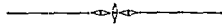


natural function is to do nothing against the truth, but for the truth, and that in contending for the faith we are contending, not for error, but for truth. And though the Christian commission rests upon other grounds and looks to other sources than physical science for its authority, it cannot, from the nature of the case, if true, be disproved by the advancement and discoveries of science; while the broad and patent features of the Old and New Testament are such as to be independent of suppositions as to the authorship of this or that book, seeing that the net result of either Testament as a whole is a unique and unparalleled phenomenon, and the testimony of the one to the other a fact of marvellous significance, which, as it was in no sense the work of human ingenuity and design to produce, so neither is it in the power of critical analysis to destroy or of conjectural theory to supersede.

STANLEY LEATHES, D.D.



ART. II.—THE REPORT OF THE EDUCATION COMMISSION.

THE Education Act of 1870 was, in some respects, "a leap in the dark." Previous educational legislation had recognised only a single system of supplying school-machinery; Mr. Forster's Act was a new departure, and introduced a dual system. When School Boards were called into existence no one could clearly foresee the extent of their development, the expense they would involve, the effect they would have on the voluntary system, or the line they would take in the matter of religious education. Compulsory attendance was an equally novel experiment, the results of which not even its advocates could clearly forecast. Since 1870 other important educational questions have been raised, such as free education, technical education, manual training, modes of examination and making public grants, the pupil-teacher system, and day training colleges. It was not without good reason, therefore, that the present Government appointed a Royal Commission to inquire into the working of the Elementary Education Acts.

The Commission was unusually large, and fairly representative of the various interests concerned, though somewhat weak in educational experts capable of judging the *desirability* and *feasibility* of proposed changes from the point of view of the child to be educated. The results of its inquiries and its recommendations are now before us in a series of huge

folio volumes that few people will have the courage to read, and still fewer will have time to digest. Evidence was collected with reference to the way in which the existing law grew up; the existing facts of our educational system; the efficiency of our present machinery, both central and local; the working of the Board school system; special schools, such as rural, half-time, Welsh, and workhouse schools, and their difficulties: the relations of ordinary schools to advanced general education and to continuation schools; the burden of the cost of education; school libraries and museums; the grievances of teachers, employers, parents, and managers; and the constitution of the Education Department. Whether legislation will directly follow the recommendations based upon this evidence or not, the evidence itself forms a storehouse of information which will be invaluable to educationists, and, through them, will infallibly exert a powerful influence on the elementary education of the future.

It would be impossible for me in the compass of a brief article to review in detail the Report of the Commission. I shall confine myself to the examination of the leading recommendations of the majority and minority.

Foremost among the recommendations of the majority in importance is the proposal "that the educational authority be empowered to supplement from local rates the voluntary subscriptions given to the support of every public State-aided elementary school in their district to an amount equal to those subscriptions, provided it does not exceed the amount of ten shillings for each child in average attendance." As regards the equity of this proposal, there cannot, I think, be any question; though, if the principle of affording aid out of the rates to voluntary schools is just, there is something illogical in limiting the amount of the proposed aid while the rate-aid to Board schools is unlimited. The rates are paid by all classes of the community alike, and all classes of the same social standing would seem to have an equal right to assistance out of the common fund. It cannot be just that the parents of children who attend denominational schools should, because they prefer definite religious teaching for their children, be refused assistance for the schools which their children attend, while other parents, equally well off, can get their children educated in schools receiving unlimited assistance from the rates. The question is not one of the poverty of parents, but of equality before the law. At present parents who send their children to voluntary schools are punished for their religious convictions by being refused any assistance in the education of their children out of rates which they themselves contribute, with the result

that, in many cases, their children get an inferior education, it being impossible in poor parishes for voluntary schools to offer the same advantages as Board schools. Christian benevolence may do much to compensate for this unjust deprivation of religious parents of rate-aid, but it cannot hope to successfully compete everywhere with Boards having an absolute command of the public purse. It is not contended that aid should be contributed out of the rates towards the religious instruction given in voluntary schools, but simply to the secular instruction. This is a civic right, and it is only those parents who prefer distinctive religious teaching for their children who are denied its enjoyment.

