sentiments,—the so-called National schools were founded. These schools afforded an excellent example of the hopelessness of English statesmen trying to force upon the Irish people a system of education to which they objected. The Irish people, Catholics, Protestants, Presbyterians, demanded denominational education. They got mixed schools. These schools—supported by Parliamentary grants—were to be open alike to Protestants and Catholics. Four days in the week were to be devoted to moral and literary, and one or two days to separate religious instruction. A board, composed partly of Catholics and partly of Protestants, was to have the entire management and control of the system.

The system, objectionable from the fact that it was what the people did not want, was made still more objectionable to the Catholics by being unfairly worked. To begin with, the board was composed of four Protestants and only two Catholics—in a country where the Catholics were to the Protestants as five to one. Next the control and management of the system was practically entrusted to a Scotch Presbyterian clergyman without knowledge or experience of the country, or sympathy with its people. With one exception, all the books were prepared by Englishmen or Scotchmen, and pains were taken to exclude Irish history and suppress all national or patriotic sentiments.

In one of the books we find this statement about Ireland: "On the east of Ireland is England, where the Queen lives: many people who live in Ireland were born in England, and we speak the same language, and are called the same nation." Let us see how in another book Scotland was dealt with: "Edward the First annexed the Principality of Wales to his Kingdom A.D. 1283. He afterwards attempted to do the same with Scotland, but was successfully resist-

ed, particularly by Sir William Wallace. This celebrated patriot drove his troops out of the Kingdom. He was ultimately taken and basely executed by Edward, and a new effort projected to subdue the Scots. But before the army of Edward entered Scotland he died, leaving his crown and enterprise to his son Edward II. This prince followed up the intention of his father, but was defeated at Bannockburn, and there the independence of the Scots was established." It was allowable to speak of Sir William Wallace as a "celebrated patriot," to think with pride on the struggle of the Scots for independence but it would have been treason to mention the names of Arte McMurrough or Hugh O'Neil, to tell how Sarsfield fought, or Emmet died. "Lines on the Irish Harp" by Miss Balfour; Campbell's poem, "The Harper," and Scott's "Breathes there a Man," etc., were suppressed by Archbishop Whately. But His Grace kindly allowed the use of the following hymn:—

"I thank the goodness and the grace, That on my birth have smiled, And made me in these Christian days A happy English child."

This boycotting of everything national or patriotic was accompanied by the gradual removal of amendment in deference to Protestant opinion, of the rules originally framed to reconcile the Catholics to the scheme.

The result was a popular agitation against the schools, which kept alive the memories of old wrongs. This state of things lasted until 1860, when, after thirty years of intermittent agitation, the system was reformed on popular lines. The schools have now become practically denominational.

The great blot of the national system was the neglect, and indeed discouragement of the national language. Irish was not taught in the schools. Of course the object of these English institutions—for such they were—was to Anglicize the youth of the country, and the use of the Irish tongue would be an effective obstacle to that policy. Indeed the Irish language faded away under the national schools. But it has been revived in our own day by the Gaelic League. It is not, however, yet taken as a rule in the "national schools." Any master who chooses can teach it, but many masters do not choose. Of course the study of the language ought to be made obligatory. The thin edge of the wedge, however, is in. A tablet with Irish characters is now, I believe, hung up in the schools, so that the children and masters are at all events reminded that English was not the ancient language of the country; and the duty of mastering the ancient and national tongue is kept constantly before their eyes. I visited one of the national schools in the County Tyrone last summer, and I was glad to see a voluntary class learning Irish, on a Sunday afternoon. Several of the masters in the district were present; the manager (the parish priest), was present; and his curates were members of the class. Nothing scarcely was spoken for an hour but Irish: it was an Irish atmosphere; and the scene brought back memories of the days when the O'Neils were masters of Tyrone.

There is a possibility that the present "National Board" will be broken up, and that the schools will be handed over to the County Councils. In some respects this would be a good change, for the County Councils would be more under the influence of Irish national opinion than a board appointed by the government of England ever can be.

The next educational institution to which I shall refer, is the Queen's University, established by Sir Robert Peel in 1845. In connection with the University three colleges were founded, namely, in Cork, in Galway, and in Belfast. The Queen's University is another instance of the hopelessness of forcing on the Irish people the things they do not want. The Irish wanted a denominational university; they got a mixed university. O'Connell denounced the institution; the Bishops and priests denounced it; Protestant Episcopalians denounced it; and after an inglorious career it perished utterly. One incident in connection with the Queen's University is worth recording, the plan was placed before Prince Albert, he saw that no provision was made for the teaching of Irish; he asked why was there not an "Irish chair?" He could only be told that there was not; he insisted that such a chair ought to be founded. It was found-

ed. But it was "starved." A miserable stipend of only one hundred a year was given to the professor of Irish, and of course the language ceased to be taught.

In 1854 the Catholic University was founded under the presidency of Dr. Newman by the Catholic hierarchy, and it continued for a period of nearly thirty years to be supported by public subscription, and attended by many of the Catholic youths of the country. Like the Queen's University, it, too, has passed away, or rather become merged in the Royal University, of which more later on.

Throughout the century, several schools, Protestant and Catholic, primary and intermediate, sprang up. Among the Protestant schools may be mentioned the following: St. Columba College, County Dublin, founded in 1843; Coleraine Academical Institution, founded in 1868; and the Methodist College, Belfast, founded also in 1868. Among the Catholic schools the most famous are Clongowes Wood College, County Kildare; St. Stanislaus College, Tuam; St. Jarlath's College, Tuam; St. Patrick's College, Armagh; St. Colman's College, Fermoy; French College, Blackrock, Dublin; St. Brendan's Seminary, Killarney; St. Colman's College, Newry; Holy Cross College, Clonliffe, Dublin; St. Patrick's College, Thurles; St. Ignatius College, Galway; St. Kieran's College, Kilkenny; Diocesan College, Limerick; St. John's College, Waterford; St. Peter's College, Wexford; St. Mel's Longford; St. Vincent's College, Castleknock, Dublin and Belvedere College, Dublin.

