

ELEMENTARY EDUCATION (IRELAND) (TRAINING SCHOOLS).

RETURN to an Order of the Honourable The House of Commons,
dated 4 May 1883 ;—for,

COPY “ of a MEMORIAL from ELEMENTARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE of the
PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH in IRELAND ON TRAINING SCHOOLS.”

Dublin Castle, }
17 May 1883. }

R. G. C. HAMILTON.

MEMORIAL from ELEMENTARY EDUCATION COMMITTEE of the PRESBY- TERIAN CHURCH in IRELAND ON TRAINING SCHOOLS.

To His Excellency John Poyntz, Earl Spencer, K.G., Lord Lieutenant General
and General Governor of Ireland.

May it please your Excellency,

WE, the Elementary Education Committee of the General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church in Ireland, appointed with full power to act on behalf of
the Church in all matters affecting the elementary education of our people, beg
leave most respectfully to represent to your Excellency—

That we have heard with anxiety and alarm that proposals with reference to
the training of national teachers are at present under the consideration of Her
Majesty's Government, the adoption of which would, in our opinion, tend to the
destruction of united national education in Ireland.

That the members of the General Assembly, since first they agreed to receive
aid from the National Board, have firmly adhered to the principle of united non-
sectarian education in preference to a denominational system, as best suited
to the wants of the country, and they are deeply convinced of the im-
portance of maintaining that principle in its integrity in the present condition
of Ireland.

That a system of public education which secures equal rights and privileges
to all, irrespective of creed, maintains parental right and authority, affords
every reasonable facility for imparting religious instruction, provides adequate
safeguards against proselytism, and brings together in friendly intercourse the
young of all denominations, is one well suited to the wants of the country; and
its acceptability to the Irish people is demonstrated by the fact that 1,066,259
pupils, out of a population, according to the last census, of 5,174,836, were
found during the year 1881 on the rolls of the national schools.

That a denominational system cannot be set up or in any way countenanced
by the State, without sacrificing the rights of minorities, interfering with the
free exercise of parental authority, necessitating increased expenditure and the
multiplication of small inefficient schools, and fostering those feelings of
alienation, intolerance, and mutual distrust, which have so long prevailed to
the deep injury of the country and the retarding of its improvement and
prosperity.

That we are aware that the Roman Catholic Hierarchy have repeatedly
demanded the overthrow of all model schools and united training schools, or
rather the transference to themselves of these institutions, to be supported by the
State while under their own exclusive management and control, as purely denomi-
national institutions; but we believe that to hand over to any denomination,
for denominational purposes, model and other vested school-houses that have

been erected at the expense of the State for the purposes of non-sectarian education, would be a wrongful alienation of public property, and would involve, in a most objectionable form, the principle of concurrent endowment, in contravention of the policy which has received the deliberate sanction of the Legislature.

That we regard the model schools under the control of the State as an essential and most valuable part of the national system, as indispensable for the training of qualified teachers, and as exhibiting to ordinary schools the most approved methods of literary and scientific instruction; and we emphatically condemn the conduct of the Board in endowing in the immediate neighbourhood of model schools rival sectarian establishments, "though well aware," as the late Sir Alexander MacDonnell acknowledged, that they had been erected "for the express purpose of drawing away from the model schools the Roman Catholic children attending it."

That so large a proportion of teachers should be untrained is admittedly a serious evil, but this evil has not been created by the State, which made adequate provision for the training of qualified teachers in the Central Training Establishment in Dublin, and in the district model schools. The evil has been created solely by the action of the Roman Catholic Hierarchy, who have thought it right to take up a position of antagonism to these institutions, and who some years ago interdicted clerical managers from giving employment to teachers who went for training to the training schools provided by the State. "It is, however, well understood," as was said in his report by a distinguished member of the Royal Commission on Primary Education, Sir Robert Kane, "that the interdict referred to has been carried out for the purpose of forcing the State to transfer these institutions to the hands of the Church authorities, and of establishing Christian Brothers in their stead, although no case of interference with the religious belief of Roman Catholics attending these schools has been established."

That Protestants of all denominations are satisfied with the system of united training pursued in the Central Training Establishment in Dublin and the district model schools, though some of them may prefer a denominational domestic life for their students attending the Central Training Establishment, that therefore the contemplated new training colleges, under sectarian and exclusive management, must be designed solely as a concession to those who claim to be the sole directors of education, who demand at the public expense "a system of education, catholic in all its branches, primary, intermediate, and university," and who condemn as intrinsically evil all mixed education; and this concession will be valued by them just as it puts into their hands an endowment for sectarian purposes, and affords a vantage ground from which all that remains of united education can be the more effectually assailed and destroyed. If, by the establishment of denominational training colleges, it is admitted to be an improper thing for teachers of different religious denominations to receive instruction in the same class-room under the same professors, much more will it be deemed improper to have children of different denominations educated in the same school under the same teacher, seeing that their young minds are more plastic, and much more easily impressed. The Commissioners of National Education, in their Report for 1842, speaking of the advantages arising from the union of Protestant and Roman Catholic children in the same school, say, "We believe that a system which encourages a union of Protestant and Roman Catholic children in the same schools for such an education as may fit them for those civil duties which they are in after life to perform together, separating them only for instruction in those religious duties which they have to perform separately, is the education best calculated to teach them by lessons both of precept and of habit, that religious differences should not prevent civil concord, and that, whatever these differences may be, the great principle of Christian charity should bind them to each other, particularly as members of the same civil community, by mutual feelings of attachment and good-will." We believe that every word here said by the Commissioners as to the advantage of the united teaching of children is equally applicable to the united training of the teachers who are to educate the children, and that particularly in a country like Ireland, torn with dissensions, civil and religious, a course ought not to be taken by the State which would prevent the very possibility of such advantages being realised.

