

establishment, with some assistance from the public revenue, of one or more central schools for education in its higher branches, not intended to supersede existing schools, but to be so conducted and arranged as to interfere as little as possible with the operation and development of other schools, while their range should begin from a higher point.

My attention was very forcibly attracted to this subject during the time I was visitor of Nelson College, an establishment founded under a deed of settlement and an Act of the General Assembly by means of funds appropriated to the Province of Nelson by the Imperial Parliament for the purpose of procuring for the inhabitants of the Province the advantages of a "superior education." Nelson College now possesses a fine building, in a commanding and excellent situation. It has a considerable endowment, and the special advantages which the inhabitants of Nelson (and Marlborough) derive from it, are exhibitions of £15 a-year each for pupils whose parents or guardians are inhabitants of those Provinces, residing more than four miles from the College, besides certain foundation scholarships and certain others founded by private persons.

Without going specifically into details, I may say that I believe a moderate expenditure of public revenue, with a statutory revision of the mode of government of that establishment—especially giving the scholastic head a higher and more influential and a permanent position, and providing more amply for the masters—might convert it into a most useful and convenient higher school for the Colony generally. My confidence in my own judgment on this subject has been a good deal shaken by what I have heard and read of the opinion of the present Rector of the High School of Dunedin, whose experience, is no doubt, entitled to far more weight than my speculation.

If such a scheme as I suggest would really interfere with or tend to injure such establishments as that over which he so ably presides, it might deserve condemnation; but I see no reason why any such consequence should probably result from it. The large population of Dunedin and of the Province of Otago make it possible to keep up a High School there to a point in respect of numbers and advancement which but very few parts of the Colony can at present approach; and there are very few schools in the Colony—at least centrally situated—which afford facilities for the great body of the scattered population of the middle classes in less populous places to give their children a superior education; and I do not believe that such establishments can, for a long time, be made entirely self-supporting. Now Nelson College, in respect of centrality of position and salubrity of climate, the possession of a singularly appropriate site of excellent buildings which could be easily and cheaply enlarged, besides a considerable invested capital, could, I think, be converted without great expenditure—chiefly by a change of constitution—into a first class school peculiarly useful to the inhabitants of those parts of the Colony which have no immediate prospect of such an establishment in their own immediate vicinity, while the full benefits derived from the existing interest of the Provinces of Nelson and Marlborough, with superadded advantages, will easily be secured to them.

I have no doubt that such an establishment would prove a great boon to the Colony; and I think its constitution and regulations might easily be so modelled as to render it in no ways hostile to the interests of any other school in the Colony. Although I think the ordinary instruction given at such a school ought not to begin so low as may be necessary at the local High Schools, I do not think it desirable that it should be so conducted that boys would ordinarily be transferred from other High Schools; and I would not suggest that this school should have any preference in respect of (Colonial) scholarships or exhibitions over the other certified schools, the exhibitions being in all cases applicable to the schools where pupils had gained them. In my opinion—*valeret quantum*,—such a school would not necessarily interfere with others more than it is for the common good that it should do, that is to say, when it supplied defects which might exist in other establishments.

In a word, I have long thought that a good High School, centrally situated, which must necessarily have external aid, would be a great boon to the Colony at large; and that the circumstances of Nelson College are such that it might, with the consent of those most immediately interested (whose rights might be carefully protected) and the aid of the Legislature in reforming its constitution and granting a further endowment, be turned into an establishment most largely beneficial and honorable to the Colony.

Of course, my views in this respect would be all but visionary, if the people of Nelson and their representatives were opposed to the change as a supposed invasion of vested interests; but I cannot believe that they would refuse their assent to a scheme which would be so advantageous to them, merely on the ground that the direction of the establishment would cease, as it necessarily must, to be purely local, and the scholastic head of it would have (as he ought to have) greater power and responsibility, and a more independent and permanent position than at present.

I ought to add, that I have made these suggestions with respect to Nelson College, without endeavouring to ascertain the opinions of the Governors or the Masters or the inhabitants of the Provinces on the subject.

The suggestion is attributable entirely to my own personal observation and the reflections on the subject which for some time past have forced themselves upon my mind.

Wellington, 15th August, 1867.

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