Reviewing the whole history of intermediate education in Ireland, it is clear that some schools did good work—eminently, I think, the French College, Blackrock, the Academical Institution, Coleraine; the Jesuit College of Tuam and Clongowes; the Methodist College, Belfast, and St. Colman's College, Fermoy; yet upon the whole secondary instruction throughout the country was, as someone—I believe Lord Cairns—said "bad in quality and deficient in quantity."

The fact seems incredible, but there can be no doubt of its authenticity, viz., that out of a total population of 5,500,000, there were only 10,814 boys in Ireland learning Latin, Greek, or modern languages, in 1871. Or, to put the matter in another way, while in England about ten or fifteen in every 1000 were instructed in these languages, only two in every 1000 were instructed in them in Ireland; and what was yet more serious, things were growing from bad to worse. Thus, while in 1861 the total number of secondary schools in the country amounted to 729, in 1871 the number fell to 574. Impressed by these facts, and believing that the lamentable situation which they revealed was caused by want of generous and general state aid and support, the Government under Lord Beaconsfield took up the subject of intermediate education in Ireland.

The result was the Intermediate Education act of 1878, whose chief provisions were as follows:

(1) A sum of £1,000,000 was taken from the Dis-established Church Surplus Fund, and devoted to the purposes of secondary education in Ireland.

(2) A board was formed called the "Intermediate Education Board of Ireland," seven members of which were to be appointed by the Lord Lieutenant.

(3) Provision was made for the establishment of a system of exhibitions and prizes for students, and the payment of result-fee to their teachers.

(4) Examinations were to be held by examiners appointed by the Board at convenient centres throughout the country, in the months of June and July, in every year; the subjects in which candidates were compelled to pass being—

(a) The ancient languages, literature and history of Greece and Rome.

(b) English language, history, and literature; French, German and Italian languages, history and literature.

(c) Mathematics, including arithmetic, and book-keeping.

(d) Natural science.

(e) Such other subjects of secular instruction as the board might prescribe.

(f) The maximum ages at which students were allowed to compete were fixed at sixteen, seventeen and eighteen years respectively.

(g) The board was not to take upon itself any responsibility with respect to the management and control of

any of the schools, but the three following rules were to be in all cases observed:

(1) Students were bound to belong to some intermediate school from the 15th of October of the year prior to the examination, and to have made at least 100 attendances.

(2) Students prepared by private pupils only were not to be eligible.

(3) No result-fee was to be paid to the managers of schools where religious instruction was imposed contrary to the sanction of parents, or where the hours of such instruction were so arranged as to trench upon the time allotted to secular study.

This act has been in operation for nearly a quarter of a century; but it is doubtful if its operation has upon the whole been as beneficial as was expected. It certainly tends to a system of cramming, a process which is not productive of sound knowledge. However, the Act, like so many English Acts of Parliament passed for Ireland, will probably have to be thrown into the melting pot again. Indeed, the chances are that before many years have passed the whole system of Irish education, — primary and intermediate—will have to be seriously and thoroughly revised.

Lastly, I shall deal with the question of university education, which calls for proper attention. The Queen's University having proved an utter failure, this subject was also taken in hand by the government of Lord Beaconsfield in 1878. The Catholic demand at that time was for a charter and for the endowment of the Catholic university; but the Parliament of England would not listen to it.

Lord Rosebery once said: "There is no principle, gentlemen, which seems so simple, but which seems somehow to need so much instilling into some of our greatest statesmen, as the fact that the potato that one knows and likes is better than the truffle that one neither knows or likes. And, therefore, when you wish to give a benefit to a nation, it is better to give something that it likes and understands, rather than something that it neither likes nor understands." England has never recognized the principle of giving the Irish nation "what it likes and understands." Instead of justly and freely establishing and endowing a Catholic University in 1879, Lord Beaconsfield's government "tinkered once more at the old tin kettle," and founded the "Royal University." The Queen's University was abolished and an examining board with power to confer degrees upon all approved candidates irrespective of their places of education, was established. In addition, and rather as a second thought, the duty of framing a scheme of exhibitions, prizes, scholarships, and fellowships—for which Parliament was to supply the funds—was entrusted to the Senate of the new establishment on which every religious denomination was represented. Like the "national schools," and the Queen's University, the Royal University is a "mixed" institution; and mixed education the Irish people will not have. After a trial of twenty-three years the Royal University has really proved a failure, and its end is not far off.

The Irish people are the most persistent people in the world. But self-complacent stupid John Bull will not see it. In all the arrogance or power he thinks that he can force his will upon the Irish on this question of education. The experience of nearly three-quarters of a century ought to satisfy him that he cannot. But, the walls of John's skull are almost impenetrable; they have, however, to be penetrated.

The question of a Catholic University will, in all probability, be pressed upon Parliament in the next session, especially if the present government remains in power. What is likely to be done? At the present moment three plans are under discussion, among those who are interested in the subject:

(1) The establishment of a Catholic University. This is obviously the just and wise course to take; Ireland will never be satisfied with anything less; and in the long run, England will have to give away. Except among the most bigoted Orangemen, there would be no effective opposition to this course in Ireland. There are, I believe, many liberal-minded Orangemen who would not object, and in any event the strength of Orangism is broken. The bulk of Protestant Episcopalians will

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