When, however, we quit the question of equity to discuss that of expediency, the policy which the friends of voluntary schools ought to pursue is not so easy to determine. I pass over political considerations arising out of the relations between the Unionists and the present Government. Rate-aid is assumed, somewhat rashly, to necessarily carry with it direct popular representation on the boards of management of voluntary schools receiving such aid, and such representation, it is feared, may endanger the control which voluntary managers ought to have over their schools. Then, again, it is urged that rate-aid will extinguish voluntary subscriptions, and that, if it were withdrawn at any time, the schools that had come to depend upon it would collapse. An objection of another kind is that rate-aid would reverse the so-called "settlement" of 1870.

For my own part, I do not see why rate-aid to voluntary schools should carry with it direct popular representation any more than tax-aid. The ratepayer and the taxpayer would be represented by the Education Department, and the auditing and publication of the school accounts would be a sufficient guarantee of the proper expenditure of public money. Voluntary schools would be examined by the Government inspector as at present; the conscience clause would be observed as at present; and not a penny need be paid out of the rates without guarantee that the schools are thoroughly efficient, and that the rate-aid is confined to the secular instruction. It would, of course, not be difficult to proportion the rate-aid to the degree of efficiency. The terrors inspired by the prospect of popular representation have had a powerful influence in inducing large numbers of denominationalists, more especially such as live in non-School Board districts, to reject assistance out of the rates. So far as their action has proceeded out of a desire to maintain definite religious teaching in their own schools at all costs, it cannot be too highly commended; but the friends of religious education ought to remember that the

interests at stake are not local but national, and that once the voluntary system breaks down in School Board districts there will be little guarantee for its maintenance in districts not under School Boards:

jam proximus ardet
Ucalegon.

That rate-aid would, to some extent, dry up contributions to voluntary schools is certain, but I do not think that the loss thereby incurred would be serious. Those people who are really interested in religious education, and give most freely to its support now, would not be likely to discontinue their subscriptions because they had to contribute to a school rate also, though it is highly probable that persons who subscribe to voluntary schools, not out of religious but economical motives, would withdraw their subscriptions once a school rate was imposed.

As to the "settlement" of 1870, it should be remembered that the friends of voluntary schools withdrew their claim to a share of the rates in 1870, on the understanding that the Government grants should be largely increased, and that the School Board rate would never amount to 3d. in the pound. The word of promise was kept to the ear, but it was broken to the hope. The grants were increased, but an increased expenditure was simultaneously necessitated by the increased demands of the Department that rendered the increase of grants wholly illusory. The School Board rate, so far from never amounting to 3d. in the pound, has reached an average of 7·2d. in the pound. In 72·6 per cent. of the boroughs and parishes where School Boards are established the rate is 3d. or over. In 20·3 it is 9d. or over. Here it should be remarked that every increase in the School Board rate makes it increasingly difficult to maintain the voluntary schools that exist by their side—first, by increasing the compulsory burden on the shoulders of the subscribers to voluntary schools, and so diminishing their power to assist such schools; and secondly, by compelling voluntary managers to increase their expenditure to compete with Board schools. The so-called "settlement," therefore, has ceased to have any moral obligation upon the consenting parties. Its two essential conditions have wholly failed. It has not afforded to voluntary schools the protection that it promised. So far from confining School Boards to the work of supplementing the voluntary system, it has afforded them every facility for subverting it. Denominationalists consented to the "settlement" of 1870 in ignorance of its effects; they have had their eyes opened, and they may now reasonably demand that the "settlement" should be modified. It is too late to confine School Board

rates within the limit of 3d. in the pound; it is not too late to carry out in some other way the pledge of the Government of 1870, that the voluntary schools should be enabled, in Mr. Gladstone's words, "to perfectly well stand in competition with the Board schools."

I hold, therefore, that the proposal for assistance out of the rates ought not to be finally dismissed. It is founded on justice and religious freedom. But I am prepared to admit that such a practice may be, for the present, inexpedient, *provided the other measures suggested by the Commissioners for the relief of voluntary schools are adopted.* The objection to relief derived exclusively from the Parliamentary grant is that it may at any time be withdrawn or coupled with conditions that would render it no relief at all.

