

**EVIDENCE**  
**BEFORE THE UNIVERSITY COMMISSION.**

BY

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#### PRELIMINARY REMARKS.

I am a graduate of the Calcutta University and an Assistant Inspector of Schools of more than twelve years' standing. I have been directly connected with the University as one of its Fellows for about seven years. As an inspecting officer I have had occasion to visit some of the colleges, most of the High English Schools and many of the Middle and Primary Schools in thirty districts of Bengal, Behar and Orissa. I propose to speak mainly about the state of High English Schools, of which I have seen a good deal. My views on some points connected with these institutions are likely to differ from the views of those whose observations are confined to particular localities and particular institutions. I am afraid I shall have to say some unpleasant things. The importance of the subject, however, is my excuse. My object is not to cry down our educational institutions, which have been doing good to the people of this country, but to point out defects which, in my opinion, very much mar their usefulness, and should be remedied.

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#### INCREASE OF HIGH ENGLISH SCHOOLS.

The number of High English Schools has considerably increased of late. Where a few years ago there was not even a single school of this class, there have

sprung up many in the course of a few years. In some places the number is much larger than necessary to meet real requirements. These schools owe their origin to four causes. When the standard of proficiency in general attainments required for admission into the Medical and Survey schools and for candidates for the Mukhtearship Examination was raised a large number of Middle Schools were converted into High English Schools. A few institutions of this class were established to meet a real demand for high education. Some were started as mere money-making concerns and others founded to satisfy individual vanity or party feelings. Some people of moderate means and education, when they fail in other walks of life, think of trading in schools and scholars. Again, when a Mr. Ghosh establishes a school, a Mr. Bose of the same town or village or of the neighbouring village, thinks it necessary for maintaining his prestige to open a rival school of the kind. Sometimes party factions are formed and what one party do the other party try to undo. Thus there have sprung up a number of schools the unhealthy rivalry among which far from furthering the cause of sound education greatly retards it. A considerable portion of the time of the Inspector of Schools is now taken up with deciding unpleasant cases connected with these rival schools. The unseemly struggle among these schools to secure boys, has made the students masters of the situation. There has been in consequence a perceptible deterioration both in efficiency and discipline of our schools, as I shall show later on.

The University, I regret to have to say, is to blame,

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to some extent, for calling into existence schools of the kind mentioned above. If the University refused to grant them the privilege of sending up candidates to its examinations they would have died before long a natural death. In this matter the University used to be guided entirely by the reports made by officers of the Education Department. But of late the attitude of the University seems to have been to ignore local advice. I am aware of cases in which in spite of strong adverse opinions expressed by the Departmental officers the University authorities thought it fit to recognise schools.

As an instance I may refer to the case of a school in the district of Dacca. While I was acting as Inspector of Schools, Dacca Division, the Registrar of the Calcutta University forwarded to me an application from the managers of a newly established High English School at Chitrakote, a village in the district of Dacca. On enquiry I found there was a recognised school close by and there was absolutely no room for two schools in such a place. I, therefore, did not see my way to recommend the school for recognition. Had the University refused to recognise it, as advised, there would have been a natural dissolution of one and the survival of the fittest. The promoters of the school, however, began to agitate. They seem to have induced the editors of some newspapers to take up their cause and also to have succeeded in enlisting the sympathy of some of the members of the Syndicate. There is a small stream, called in the local dialect a *khal*, between the two schools. It has little or no water during the greater part of the year and can be easily crossed even

to the last Entrance Examination some of the boys of the first class who failed to pass the test examination. The guardians of the boys, however, influenced the managers of the school, and the Head-master was obliged to send up all the boys without a single exception. The same Head-master found himself in greater troubles when he refused to promote some of the boys who had failed to secure sufficient marks at the annual examination. They formed, perhaps with the connivance of their guardians, a combination against the Head-master and so upset the order of the school that it had to be closed for some time. Anonymous petitions containing various allegations against the Head-master were submitted, he was threatened with bodily injury and some of the boys who had been promoted were prevailed upon to leave the school. The authorities of the school then sought Departmental interference and I paid a visit to it. The threat of rustivating the ringleaders produced the desired effect and order was restored. Although I was of opinion that it was necessary to punish some of the ringleaders so that it might deter others from creating such a row in future, they had to be pardoned at the intercession of the school authorities. This, I am afraid, is not an isolated case.

As sending up of unfit and unprepared candidates tends to lower the standard of examination it is desirable that greater strictness should be insisted upon in the selection of candidates for the University Examination and in promotion of boys from one class to another specially in the higher forms. The Inspector of Schools

has taken into his hands the selection of candidates for the University Examination from the Government schools. I would have the selection of candidates from all schools made by the Inspector of schools, who might be required to certify as to their fitness for going up to the University Examination.

