

THE IRISH EDUCATION COMMISSION.

I.

THE Royal Commission which was appointed in July, 1901, "to inquire into the present condition of the higher, general, and technical education available in Ireland outside Trinity College, Dublin, and to report as to what reforms, if any, are desirable in order to render that education adequate to the needs of the Irish people," has now issued three bulky volumes of minutes of evidence, and its report, which will shortly be presented to Parliament, is anticipated with interest by the medical as well as the general public.

APPOINTMENT OF THE COMMISSION.

Public attention has been directed to the question of Irish university education by several events, of which the most important was Mr. Balfour's letter of January, 1899, in which he proposed to establish two new universities, in Dublin and Belfast respectively, in place of the present Royal University. The letter was preceded by several declarations of the Roman Catholic laity of Ireland expressing their discontent with the present university system. It was shortly followed by resolutions of the Senate of the Royal University of Ireland and of the Corporate body of Queen's College, Belfast, calling the attention of the Government to the inadequacy of the provision for higher education in Ireland.

Since that time the Irish university question has been a subject of warm controversy in public prints; and while there is substantial agreement that the present system is unsatisfactory, the suggested solution on denominational lines has in many quarters been deprecated. The efficiency and value of Trinity College, Dublin, is on all hands admitted, but there is a widespread dissatisfaction with the present constitution and methods of the Royal University and the Queen's Colleges, and of the Roman Catholics, who constitute 75 per cent. of the population of Ireland, a large part are debarred by religious scruples from taking advantage of the teaching of any of those institutions.

The subject of technical education has in the last years received an increasing amount of attention, both in Great Britain and in Ireland, and the department of Agriculture and Technical Education recently established in Ireland is becoming conscious of the need of co-ordination between its work and that of the universities, such as exists in industrial centres elsewhere.

PREVIOUS HISTORY OF IRISH UNIVERSITY EDUCATION.

The history of Irish universities is identical with that of Trinity College, Dublin, until 1795, when a Roman Catholic College was established at Maynooth, and received an annual Government grant of about £8,000—which was increased in 1845 to £26,000. Maynooth was intended for the education of lay as well as ecclesiastical students, but, wanting the power of conferring a degree, the former department languished, and in 1817 was abolished. At the same time as Maynooth college was established the regulations of Trinity College, Dublin, were altered so as to admit Roman Catholic students. In addition to those two colleges, there existed at that time a university Faculty of Arts in the Belfast Academical Institution, which received a small Government subsidy. At the disestablishment of the Irish Church (1869) the annual grants to those three colleges were all commuted for capital sums.

THE QUEEN'S UNIVERSITY.

The Bill founding this University was produced in 1845. The University was of the same type as Victoria University and the University of Wales, and consisted of the three Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork, and Galway. It was the intention of Sir Robert Peel's Government that these colleges should be strictly undenominational, and safeguards were introduced which should render them acceptable to all classes and creeds in a country where religious differences are very bitter. In particular it was hoped that the college at Belfast would be largely frequented by Protestants, and those of Cork and Galway by Roman Catholics, who constitute the majority of the population in the South and West. This expectation was disappointed in consequence of a number of rescripts issued by the Catholic authorities forbidding ecclesiastics to accept office in them, and condemning them as dangerous to faith and morals. It is said that a considerable minority of the bishops were in favour of accepting the Queen's Colleges, and that the reasons for this prohibition were principally that the

Government declined to constitute the Roman Catholic bishops final judges of what was dangerous teaching and to duplicate the chairs of controversial subjects, such as mental science and history, and that Lord John Russell's Government, which succeeded to office, and carried out the scheme introduced by Sir Robert Peel, did not, as the latter had intended, appoint a large proportion of Roman Catholics on the staff of the Cork and Galway Colleges.

This ecclesiastical ban gravely impaired the utility of the Queen's University, which, nevertheless, during its short existence greatly ameliorated the conditions of education in Ireland. The annual entry of students increased from about 250 in the early years to an average of about 300 in the last six years, and in 1880 the number of its students was 1,010 as compared with 1,231 in Trinity College, Dublin. During this period the records of the latter college show no diminution in the number of its students, so that it may be said that the Queen's University in twenty years nearly doubled the university work in Ireland. The graduates in medicine averaged annually 63.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, DUBLIN.