That

That undenominational training and model schools, such as have hitherto existed, are the proper complement of an undenominational system; and as the declared "object of the system of national education is to afford combined literary and moral, and separate religious instruction, to children of all persuasions, as far as possible, in the same school," teachers should be trained in institutions calculated to fit them for working this system, amid surroundings in harmony with its object, and not in denominational colleges, where students of one particular creed would be trained separately from all others, and in a spirit of hostility to the principles on which the national system is based.

That there is no proper analogy between the training colleges in Great Britain and the model and training schools in Ireland. The former having been established under a denominational system, were in perfect harmony with its principles as long as that system existed. The latter having been founded in connection with a national non-sectarian system, were consequently non-sectarian, and were conducted in conformity with the principles of the system of which they were regarded as an integral part. In 1870 the English system of primary schools was in a great measure assimilated to the Irish system. One step in advance was then taken and one remains to be taken. But to establish denominational training colleges in Ireland now, and so create a want of harmony between the colleges in which the teachers are trained and the system which they are to carry into practice in the schools, would be an inconsistent and retrograde policy, deeply injurious to the true interests of national education, and one little likely to realise the aim set before them by the early Commissioners as expressed in their Report of 1835, namely, the raising up of a body of teachers "identified in interest with the State, and therefore anxious to promote a spirit of obedience to lawful authority." Besides, the model and training schools in Ireland having been built exclusively by public money, and for the good of the general community, were naturally and properly under the management and direction of the State. In this respect also they differ materially from the training colleges in Britain, which were built in great measure by private subscriptions and for denominational purposes, and were, therefore, under the management and control of the denominations in whose interests they were established.

That a large number of the teachers who are returned by the Commissioners in their Annual Reports as untrained, merely because they have not attended at the central training establishment in Dublin, have received an excellent practical training either as monitors or pupil teachers in the district model schools, one of whose leading functions is "to educate young persons for the office of teacher," and it is well known to those acquainted with the working of the national system that many of the very best teachers in connection with it received their entire training in the district model schools. The district model schools have not been utilised for this purpose by the Commissioners to the extent they should have been, particularly in recent years.

That the remedy for the existing evil should be sought in the fostering and encouragement of these schools, and the development and much wider scale of their training capabilities, and not in their conversion into sectarian institutions or in the establishment of new denominational training colleges. If the denominational element be introduced or recognised in connection with the training of teachers, its recognition here must eventuate its universal application, and in the complete reversal of a system of 50 years' growth, which has taken deep root, and, in spite of many difficulties, has conferred great advantages on the country.

That the Commissioners in their Report for 1849, make the following statement in reference to the successful working of the plan for the united training of teachers of various denominations: "We have felt it our duty in previous reports to express our satisfaction at the spirit of brotherly love in which the national teachers in our training schools live with each other, coming from all parts of the country, belonging to various religious denominations, and entertaining different opinions on many questions, they nevertheless live in harmony under the same roof, and in the practice of Christian kindness and good will." Up to the present time, the evidence of the Commissioners is the same. In their last Report, they say, "The inmates have been distinguished as heretofore for the general correctness of their conduct for order and discipline, for the

exercise of kindly feelings towards one another, and for the careful observance of their religious duties." And the late Sir Alexander MacDonnell, then Resident Commissioner, when examined before the Royal Commission of 1868, after stating that no part of their system had worked more happily than the united training of Protestants and Catholics in the Normal School in Marlborough-street, Dublin, added this remarkable testimony (Query 11-241): "I have seen for the last 29 years great numbers coming from every part of Ireland, Saxons and Celts, Protestants and Catholics, between the ages of 18 and 25, the age of the passions, when men are most unmanageable generally, and I have seen them living in perfect harmony together, not only during the day when they were attending their secular instruction, but during the evening, and I have never known a single case amongst them where there was any religious quarrel, and thousands have been educated in that way."

Having regard to such evidence of the successful working and beneficial results of the system of united training, and considering that no evils have ever been shown to have arisen from it, we are of opinion that, while it should be developed and made more extensively useful, it should not be superseded, directly or indirectly, and that the mere fact of its being condemned by the Roman Catholic Hierarchy cannot be held to be an adequate reason for interfering with it, and bringing in a totally different system of training, seeing that mixed education, as a whole, is involved in the same condemnation.

May it please your Excellency to represent these as our views to Her Majesty's Government, with the prayer that the fundamental principle of united education, as opposed to the denominational system, may be preserved unimpaired, and, in particular, that no sanction may be given to the establishment of denominational training colleges, or to any other changes tending to denominationalism that may be proposed in the national system.

And we will ever pray.

Signed on behalf, and by order of the Committee,

T. G. Killen,

Moderator of the General Assembly of the
Presbyterian Church in Ireland.

Francis Petticrew,

Convener of the Elementary Education Committee
of the General Assembly.

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(TRAINING SCHOOLS).

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TION COMMITTEE of the PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH
in IRELAND on TRAINING SCHOOLS.

(*Sir Thomas M^cClure.*)

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