Let us see what the other measures suggested are: It is proposed that the 17s. 6d. limit should be abolished, as tending to discourage improvement; that special grants should be made to small schools; that the fixed grant should be increased to 10s. per child in average attendance; that the average amount of the variable grant should be not less than 10s. per scholar; that extra grants should be given for the purpose of allowing pupil-teachers more time during school hours for their own studies, and for the supplementing of the instruction given by the head-masters by central-class teaching; and that public elementary schools for which no rent is paid or received should be exempted from local rates.

The injustice and impolicy of the 17s. 6d. limit are too obvious to argue. The boast of the present system is that it is a system of "payment by results;" the 17s. 6d. limit is a system of "*fining* by results;" it mulcts the successful poor school because it is poor; it rewards the rich school because it is rich. The limit is practically inoperative in the case of Board schools, for the Board can always fall back upon the rates to make up for any diminution of the Government grant.

The necessity for special grants to small schools is recognised by the minority as well as by the majority of the Commission, and is placed beyond dispute by the statistics collected on the subject by Prebendary Roe. These statistics show that the smaller a school is the more expensive it is to work, and the smaller is the grant that it is capable of earning per child. In 151 small rural schools in Somersetshire each child costs on the average 5s. 8d. a year more than the average cost in all Church of England schools. The explanation of the costliness of small schools is found in the fact that no matter how small a school may be, it demands, in order to satisfy the requirements of the code, the same classification as a large school, and, as a consequence, a larger staff in pro-

portion to the number of children. The explanation of the small grants to such schools is found in the irregularity of attendance in country districts, the impossibility of providing a separate teacher for each standard, and the inability of the managers to secure the services of the most efficient class of teachers.

The increase of grants is absolutely indispensable if the various recommendations of the Commissioners for the improvement of schools are to be carried out. The way in which it is proposed to distribute the grants would greatly relieve the anxiety of managers, teachers, and children, and would remove one of the strongest temptations to over-pressure. It is especially satisfactory to find the Commissioners recommending that "the conditions of the variable grants should be so modified as to depend upon the good character of the school and the quality of the acquirements of the great majority of the scholars," instead of upon individual passes.

The assessment to the rates of public elementary schools is utterly unreasonable, and it is surprising that it should have been maintained so long. The managers of voluntary schools in School Board districts have to pay rates upon their school-buildings not only for the maintenance of the poor, but for the maintenance of the Board schools. It is true that Board schools are rated also, but there is this vast difference in the two cases: in the case of the Board schools the money comes out of the pockets of the whole body of the ratepayers, including, therefore, the supporters of voluntary schools; in the case of voluntary schools it has to be provided by the voluntary subscriptions. The business carried on in the school-buildings is not carried on for profit; and as the buildings could never be let for any purpose, the rate upon them is simply a rate on public charity.

It remains to be seen whether the Government will have the courage to give effect to these recommendations. That they will be stoutly opposed we have had fair warning from the recently held National Conference on Education; but it should be distinctly understood that, unless they are acted on, the various recommendations that have been made by the Commissioners will be utterly futile, and large numbers of voluntary schools will inevitably collapse. It is to be hoped that Denominationalists will not show the tame spirit that they exhibited in 1870. They may plead ignorance in extenuation of their remissness in accepting the disadvantageous terms of that Act, but they cannot plead ignorance of the intentions of the present opponents of the voluntary system.

Ought Denominationalists to be content with merely holding their ground? Was it intended by the Act of 1870 that the

voluntary system was to be rendered incapable of further expansion? If so, the date of its total disappearance cannot be far distant. Voluntary schools will, through various causes, disappear one by one, and no new ones are likely to take their place. Mr. Cumin contends that the prior right to supply new school accommodation belongs to the School Board, though the Board can divest itself of this right, and that it is for the Board to determine whether a new school is necessary. Now, that there should be some check on the multiplication of schools is indisputable, but the majority not unreasonably consider that this check ought to be placed, not in the hands of the local School Board, whose religious animosities might blunt their sense of justice, but in those of the Department. Otherwise Denominationalists would be delivered over, bound hand and foot, to the tender mercies of a School Board, and would be absolutely dependent on its caprice for the enjoyment of the not unreasonable privilege of sending their children to a school giving such a religious education as they preferred. It is true that they would be free to maintain schools wholly at their own expense, but it is a new doctrine that religious opinions suffice to disqualify parents for receiving State aid in the education of their children. As a matter of fact, the Department has not acted in accordance with its own interpretation of the law, even when a School Board was willing to divest itself of its alleged prior right of supplying school accommodation. The Willesden School Board was compelled by the Department to supply a deficiency under pain of being declared in default if it allowed the deficiency to be supplied by voluntary agency.