In 1853 an attempt to found an independent Roman Catholic university was made by the Roman Catholic bishops. A considerable sum of money was subscribed and teaching was commenced in a building in Dublin, Cardinal Newman being the first Rector. In 1879 a college of the Roman Catholic University, under the name of University College was recognized and subsidized by the Royal University of Ireland. About this time the capital originally devoted to the college was nearly exhausted, and its management was transferred by the bishops to the Jesuits, by whom it has since been conducted with great success, though not without some pecuniary loss.

THE ROYAL UNIVERSITY OF IRELAND.

This University was founded by Royal Warrant in 1881 with the power and duty to examine for and confer degrees on all comers, male and female, without requiring any residence in college or attendance at any course of instruction, except in the faculty of medicine, in which the Senate was to recognize the certificates of certain institutions and schools. Faculties of arts, engineering, music, medicine, and law were created, and courses of examination were arranged in those subjects. The University was forbidden to confer theological degrees or prizes for proficiency in theological subjects.

The University consists of a Chancellor, nominated by the Crown, a Senate, and graduates. The Chancellor is the chief officer of the University. In his absence his duties are performed by the Vice-Chancellor, whom the Senate elects out of its own body. The Chancellor furnishes annually to the Lord Lieutenant a report on the condition and progress of the University. Since the foundation of the University the Chancellor has always been a Protestant and the Vice-Chancellor a Roman Catholic.

The Senate.

The Senate is a body of thirty-six members with the Chancellor. The original senators were nominated by the Crown. As vacancies occurred, members were elected by Convocation to the number of six, two retiring annually, but being eligible for re-election. The constitution of the Senate has been maintained in such a manner that of the members half always belonged to the Protestant and half to the Roman Catholic communities. As this tacit arrangement has not been recognized by Convocation, the balance has in general been maintained by the Crown nominating a Protestant or Roman Catholic senator as vacancies have arisen in such a manner as to neutralize the Roman Catholic or Protestant elected by convocation.

To the original Senate was entrusted the duty of drafting a scheme for the organization of the University in respect of degrees, examinations, scholarships, fellowships, etc., with the very singular proviso that in fixing the values of the said scholarships, exhibitions, fellowships, and other prizes, the Senate should have regard to the advantages of a similar kind offered by Trinity College and Dublin University, so as to avoid as far as possible any injury to the advancement of learning in that College and University.

In general the Senate is the governing body of the University, and has the entire management of its affairs and property, the regulation of all fees and examinations, and the appointment of all examiners and other servants (with the exception of the secretaries, who are Crown nominees). The Senate has also the duty of preparing from time to time accounts of the receipts and expenditure of the University which are forwarded to the Auditor-General and presented to

Parliament. A statutory meeting of the Senate is held once a year and appoints fourteen of its members as a standing committee (five to constitute a quorum), which reports on most of the matters that come before the Senate.

Convocation.

This is a body consisting of the Convocation of the former Queen's University, together with such graduates of the Royal University as register their names on the roll. It is represented by six senators. It has no direct initiative and no veto in any university affairs.

It thus appears that the Royal University is purely a body granting degrees and awarding a number of money prizes. It has no direct relation with any teaching body, and in its awards does not take into consideration, except in the medical faculty, where or how candidates have received instruction. This provision was obviously modelled upon the then arrangements of the University of London, and has encouraged many minor institutions which aim at giving an academic training, notably a number of higher Roman Catholic schools and of ladies' colleges. On the other hand, it has certainly acted detrimentally on the arts faculties of the various colleges.

Though not directly connected with any teaching institution, the Royal University has a very important connexion with certain colleges through its Fellows.

The Fellowship Scheme.

In the original draft charter the Senate was empowered to elect a number of Fellows, finally fixed at 28 and altered in 1887 to 29. The Fellowships are tenable for seven years, and are of the value of £400 per annum, except when the Fellow is in receipt of a salary in a State-endowed institution, when the amount of his salary is deducted from his Fellowship. The first Fellows were appointed at the discretion of the Senate, but it was provided that after seven years it should be competent for the Senate to re-elect the same Fellows, and if this were not done, to elect their successors by competitive examination of the graduates. In addition to the ordinary Fellowships, the Royal University confers 8 medical Fellowships, with salaries of £150, subject to the same deductions as those of the Fellows and requiring the same services. The duties of the Fellows are:

1. To conduct university examinations.
2. To recommend courses of study, etc., for the university examinations.
3. To teach matriculated students of the university in the respective institutions with which they are connected at the time of their appointment.

