

state that "of Erasmus Smith's exhibitions, only twenty in the last ten years have been given by examination at entrance. The remaining exhibitions, on this foundation, are filled up by the Board from students who have already been distinguished in their academic career, without reference to the schools at which they were educated." The management of the Schools and the estates is committed by the charter to a Board consisting of thirty-two members. The Archbishops of Armagh and Dublin, the Chief Justices of the Queen's Bench and Common Pleas, the Chief Baron, and the Provost of Trinity College, are *ex officio* members. This Board elects new members as vacancies occur; and makes no report of its proceedings. It is provided that the Masters who are appointed by the Governors, shall be approved by the Bishop of the Diocese "if they shall willingly subscribe the two first canons of the Church of Ireland." No religious restriction is imposed on the pupils. The Master is directed to lecture every Sunday on Usher's Catechism, but the anxiety to provide for the education of the children of the tenantry, shows that the Schools were designed for the benefit of all religious denominations, since the bulk of the tenantry on the southern and western estates, must at the date of the charter have been Roman Catholics.

In considering the condition of these Schools, the first point which naturally attracts our attention is the constitution of their governing body. The Commissioners of Education in Ireland, consists of the Primate, the Lord Chancellor, the Lord Chief Justice of the Queen's Bench, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, the Members for the University, the Provost of Trinity College, the Bishop of Tuam, four other Bishops, one from each province, and four other "proper and discreet persons," who are appointed by the Lord Lieutenant. It would not have required extraordinary sagacity to have predicted that such a Board could never work well. The time of the eminent persons who are *ex officio* members is fully occupied by other duties. The Provincial Bishops are necessarily non-resident. The remaining four "proper and discreet persons" serve gratuitously, and in most cases must have other more urgent demands upon their time.

Not only is the constitution of the Board defective, and its energy misdirected, but its powers are very much restricted. In the Diocesan, and most of the private Schools, the Board has no control over the funds. The Master of the School receives his salary directly from the Clergy or the Trustees, and there are seldom any surplus funds. But the property of the Royal and other Schools, which is vested in the Board, collectively exceeds the sum now required for payment of all salaries and similar purposes. Each School, however, has its own separate endowment, and the Board has no power to apply the surplus rents of one School to the wants of another. Under the present system, the surplus funds are allocated to support, maintain, and provide for free scholars, and to endow Exhibitions in Trinity College, Dublin, at the discretion of the Commissioners. The latter alternative has been adopted, and a sum exceeding £1000 per annum, is given in Exhibitions, tenable under certain conditions, for five years, varying in amount from £25 to £50, and bestowed by public examination, upon the best answerers in a prescribed course. Objections to this system arise from every quarter. Four of the Royal Schools, and one Private Foundation, are sufficiently wealthy to have Exhibitions. But as these Exhibitions are strictly appropriated to each School, and as the Candidates from all the Schools are examined together, it sometimes happens that the defeated candidate of one School is better than the successful candidate from another, and thus the anomaly occurs, that in an open and perfectly fair examination, the worse man obtains the prize. But at a time when the Commissioners of the great English Universities propose, with the general consent, to abolish all restrictions of place and birth and name, in the various endowments of those establishments, it would be indeed strange to see the opposite process in operation in Ireland. Fortunately it is unnecessary to discuss the question. It has been long since settled. A far more important change was made by the Act of George III. This measure, which the late Sir Robert Peel, then Chief Secretary for Ireland, introduced, took away from the Masters

the estates which the charter had vested in them, conferred these estates upon the Board as at present constituted, and rendered the Masters dependent for their salaries on the discretion of this Board. At a still later period, the Commissioners of Education themselves, by virtue of the powers which their Act conferred, established the Exhibitions to which we have referred, and merely required that each candidate should have been for three years a pupil at some of the Royal Schools. It was probably thought that the inhabitants of these particular localities necessarily possessed a great advantage, in having their children educated under their own eyes, and in thus avoiding the inconvenience and expense of sending them to reside in some distant county. But if the Legislature was justified in taking away from the Masters their estates, and appropriating to the present purposes, without any local restriction, the surplus revenues they may well admit to a share in these advantages, if on other grounds it is judged expedient to do so, boys educated, as well as born, out of the charmed circle of the estates. The Act of George III. gives to the Commissioners the alternative of maintaining Free Scholars at the School, or of establishing Exhibitions in Trinity College. To the former plan, as well as to the original idea of "Free Schools," the objections are at least as strong as to the present system of Exhibitions. The Board would either insist that the Master should instruct the Free Schools gratuitously, or they would pay him at a certain rate for each boy. In the first case, the Free Scholars would represent a certain charge upon the Master's salary: in the second, a certain number of pupils in addition to his salary, guaranteed to him by the Board. In a very short time the results of these two methods would completely coincide, and the Free Scholars would always be regarded as a charge upon a settled income. In such circumstances, unflinching experience shows that careless Masters are consequent upon the removal of the chief incentive to exertion. The Diocesan Schools support their original character of Free Schools by the gratuitous instruction of three boys, on an average, in each School. The Royal Schools, as having about three times their revenue, are proportionately liberal, and exhibit an average of between seven and eight free pupils in every School. In Erasmus Smith's Grammar Schools there are absolutely none: we must remember, too, that the returns from which these figures are taken, refer to a period during which considerable agitation had prevailed on the subject of gratuitous education. In a paper* read before the Society of Arts by the Dean of Hereford, so well known for his successful exertions in the cause of elementary education, we find some remarkable statements upon the subject. The same high authority, in strong terms, declares his conviction, founded on considerable personal experience, that "the educational and other charities dispersed over the country, do little or nothing but positive mischief." Similar opinions are held by several of the Privy Council, and by Inspectors of Schools, whose views are fully stated by the Dean of Hereford.

Were cheap, but wholly gratuitous, Education secured, we may consider the propriety of devoting a part of the surplus funds to the endowment of Collegiate Exhibitions. Every parent naturally thinks his own son likely to obtain one of these prizes, which at once confer upon the holder rank among his companions, and relieve the paternal finances in the most gratifying way by the honorable and hard won earnings of the boy. Thus the Exhibitions operate as an attraction to children yet untried, and bring more pupils to School. After some time spent at School, if the parent has any reason to hope, and he is slow to despair, that his son has a fair chance of success, he will leave the boy a year or two longer, and thus Exhibitions—and nothing can be more important—keep boys at School. Even if the boy fails, and from the very nature of the case the great majority must fail, the effort has not been without its value. The simultaneous efforts, too, of a whole School, although the boys themselves are unconscious of them, imperceptibly raise the standard of Education. The Master is not slow, to feel the general activity. The Exhibition is the great prize of his

* "Remarks On the Importance of Giving, as Far as Possible, a Self-Supporting Character to Schools for the Industrial Classes, and the Means of Doing So." London: Groombridge and Sons. 1853.