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### **NUMERICAL STRENGTH OF THE CLASSES.**

In some schools the classes are too large to be properly taught and controlled by a teacher. Individual attention, which is essentially necessary, is out of the question. The boys have to be left much to themselves. In aided schools, as a rule, we insist upon the division of a class into sections when the number of boys exceeds fifty. But even fifty is too large a number to be well taught and looked after by a teacher. When he begins to hear the lesson from the top of the class he can scarcely reach the bottom. Forty, I think, is a fair number for a class. Where this number is exceeded the efficiency of teaching is affected. I think it desirable to have a rule that no class or section of a class should contain more than forty boys.

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### **TEACHING STAFF.**

The teaching staff in many schools is far from sufficient. The pay is too low to attract qualified men or to induce them to stick long to the posts when they accept them. They have to work without interruption

are our students better grounded in Geometry, Geography and other subjects, which are taught very unintelligently. The defect in teaching seems to be chiefly due to five causes, viz. (1) Want of qualified and dutiful teachers; (2) Large classes making individual attention impossible; (3) Absence of love of learning for its own sake; (4) Multiplicity of subjects and text-books; and (5) Examination questions encouraging cram.

I have already told you that most of the teachers are not well grounded in the art of teaching and many of them have not their heart in the work, and some of the classes are so large that it is not possible for teachers to attend to every student. Unless the appointment of trained teachers and payment of sufficient salaries to them are insisted upon, and the classes are composed of a limited number of boys, the quality of teaching is not likely to improve. As for love of learning for its own sake, much can scarcely be expected in these days of keen competition when the bread-and-butter problem absorbs all attention. But I have no doubt that if the subjects included in the curriculum of our schools be intelligently taught and studied, boys will learn much more of them than they do now. At present the one object of both the teachers and the pupils being any how to pass the examination as easily and as soon as possible, only that which is likely to be useful for that purpose is taught and learnt. Thus cramming takes the place of intelligent study and the memory is cultivated to the neglect of reason and judgment. Names, dates, allusions and linguistic peculiarities are much more attended to than acquirement of real knowledge



and development of intellect and understanding. Keys, annotations, guides and catechisms are more read than the prescribed text-books. If the use of these be discouraged, if the different subjects be so taught as to prove interesting and instructive, if observation and reasoning be insisted upon, and, in short, if the teachers satisfy themselves that the students thoroughly understand and assimilate what is taught, a love of learning is likely to be created even if the passing of examination and earning of bread be the principal object.

Multiplicity of subjects and text-books also stands in the way of acquirement of a thorough knowledge. So many subjects have to be learnt and so many text-books have to be read that in some cases there is no alternative but to cram. Moreover, the examination questions are generally so framed as to encourage cram. It is most desirable that the course of studies should be simplified and such interesting and instructive text-books should be prescribed as may create in our students a taste for learning and contribute to the formation of a good character. The questions set at the examinations should be such as may be answered only from a thorough knowledge of the subject and not by mere cram. Original composition in the form of essays and letters, translation from their vernacular into English and second language and paraphrase of unseen passages should be required of the candidates and sufficient marks should be assigned to such questions.

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### **HOUSE ACCOMMODATION.**

Many of the schools under private management are badly housed. Few of them have a decent habitation of their own. The school-houses do not seem to have been built on sanitary principles, there being little provision for sufficient light and air. The ceiling being low and the roof made of corrugated iron, the heat is almost unbearable during a part of the year. The class rooms are not sufficiently large and boys are so overcrowded as to affect their health.

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### **MANAGEMENT OF SCHOOLS.**

The managing committees of schools are generally composed of men who have no experience of school management and little knowledge of the requirements of educational institutions. Every body is at liberty to start a school. Generally the managers of private schools seem to be always anxious to run their schools on cheap lines and they do not care to have them well officered and well equipped.

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### **PRIVATE COLLEGES.**

From what I have seen of some of the private colleges I may say that some of my remarks on the management, staff and accommodation of schools are not altogether inapplicable to them. I do not think their staff is as strong and their laboratories as well equipped as desirable. As for libraries, they are very

poor apologies for what they ought to be. The University should insist upon annual examinations being held in the first and third-year classes and those who fail to secure sufficient marks should not be promoted to the second and fourth-year classes. Candidates for the F. A. and B. A. Examinations should prove their fitness to go up to those examinations by passing a test examination.