A consideration of the third provision shows that the Fellowship scheme constitutes an indirect endowment of certain teaching institutions. At the first meeting of the Senate fourteen of the Fellowships were conferred on teachers in University College, Dublin, one on a teacher in Magee College, Londonderry, and the remaining thirteen were distributed between the three Queen's Colleges. In 1887 an additional Fellowship in Celtic Languages was instituted and given to a professor in University College. In 1888, when the expiration of the original Fellowships was imminent, the statutes of the University were altered in such a manner as to abolish the provision for the election of Fellows from among the graduates by competitive examination, and the Senate continued to confer fifteen Fellowships on University College. University College and Magee College having no State endowment, the Fellows attached to these institutions receive the full amount of their salary, but the Fellows in the Queen's Colleges receive this sum with a deduction for the amounts of their salaries. The figures are: University College receives £6,000; Queen's College, Belfast, £676; Cork, £344; Galway, £320; and Magee College, £400.

The abolition of the provision for election of Fellows by competitive examination was obviously necessary in the interests of the colleges, as it would have been most vexatious that they should appoint as their professors the successful candidates at a competitive examination in the Royal University. There is no university or college which is restricted in the choice of its professors to the graduates of a particular university, and in the departments of arts and science, particularly the Queen's Colleges, have always had many teachers who are not graduates of the Royal or Queen's Universities. In fact, the provision for the election of Fellows was self-contradictory. It is clear that if twenty-nine gentlemen are to hold at the same time the office of professor in a college and that of Fellow in a university, one or other institution must practically confer the two offices; and, in fact, the practice of the Senate has always been, on a Fellowship becoming vacant,

to confer it upon the recommendation of the president of one or other college.

As to this distribution of half the Fellowships to University College, several of the senators in their evidence implied that it was the intention of the Government to grant this relatively large share of the university funds as an indirect endowment to the Roman Catholic college, but no documentary evidence of this is forthcoming. Other witnesses denied this statement, and asserted that the arrangement was due to the influence of the then Chancellor of Trinity College, together with the Roman Catholic members of the Senate. Be that as it may, this indirect endowment has always been granted to University College out of the Royal University funds, and, as the accounts are submitted to Parliament, the term "underhand endowment" frequently applied to this grant is an unfair one.

The Examiners.

Another aspect of the same matter has been commented upon. It is that the Fellowship scheme gives the representatives of University College a preponderance on the Examining Boards of the University, which tends to induce candidates to study there rather than at the other colleges. The Fellows and medical Fellows are assisted in conducting the examinations by the junior Fellows (who are selected by competitive examination, and are not professors), and by a number of examiners who are for the most part teachers at one or other college. Of a total of 80 examiners, 26 hail from University College and the Catholic School of Medicine; 17, 9, and 7 respectively from the Queen's Colleges of Belfast, Cork, and Galway; 3 from Magee College, Londonderry; and 18 are not attached to any of these institutions. In the subjects belonging to the Medical Faculty in particular there are 34 examiners, of whom 13 belong to the Dublin School, 10 to Belfast, 5 to Cork, 2 to Galway, and 6 are connected directly with none of the colleges; 4 of these, however, are practitioners in Dublin. Of this inequality the students of the Queen's Colleges have for many years been conscious, particularly in relation to the Final Examination in Medicine, where 6 out of a total of 13 examiners belong to the Catholic School and 2 to other Dublin schools.

These two difficulties as regards the distribution of Fellows and examiners among competing schools are among the most formidable with which the Royal University has to contend. The question of examiners was discussed by several witnesses before the Gresham Commission, when a number of teaching bodies protested against the examiners before whom their students were to appear being appointed from rival institutions affiliated with a reconstituted London University.

