

EXTRACT FROM EIGHTH REPORT OF THE BOARD OF EDUCATION OF VICTORIA.

MEMORANDUM ON THE STATE OF EDUCATION IN THE PRINCIPAL COUNTRIES OF EUROPE AND AMERICA IN REFERENCE TO QUESTIONS OF COMPULSORY EDUCATION, PAYMENT OF SCHOOL FEES, AND THE RELIGIOUS DIFFICULTY.

THE following Memorandum consists of three parts. The first gives a short account of the state of public education in the principal countries of Europe and America in reference to the questions of compulsory attendance, payment of school fees, and the treatment of the religious difficulty.

The second part shows, as far as the information at our command allows, the present state of public opinion in England on these questions, and contains an account of the various schemes by which it is proposed to enlarge the educational provision there, and spread elementary instruction more widely among the lower classes.

In the third portion it has been our endeavour to draw a few principles from the systems of other countries, and to apply them to the circumstances of this Colony.

PART I. COMPULSORY EDUCATION.

STATE OF EDUCATION IN THE CHIEF COUNTRIES OF EUROPE AND AMERICA.

GREAT BRITAIN.

England.

Education is at present compulsory only on a small class in England, namely, those children who are forced to earn their living in factories and mines, and in a few other cases, which are specified below.

1. Compulsory attendance is required under the Factory, Factory Extension and Workshop Regulation Acts, of nearly all children at work under thirteen years of age, with the exception of children of the agricultural classes.

2. The attendance at school of the children of indoor paupers is compulsory, and is provided for out of the poor-rate. There is a permissive Act (Denison's Act, passed 17th July, 1862) empowering Boards of Guardians to pay out of the rates for the children of outdoor paupers; but this is not often carried into effect.

3. By the Industrial Schools Act the police *may* send vagrant children to Industrial Schools, education to be paid for from the borough rates when the parent cannot pay.*

The number of children receiving education under these Acts is estimated at about 68,000.†

Scotland.

In Scotland, provision is made for primary education—1. By parochial schools established by the landowners, or in their default, the Presbytery; and 2. By supplementary denominational schools, supported partly by voluntary efforts, and partly by grants from the Privy Council. The latter class alone supply the educational requirements of the boroughs and towns. The establishment of the parochial schools with paid teachers and low school fees has brought education within reach of almost the whole population; and the custom of regularly sending children to school has long been universal, alike with the poorest as with the well-to-do, so that the question of compulsion has not arisen in recent times. The Factory Acts which have been already mentioned apply, however, to Scotland, and make the attendance at school of children earning wages compulsory.

* *Educational Record*, No. 86, p. 41, and National Education Union Report, p. 11; Progress of the Working Class p. 28; Statutes at large, vol. xl. p. 574, &c.: 18 and 19 Vict. c. 34, as to outdoor paupers; 7 and 8 Vict. c. 15, as to cotton and woollen manufactories; 8 and 9 Vict. c. 29, and 10 and 11 Vict. c. 70, as to print works; 23 and 24 Vict. c. 78, as to bleaching and dyeing; 24 and 25 Vict. c. 117, as to lace workers; 26 and 27 Vict. c. 38, and 27 and 28 Vict. c. 98 and c. 48, as to other trades; 23 and 24 Vict. c. 151, as to mines.

† Transactions of the Association for the Promotion of Social Science.