It is very desirable that there should be definite and stringent rules for the recognition of schools and affiliation of colleges. When an application is made it should be well ascertained whether there is a real demand for the institution for which affiliation or recognition is sought, whether its promoters, by their education and means, are in a position to conduct it on lines on which it ought to be conducted. Everybody should not be permitted to undertake such an important and responsible task. No school should be recognised and no college affiliated unless and until the sources of its income are such as to ensure its stability and its staff is both sufficient and qualified to teach the subjects and standards prescribed, and unless it is well housed, well furnished and well equipped. Besides, there should be a sufficient guarantee of its being always conducted on an efficient footing. The affiliated institutions should be periodically inspected by the University and those that are found to have deteriorated in efficiency or discipline should be disaffiliated. Weeding out inefficient schools and colleges from time to time is likely to produce a salutary effect.

It is desirable that every University should have a

distinct sphere of its own. It should not recognise or affiliate institutions which it cannot properly control.

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### AGE-LIMIT.

I am in favour of fixing a limit of age for candidates for the Entrance Examination. In my opinion it is not desirable to allow a boy to go up to the Entrance Examination before he is fifteen, if not sixteen. I have found even very smart boys who stand high in their class examinations, have to depend much more upon their memory than on understanding. Unless there is a sufficient development of intellect it is not possible to understand thoroughly subjects like Geometry and Science. Besides, the effect of rushing up a boy in his studies is disastrous to his health. The other day I had a talk with the Head-master of a very largely attended school in my division. He mentioned to me three instances of boys having passed the Entrance Examination from his school at the early age of thirteen or fourteen. These boys acquitted themselves creditably at the University Examinations and gained scholarships. But the ultimate result has been disastrous in all the cases. One of the boys died shortly after he left the University, one is in a lunatic asylum and the other, though a member of the Bar, is in a miserable state of health. Last year while out on tour at Sassaram I happened to put up in the same Bungalow with a high official of the Opium Department. He told me that one of his sons had passed the Entrance Examination

at the age of fourteen. But the mental strain so told upon the health of the boy that when he was preparing himself for the F. A. Examination, the family doctor saw no alternative but to advise that the text-books should be burnt. There might be some exceptional cases to the contrary. But I have no doubt that in most cases their health is seriously affected when boys have to prepare themselves for the University examinations at an early age. I have been so thoroughly convinced of this that I have withdrawn two of my sons from the Calcutta Madrasah although they were doing well in their classes, so that they may not go up to the Entrance Examination before they are sixteen. The interests of our students require that an age-limit should be insisted upon.

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### RESIDENTIAL SYSTEM.

Nothing exercises a healthier influence upon the life and character of the students than lodging in a boarding-house in charge of a qualified superintendent and leading a common life. Now-a-days the advantages of boarding-schools are not properly appreciated in this country. In ancient times, however, this was perhaps the prevailing system of education in India. The Hindu *Tols*, the Buddhist *Viharas* and the Muhammadan *Khanquahs* were all boarding-schools. In those oriental seminaries the pupils always resided with their preceptors, undivided attention was paid to studies, and moral and religious lessons were taught more by

personal examples of the teachers than by precepts. The result of such a system of education is well known to every student of Indian history. While it was in vogue India produced almost all those great scholars who have left behind them imperishable monuments in the domains of Literature and Philosophy. The dearth of original thinkers and writers in India at the present time is not improbably due in part to the present system of education. The distinguished Arabic scholars of the time are not turned out by the public Madrasahs. Those who sit at the feet of reputed Arabic scholars at Lucknow, Cawnpur and Rampur perhaps learn much more than those who attend our Madrasahs. The well known Sanskrit scholars are not perhaps trained in the Sanskrit College, but in the *Tols* of Nadia. I had occasion to visit some of these institutions and also some of the Burmese *Kyongs*, in which the pupils reside with their preceptors. The whole atmosphere of these institutions appeared to me totally different from that of our ordinary schools. Both the teachers and the taught are happy, cheerful, contented and devoted to their respective duties.

It is most desirable that the residential system should be introduced into this country and students attending our schools and colleges should, as far as possible, live in hostels attached to these institutions. No student should be allowed to live in any questionable quarter. An intelligent boy is sure to catch the contagion from his surroundings. Our students should live in such places that they may not imbibe those vicious habits and immoral and irreligious

tendencies that vitiate the character of some young men. They must be kept apart from surroundings that are not calculated to contribute to the formation of good character or proper development of intellect. It would be of much advantage even to those who have guardians to look after them if they could also live in the school and college boarding. Separation of boys from their parents is necessary for undivided attention being paid to studies, games &c. In ancient India this was insisted upon. In England although parents take much more care for the education of their children, boys are generally sent to boarding-schools. I would have as many of the teachers and professors as possible live with the students in the school and college boarding. The growing want of touch between the teachers and the taught is very much to be regretted. They meet only during the school-hours and the teachers do not exercise the least influence over the character of the pupils. It is most desirable that the teachers and the taught should come frequently into contact and know one another very thoroughly, because the living example of a good teacher does much more to improve the moral tone of students than anything else.