The objections urged against this arrangement are of two kinds, one that already mentioned, that it attracts students from one college to another, and the other that the scope of the teaching is seriously hampered when a teacher has to regard rather the examinational potentialities of a subject than those aspects which he considers most important and of greatest educational value. As one witness put it, "the examination dominates the teaching." This condition is, perhaps, not to be deprecated in relation to some of the subjects of the Final Examination in Medicine which confer certain civic privileges and responsibilities, but even in those subjects the question admits of argument. In the earlier medical classes, greater freedom of teaching would clearly be a benefit to the pupils; while in the departments of literature and pure science, it is obvious that no teacher can do justice to his own learning in a course which he has no voice in determining. Many of the most eminent witnesses before the Gresham Commission emphasized this fact, that the object of scientific and literary training is rather to establish certain constructive and critical habits of mind than to inculcate a particular series of facts and every teacher should have freedom to select his own materials for the purpose.

Appointment of External Examiners.

To meet the complaints of those who think the provincial schools or their students are at a disadvantage owing to the preponderance of examiners in the Dublin School, the students being awarded places and exhibitions in order of merit, the Senate has recently adopted the principle of introducing external examiners in the medical faculty from schools outside of Ireland. It is hoped that this will increase the prestige of the medical degrees besides abating the qualms of the provincial students. Obviously this change can only be completed gradually. It is one in which the Royal University of Ireland will follow the practice of the most progressive medical schools of Britain.

Merits of the Royal University.

The Royal University, during the twenty odd years of its existence, has had to contend against great difficulties. It had to take up the work of the Queen's University at a time when the latter, so far from being decadent, was increasing every year in numbers and importance, and appeared to have justified its existence. The Queen's University was not satisfactory to Roman Catholics. It has been plainly stated that it was not satisfactory to the authorities of Trinity College, Dublin. The middle of the nineteenth century witnessed a great increase of the university population of Great Britain. For example, in the years between 1867 and 1877, Edinburgh University added 60 per cent. to its students. Trinity College, Dublin, did not share in this prosperity, but suffered a slight decline, while there was a steady, though moderate, increase in the Queen's University. The provision in the charter of the Royal University against offering greater money prizes than those of Trinity College certainly suggests that the authorities of the latter were alarmed. But unquestionably the Queen's University was very satisfactory to that section of the population from whom its 1,200 students were drawn. No serious aspersions have been thrown on the character of its teaching or degrees, which, on the contrary, were of a very high order. The graduates resented the dissolution of the University, and appear to have had little voice in the constitution of its successor. The original Senate of the Royal University of Ireland contained only ten members who had been connected with the Queen's University, with provision for the gradual introduction of representatives of Convocation. This dissatisfaction of the graduates has been perpetuated by the Fellowship scheme and by the unrepresentative character of the Senate. In general the dissolution of the Queen's University gave rise to a feeling of instability and uncertainty in Irish university affairs which has been most prejudicial to the Royal University.

In spite of these disadvantages, the Royal University in its limited sphere of action has done very good work; the standard of its degrees is high. In the Medical Faculty the course is particularly arduous, as students after passing a matriculation examination satisfactory to the General Medical Council, must pass a further examination in English, Latin, and another language, mathematics and experimental physics, along with or before their first medical examination. This regulation of course postulates a higher degree of general knowledge on the part of medical graduates of the Royal University than is frequently found accompanying other degrees and sciences to practise. The medical examinations are also admittedly of a high standard, and have from time to time received warm encomiums from the Inspectors of the General Medical Council. The other degree examinations of the Royal University also demand relatively a high grade of learning, and on the whole it may be said that the Royal University has in this respect contributed to elevate the standard of degrees in the United Kingdom. It has also admitted a large number of students to graduation. In the Faculty of Medicine the number of graduates does not materially differ from that of the Queen's University (about 50 per annum). The degree of B.A. was conferred on 2,172 candidates in the last fourteen years, as compared with 662 in a like period of the Queen's University. It may be noted that whereas 36 per cent. of those in the latter University proceeded to the M.A., in the Royal University this percentage is reduced to 13. The most remarkable feature of the B.A. figures is the numbers of women. During the last fifteen years the number and percentage of women taking the B.A. annually have increased from 15 and 10 per cent. to 55 and 37 per cent. respectively, the number of men showing little change.

