

(No. 78.)



1867.

---

T A S M A N I A.

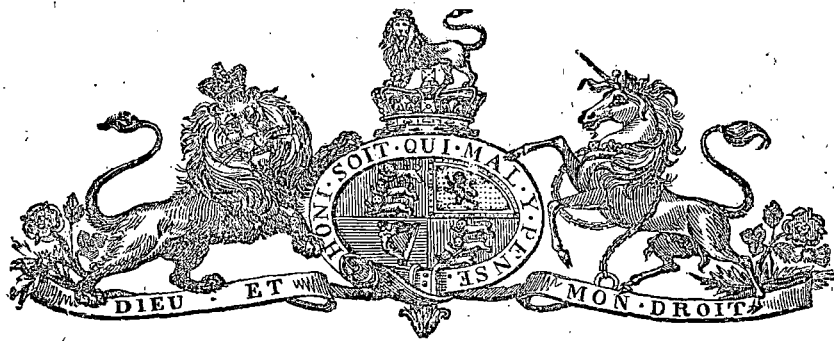
---

MR. A. I R E L A N D.

AMENDED AND COMPLETED EVIDENCE BEFORE THE ROYAL  
COMMISSION ON EDUCATION.

---

Laid upon the Table by the Colonial Treasurer, and ordered by the House to be  
printed, 11 October, 1867.



*AMENDED and completed Evidence of Mr. A. IRELAND before the Royal Commission of Education.*

---

[NOTE.—Mr. Ireland gave his *viva voce* Evidence before the Commission on 26th June. A reminder was sent to him for his amended evidence on 8th July; and as it was not then received, the copy as taken down by the Secretary was printed off. No meeting of the Commission was held from the 8th July till the 9th August. Mr. Ireland has been informed by letter of the cause of his amended Evidence not having been printed.—H.M.H., late Secretary.]

---

MR. A. IRELAND, in reply to questions from the Chairman, states :—

I have been thirteen years presiding over the School which I now conduct.

I conducted the School from the first as a private speculation. In Scotland I was in communication with Dr. Nicholson, and he intimated that he would be happy to have me out as teacher in connection with his Church; but otherwise it was entirely a private speculation.

I have no connection as a teacher with the Church now; I have not even the School-room.

I have about eighty-five pupils at present; for whose education I have to assist me a second English master, a writing master, a drawing master, and a junior assistant, chiefly for manual work.

The fees I charge vary from one to three guineas per quarter, according to the branches of education taught.

I know nothing of the working of the Public Schools here, except from hearsay.

I know, generally, the classes from which the Public School pupils come. I have had some of them,—I may say a good many, both from town and country schools, principally the former.

Supposing the State to withdraw provision from the elementary schools in town, what, if any, reduction would that enable you to make in your charges, so as to attract such pupils as now attend Public Schools? I am not in a position to say what actual reduction I might be induced to make in my charges. That would depend entirely upon the nature of the education required, the number of children offering from separate families, and the amount of competition going on in education among private teachers. In fact education, like every other commercial speculation, must be governed by the laws of supply and demand. I consider one guinea per quarter as little as any competent teacher should be paid for educating a boy in the ordinary branches of an English education. Where a parent is called upon to pay for the education of several boys, of course such a charge would come heavy, especially if the parent was a man of moderate income. In such case reductions would, of course, be made according to circumstances, and the conditions which I have mentioned above.

Would you be favourable to a system under which certificates of competence would be required from all teachers? I would have no objection.

At present do not competent masters find themselves injured in their profession by its being undertaken by incompetent persons, not merely incompetent in education, but other causes? Undoubtedly they do, and it is very necessary that the State should provide some protection to meet this case. I do not mean protection to the teachers, for I think they might very well trust their interests to the discrimination of the public. By the term "protection" I mean the initiation of some system by which children and parents alike would be protected from the imposition of quacks. Utterly

incompetent men may profess to keep school and may offer to teach children at rates considerably under those charged by the competent teacher, thereby swindling the parents and inflicting the grossest injustice upon the children. I know of only one way to meet this difficulty, and that is the adoption of some system of diplomas or certificates to be issued by a Board of Examiners, and which would distinguish the qualified teacher from the mere charlatan. This plan is adopted in the case of the medical profession, and to some extent in the case of lawyers. I think the necessity is quite as great, where the education of the young is involved. Certificates might be issued in three classes according to the competency of the candidates, and the door should be even open to those holding certificates of the lower class to obtain a first-class certificate when competent.

I have two boarders.

I pursued the profession of teacher before I came to the Colony.

You are aware that at the present time encouragements are given by the State in the shape of Exhibitions to Superior Schools, obtainable by competition from all Schools. Does this system operate favourably, as testing the skill of masters and encouraging pupils? I think it does.

It shows to the world at what Schools an education is given that will stand an independent and impartial examination? To some extent it does.

What age were the boys you had from Public Schools? All ages, 7 to 15.