The Commission see no reason why voluntary effort should not be entitled to work *pari passu* with a School Board in providing accommodation to meet any increase of population subsequent to the determination of the necessary school supply arrived at by the Department after the first inquiry of 1871. They further suggest that if a similar inquiry were held periodically—say, every five years—voluntary effort might be recognised in the interval between two inquiries as entitled to meet any deficiency not ordered to be filled up by the School Board on the requisition of the Department. Such an arrangement, they consider, would not violate the letter, much less the spirit, of the Act of 1870, which was intended to supplement not merely voluntary schools then existent, but the voluntary system.

Closely connected with the matter of school provision is that of the transfer of schools to School Boards. Under the 23rd section of the Education Act of 1870, power is given to

denominational schools to transfer their school-buildings to School Boards on the following conditions :

1. That the resolution to transfer must be adopted by a majority of two-thirds of the managers present at a meeting specially convened.

2. That the resolution of the managers must be confirmed by a majority of two-thirds of the annual subscribers present at a meeting specially convened.

3. That the proposed transfer agreement must be sanctioned by the Education Department, which "shall consider and have due regard to any objections and representations respecting the proposed transfer, which may be made by any person who has contributed to the establishment of such school."

The Commissioners point out that the effect of these provisions has been to set aside almost entirely the influence of the trustees and founders of a school, and to place its fate at any given moment in the hands of the managers for the time being, who are an uncertain and changing body, and may never have contributed to the erection of the school. It is notorious that numbers of voluntary schools have been transferred to School Boards without adequate justification. The clergyman was, perhaps, indifferent to distinctive religious teaching; or was unpopular with his parishioners, and could not get them to assist him in supporting his schools; or experienced some little difficulty in tiding over the interval between the earning of a public grant and the obtaining it. I have known a Church school with a handsome endowment, and situated in a wealthy parish, handed over to a Board. I have known a school that had been temporarily transferred to a Board, on the ground that the parish could not maintain it, recovered by a more energetic body of managers, and carried on without difficulty. I have known a clergyman who meditated the transfer of his schools, but was induced by his Bishop to make a further effort to keep them on, with the result that, though the incident occurred some fifteen or sixteen years ago, the schools are still in the hands of the Church, and perfectly solvent. It was stated in evidence before the Commission that in many cases in which the transfer itself could not be opposed by those who founded, and who have to a great extent maintained, the school, an agreement with the School Board has been sanctioned by the Department, containing provisions which were not even necessary for the purposes of the Education Act, and which have been widely at variance with the original trusts. In view of the grievances complained of, the Commission recommend: (1) that no transfer of a school held under trust shall take place without the consent of a

majority of the trustees; (2) that the Department be instructed to sanction only such terms of transfer, beyond what is required for the purposes of the Education Acts, as do not interfere with the original trust, in the event of a voluntary school being leased to a School Board; (3) that provision be made that no structural expenses should be incurred without the consent of the trustees who lease the building. The second of these conditions would allow of a school being used for many religious purposes, even if the managers were compelled to hand it over to a Board for the purposes of a day-school.

The majority and minority agree in recommending that school accommodation should be provided for one-sixth of the population; that the farming of schools to teachers should be prevented; that voluntary managers should co-operate for the purpose of engaging the services of organising masters and peripatetic teachers of science; that the inspectorate should be thrown open to teachers, and that all new inspectors should have previous practical experience; that teachers should be paid fixed salaries; that the head-teachers should not be dissociated from the work of actual teaching; that the Code requirements as to staff should be considerably increased; that pupil-teachers should be allowed more time during school-hours for their studies, and that the instruction of the head-teacher should be supplemented, but not superseded, by central class-teaching; that extra grants should be offered for this purpose; that provision should be made for the training of day-students at places giving a liberal education; that the minimum age for half-time exemption should be eleven, and for full time thirteen, and that half-time should be conceded only to those who are "beneficially and necessarily" employed at work; that drawing should, as far as practicable, be made compulsory for boys; that the teaching of history should be introduced earlier than at present; that singing by note should be gradually made universal; that there should be an increase in the number of reading-books; that various schemes of instruction should be provided for various classes of schools; that every school should have a school-library; that evening-schools should be encouraged; that higher schools should be set up, and that, where they cannot be supplied, higher classes for children who have passed Standard VII. should be attached to ordinary schools; that arrangements should be made whereby the school-fees of the children of poor parents should be paid without any association with ideas of pauperism; and that a longer term of office, with partial renewal, would be an improvement in the constitution of School Boards.