The law degrees also show a large increase in the Royal University as compared with the Queen's. The faculty of engineering does not show much change in this respect.

In addition to granting degrees to about 180 students annually, the University has distributed every year a sum varying from £4,000 to £6,000 in exhibitions and other money prizes. Nearly a third of this sum is awarded to graduates and may be regarded as an encouragement of research. In the medical faculty prizes of the aggregate value of £970 are offered annually, while the average number of students who pass the first examination in medicine is 68. The sum total of prizes represents about £24 for each student who graduates, or £8 for each matriculated student. This is a considerable endowment of the higher learning. On the other hand the University fees are small, amounting to an average of less than £4,000 a year (that is, considerably less than the annual

endowment of students). The total fees for the examination necessary for M.B. are £6 10s., and for B.A., £3 10s.

It will thus be seen that the Royal University offers an inexpensive, or rather a slightly endowed, avenue to degrees of high character in various faculties, and thus encourages and directs the labour of a large number of students.

In the faculty of arts it has been instrumental in greatly promoting academic aspirations, particularly among women, and schools throughout the country have notably benefited by the increase in the number of available teachers.

Defects of the Royal University.

The difficulties with which the Royal University has had to combat arise largely from the religious differences of the people. It was founded in order to give to Roman Catholic students facilities for graduation which should not be offensive to their religious advisers and should at the same time be available for Protestants. The plan of keeping an even balance of Roman Catholics and Protestants in the Senate was devised to meet this difficulty, but this balancing and the pursuit of the same policy in the Fellowship scheme has diminished the popularity of the University in many quarters. Many of the graduates would prefer to see its government in the hands of a body more directly representative of the institutions concerned. From a table given in the first volume, it appears that the average number of senators at a meeting is 16.8 (Standing Committee numbering 14), and each senator has attended 47 per cent. of the meetings. But many distinguished members have been unable to attend often, and it is complained that the business has in practice been conducted by the Standing Committee. The system of granting degrees without collegiate education (which prevails also in Dublin University) is also regarded by many witnesses as a defect in the Royal University. It has certainly depleted the arts faculties in the Queen's Colleges. The tables show that less than 33 per cent. of those who have taken the B.A. have been educated at one or other of the recognized colleges, and the number of candidates from Belfast and Cork has steadily declined.

A large proportion of the witnesses express the opinion that the absence of collegiate education preliminary to a university degree is too grave a loss to be compensated for by the increase in number of those who graduate. The lonely student does not counterbalance the crammed student. This is a question that has been debated before other Royal Commissions, and it appears that the importance of a collegiate training is more emphasized than it was ten years ago. It is suggested that London University might perform this function for Ireland, and other duties be given to the Royal University.

CHARITY AND THE POOR LAW.

MR. F. H. BENTHAM, Chairman of the Bradford Board of Guardians, we learn from a report in the *Yorkshire Daily Observer*, recently gave a lecture on Bradford charities and Poor-law administration at a meeting of the Bradford Liberal Club.

Mr. Bentham referred to the appeal for £50,000 to put the finances of the Bradford Royal Infirmary, the largest charity in the city, upon a sound foundation, and proceeded to ask whether the expenditure of the charities was sufficiently safeguarded. The spheres of private and legal charity often clashed. The Bradford Board of Guardians had increased its stringency with regard to outdoor relief, but the hospitals were subject to increasing abuse. At the Royal Infirmary there was no rule excluding the actually destitute who belonged to the Poor Law, and at the Children's Hospital children were admitted without inquiry as to the circumstances of the parents; inquiry was made afterwards, and parents were expected to contribute if able to do so, but the net result was that it had received in 1901 in respect to 315 children, with an average residence of 37.2 days each, only £104 16s. from their friends. In the out-patient department no inquiries were made as to the circumstances of parents. The out-patients attended gratuitously by the staffs of the Royal Infirmary and the Children's Hospital in Bradford numbered in 1901, 12,446 cases, a number three and a-half times greater than all the Poor-law cases and the insane. Proceeding to compare the amounts of contributions for charitable purposes in different towns, Mr. Bentham said that the total amount received in subscriptions and donations in 1899 for the twenty-nine charities in Bradford amounted to £10,740, equal to 10d. per head of the population. In