Was your observation of the attainments of the boys sufficiently minute to lead you to remark either superiority or inferiority on their part as compared with a similar number of boys from miscellaneous Schools? Their general knowledge was good in many instances, but in the details of subjects they are not so well grounded. In some instances they were bad in both respects.

You have had an opportunity of appreciating the value of education, and the sacrifices which will be made to obtain it on the part of parents, in Scotland and in this Colony? I have. The result is, that I find some parents here make great sacrifices, while others are indifferent as compared with those in Scotland, where greater sacrifices are made than here in general.

I know little personally of the lower classes, only from hearsay.

Mr. Ireland hands in the following written statement :—

*By the Chairman.*—You have referred to all civilised States having recognised the obligation of providing elementary education, can you mention one of these which has not at the same time recognised the obligation of aiding education by means of Universities or Schools of an advanced description? I cannot, nor do I know of any civilised State which has attempted to go beyond its absolute parental duties without having first provided the means for the discharge of those duties; *i.e.*, I know of no country which has attempted to provide an elaborate system of superior education without at the same time providing ample means of primary education for its pauper children, with Reformatories and Industrial Schools for the children of its criminal population. Further, I know of no civilised State which has attempted to establish an expensive system of superior education when its finances were in as slender and depressed a condition as those of Tasmania. True, it may be said that some countries maintain such systems in the face of a heavy national debt, but those are countries the resources of which have been developed, which have large populations and immense capital at command. It can hardly be said that Tasmania offers either of these conditions. As a citizen, I think that if her Government provide at present for the education of her pauper children, and at the same time offer reasonable opportunities to her youth to advance themselves to Superior Schools, it will do all that it is in a position to do, or that may reasonably be expected of it. Universities may be talked of when her lands are cultivated and settled by an industrious people, and she begins to present some of the rudimentary conditions of an advanced civilisation in the shape of increased means of transit, and other facilities for the growth of trade and the augmentation of the revenue.

Unless under a system, such as you suggest, of compulsory attendance at some School, do you not apprehend that anything done by the Government will fail to alter the state of things which you represent to exist at present under which a large proportion of children are uneducated? Unless some compulsory effort is adopted any plan would be useless.

*By Dr. Butler.*—You speak of 8000 children at Schools, and only 4000 average attendance, and you calculate that the latter only get education; would it not be the case that all the children who attend receive some education? Of course, some; but their irregular attendance would render this partial.

Would not the average attendance make it appear that only half are instructed? It would. I have taken my data from the Report of the Board of Education. Of course I do not assume to say that the balance of the 8000 children are altogether uneducated, but, from what I have heard, the attendance of the bulk of them is so irregular as almost to nullify any education which they may receive.

*By Dr. Butler.*—If your proposition to compel parents to send their children to School at least three days per week were adopted, would not that only be partial education? Suppose 8000 children attended during three days in each week, would not that reduce the average daily attendance to the same number, namely 4000? Undoubtedly it would; but it would show 8000 *bonâ fide* scholars who had received something like a practical and useful education, although not to the extent of full time. If I am rightly informed, the Returns of the Board of Education fail to show this. In some Schools I am told that the names of children are entered, they may attend once or twice perhaps for a whole month, and then nothing is seen of them, perhaps, for two or three months. This is a useless system of partial education; and I believe a system which would secure the attendance of scholars only one day in each consecutive week would be better. To be of any practical value education must be imparted regularly,—a child will gain very little advantage by attending School merely by fits and starts.

In supervising the lower class in your School, how many children can be taught by a master? I will say, after consideration, how many my Second Master can arrange his work for, so that he can alone instruct them in the simple elementary branches of education.

I have re-considered this question, and I think my Second Master could easily instruct from sixty to eighty boys daily in reading, writing, and arithmetic, that is if he was master of a Public School, and was confined simply to those branches. He would probably divide the total number into two or three classes.

Do you think the amount of instruction in primary Schools should be inferior to that in the programme which I hand you? I do not think the programme should be inferior.

What amount of income should a master expect to derive from his occupation? From £100 to £150 should be sufficient, over and above the rent of building. I mean this for a master teaching from sixty to eighty boys, as described in the answer given above.

Is it the fact that in Scotland children of various classes and sexes are educated together at general Schools? If so, did those of higher ranks receive a better education than the others? It was the fact that children of various classes and sexes were educated together at general Schools in Scotland, and in some Schools boys and girls were even taught in the same class. I believe, however, that an alteration has been made in this system, although I am not prepared to say what it is. In reference to teaching, I have heard of pampered and weak-minded masters who have bestowed an unfair amount of attention upon the children of aristocratic parents, to the detriment of others in their Schools; but as a rule I believe Scotch teachers to be honest and impartial.

Can you recal to memory any general inconvenience to arise from mingling the sexes? In Scotland I have. In Schools I was acquainted with the females were in different parts of the School, but still there were inconveniences.