This is a substantial body of valuable recommendations,

and is in itself a sufficient answer to those critics of the majority who assert that their sole object was the promotion of the interests of voluntary education. It is natural that in the discussion of the Report stress should have been, at first, laid on the points of difference between the majority and minority; but, if there were no other outcome of the Commission than legislation based upon the recommendations on which majority and minority are agreed, there can be no question that the cause of elementary education in this country would be enormously advanced, and that the Commission would have imposed on the nation a heavy debt of gratitude.

The minority of the Commission consists of eight members, the Hon. E. Lyulph Stanley, Sir John Lubbock, Bart., M.P., Sir Bernard Samuelson, Bart., M.P., Dr. Dale, Mr. Sydney Buxton, M.P., the late Mr. Richard, M.P., Mr. T. E. Heller, and Mr. G. Shipton. Though unable to sign the Report of the majority, they agree in giving their assent, to the recommendations mentioned above. There are other points, however, on which they are not agreed, and a sub-minority of five have felt it their duty to issue a separate Report. This report is ably drawn up, and, as the opponents of the voluntary system are likely to base their "plan of campaign" upon it, I propose to briefly consider the scope and probable results of its recommendations. I do not question for one moment the educational zeal of its subscribers, but I do not think that it will be difficult to show that the effect of carrying out their policy would be the gradual extinction of voluntary schools and the endangerment of religious instruction of any kind in elementary schools.

The sub-minority deny that when the first deficiency of school provision has been supplied, voluntary agency ought to be allowed to supply further and future deficiencies. In other words, they are opposed to the expansion of the voluntary system. Voluntary schools may die out, but no new ones are to be recognised. The sub-minority would not only not oppose the transfer of voluntary schools to School Boards, but recommend that where any building which has been aided by a Parliamentary grant, exists for the elementary education of the poor, and is not used on week days for such purpose, the School Board should be entitled to have the use and occupation of the building for the purpose of supplying school accommodation. As the Parliamentary grant did not cover more than a sixth of the cost of building, this recommendation means the confiscation of the remaining five-sixths originally subscribed by Church people for Church purposes. The sub-minority object to the proposal to aid voluntary schools out of the rates, because "such a proposal seems to them unsound in principle, destructive of the settlement of 1870, and certain, if it became

law, to embitter educational politics and intensify sectarian rivalries." Their anxiety to maintain the settlement of 1870 may be measured by their efforts to subvert the system which School Boards were intended, under that settlement, to supplement. The sub-minority recognise the need of technical training, but would place it almost entirely in the hands of School Boards. "We cannot," they say, "see our way to support a proposal to impose on the ratepayers a contribution in support of voluntary elementary schools." The sub-minority think that the time has come when ten square feet of accommodation should be allowed to every child in an elementary school. As the present allowance is eight square feet, this proposal would at once reduce the accommodation in voluntary schools by over 700,000 places, a reduction equivalent to suppressing one voluntary school out of every five. While no one will grudge any extra superficial or cubic space that may be necessary for the health of the child or the convenience of the teacher, the increase should clearly be only gradually increased. The necessity is not urgent, eight square feet having been the allowance that the Department, until quite recently, always accepted as sufficient. The sub-minority admit the injustice of the 17s. 6d. limit, but do not recommend its remission, for no other reason that I can see than that it would ease the burden on efficient voluntary schools. They would have the fees in voluntary schools subject to the approval of the Department, a control which would never be likely to increase the fees, but might often injuriously lower them. They would increase the expenditure in voluntary schools without providing any proportionate increase of income to meet it. It will thus be seen that the recommendations of the sub-minority strike at the expansion of the voluntary system and at the reduction of its present area of usefulness, and would render it increasingly difficult for voluntary schools to exist at all.

There is one point on which I have not touched, and that is the proposals of the majority with regard to the training of teachers. The majority fully recognise the need of increasing the facilities for the training of teachers, and—seeing no prospect of increasing the number of residentiary training colleges unless the unsectarian party put their hands into their own pockets—recommend that day training colleges should be opened in connection with local university colleges, and that existing training colleges should be permitted, though not compelled, to take day students. Both these arrangements are admittedly a *pis aller*, and as they will seriously deteriorate the future teachers of the country, on whom more than anything else its education will depend, I cannot but regret the

conclusions arrived at. The majority say, "While unanimously recommending that the experiment of a system of day training for teachers and day teaching colleges should be tried on a limited scale, we would strongly express our opinion that the existing system of residential colleges is the best for the teachers and scholars of the elementary schools of the country." Why should we be satisfied with anything short of the present arrangement, if such arrangement is the best? At the very moment when we are seeking to improve the education of the country, why should we take a step which is distinctly retrograde? What guarantee would there be that religious and moral instruction would be given by local university colleges, when those colleges themselves are not founded on a religious basis? What guarantee would there be for the practical teaching and training of teachers by professors who know nothing about education? It is assumed that the students attending a local college could practise in some neighbouring school under the skilled direction of a trained teacher. So they could; but it is a great mistake to assume that such practice is sufficient to meet the exigencies of the case. *Every* teacher of teachers should have studied the science and art of education, and should constantly bear in mind in his teaching the class of children for whose instruction his pupils have to be prepared. If, however, day colleges are inevitable, why should not voluntary agency be left free to establish them? Why should we not have Church day training colleges as we have Church residential colleges?

The suggestion of Mr. Cumin that day students might be admitted into the denominational training colleges without being required to join in the family worship of the college or receiving any religious instruction to which their parents object, appears to the majority to have very great recommendation. I admit the advantages such an arrangement offers for the purpose of secular training, but I do not think that the Commissioners could have given much consideration to the effect of having in the same college students of different religious beliefs and, possibly, some of no belief at all. A training college is not like a residential university college, where students have separate rooms, and rarely meet except in the lecture-room or the dining-hall. In a training college the students live in common rooms, and are in each other's society from the time they rise in the morning to the time when they go to bed. Any discordant element in such colleges, therefore, would be intensified by the opportunities afforded for its manifestation. While the resident students were attending chapel or religious instruction the non-residents would be engaged in secular studies; and as the whole body

would be preparing for the same competition in secular examination, the resident students would be constantly exposed to the temptation to claim the same freedom from attendance at chapel and religious lectures as the non-resident students. I have no hesitation in saying that, though the religious convictions of many students would stand even such a severe and constant trial as this, many students, who at present profit by the religious privileges afforded by a training college, would grudge the time that was withdrawn from secular studies for religious exercises and instruction, and would consider themselves placed under a great disadvantage, as regards the examination in secular knowledge, when compared with the non-resident students. Nor do I see how a conscience clause could be successfully resisted for resident students if it were insisted on for non-resident. Once students were admitted into a training college who were exempted from religious exercises and religious instruction, the principle on which our residential training colleges are now conducted would be gone—viz., that it is absolutely essential that teachers who will be responsible for the moral and religious instruction and training of children should be themselves morally and religiously educated.

I cannot close this paper without expressing a hope that the leaders of the Church will see the necessity for a general and systematic endeavour, not merely to protect from extinction the schools that we have, but to render them more efficient, and to provide new schools wherever our co-religionists need them. A system that does not develop is doomed to extinction, and its end will approach with ever-increasing rapidity. Every voluntary school that collapses will render the collapse of another voluntary school more easy and certain. If our existing schools are worth fighting for, their multiplication is worth fighting for. At present one school is given up after another, and nobody seems to greatly care. Church education is looked upon as a purely parochial matter, and not as a Church matter. Cornwall has no concern in the voluntary schools of Northumberland, nor has Northumberland any concern in those of Cornwall. Churchmen by profession, we are, educationally considered, Independents in practice. Stronghold after stronghold is abandoned or surrendered, and the officer in charge of it often scarcely considers it necessary to notify the loss to his commander-in-chief. Even the parishes which are well provided with schools are often shut up in educational isolation, and are content to fight for their own hand. What we want is the recognition of the solidarity of Church educational interests, and an effective organization for mutual succour and mutual defence.

EVAN DANIEL.