The success of a boarding-house chiefly depends upon its proper management. An ill-managed institution of this kind is a hot-bed of evils. My experience of the boarding-houses attached to some of our educational institutions, is far from pleasant. Their superintendents do not seem to realise the true significance of Bacon's dictum that "cleanliness is next to godliness."

The rooms are not kept clean, the furniture not well arranged, beds, books, and other things not put in order and hardly any care is taken to ensure regularity in meals, study and sleep. Some special training is necessary for officers to be placed in charge of boarding-houses. Men of good character and regular habits, capable of maintaining discipline and commanding respect, alive to their responsibility and devoted to their duties, should be placed in charge of these important institutions.

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### THE SENATE.

There seems to be no fixed principle on which Fellows are appointed by Government. Some of them seem to have been appointed merely by way of compliment. They do not possess academic attainments which should be a requisite qualification for a Fellow. I think it is necessary that Fellows should be graduates of some University, Indian or European. Exception may be made only in case of ex-officio Fellows, whose number must be limited. It is desirable that Fellows should be educated men, able and willing to work for the good of the University. The best way for the University to recognise oriental scholarship is to confer honorary degrees and not to bestow complimentary Fellowships.

The manner in which Fellows are elected by our graduates is very far from satisfactory. The canvassing and wire-pulling that take place on the occasion of



such election are open to serious objection. Those who can canvass well seem to have the best chance of success. Some of our best men fail to enter the University through the door of election. I believe many of the Fellows elected by the graduates come from a profession which seems to afford special facilities for canvassing. Under the existing system of election neither a Muhammadan nor an Anglo-Indian seems to have much chance of success.

As Fellows are appointed by Government and elected by the graduates in the unsatisfactory manner described above, it is no wonder that some of them do not care to take any interest in the affairs of the University. I regularly attended the meetings of the Senate for five years but I failed to find present in any of them some of the Fellows whom I have known merely by name. There are others who are seen in the University Hall only once a year on the occasion of the Convocation. Again there are some who come to meetings simply to record their votes when matters in which they take personal interest have to be decided.

Such being the state of the Senate, it requires to be remodelled and reconstituted. The number of Fellows, in my opinion, should not be either less than 100 or more than 150. Two courses suggest themselves to me by which the reconstitution of the Senate may be effected. One is not to fill up vacancies caused by death or retirement of Fellows till the number comes down to the required figure. The other course is for the Fellows to tender their resignation to the Chancellor. I would prefer the latter course to mend matters

at once. Delicacy is likely to be felt in making it known that some of the existing Fellows have ceased to be what they are. It is desirable, therefore, that we should in a body tender our resignation to His Excellency the Chancellor so that he may have unfettered discretion in the appointment of Fellows and reconstitution of the Senate. I see no objection to a limited number of Fellows being elected by the Fellows themselves and by other graduates of the University, provided effectual steps are taken against the unpleasant canvassing and wire-pulling that characterised the election of Fellows in the past. I am in favour of life Fellowship. If it is to be terminable, every Fellow should hold office for at least ten years. If a Fellow were to retire earlier, he would be going out just at the time when he is likely to be most useful to the University. For the first few years a Fellow, for want of knowledge and experience, is not able to take an intelligent part in its proceedings. The longer he is a Fellow the more useful he is. A Fellow should, however, forfeit his Fellowship if he fails to attend, without reasonable excuse, the meetings of the Senate for a certain period, say for two consecutive years.

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### THE FACULTIES.

The different Faculties should be composed of such men as would be in a position by their attainments and experience to take an intelligent part in their deliberations. If Fellowships be not indiscriminately bestowed,

all the Fellows would be qualified men. In that case I would assign each Fellow to one or more Faculties on which he might be qualified to sit.

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### THE SYNDICATE.

As in the case of election of Fellows, there is in the election of Syndics also a good deal of canvassing unbecoming such educated men as the Fellows of the University. The existing number of Syndics seems to be adequate. Instead of being elected every year, I would have Syndics in office for two or three years, but I would not have the same men re-elected several times so that all those Fellows who are able and willing to serve on the Syndicate may have an opportunity of doing so. I would like to see men engaged in practical work of education well represented on the Syndicate. It would be deplorable if educational experts were to be outvoted by amateur educationists.

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### THE BOARDS OF STUDIES.

As a member of the Boards of Studies in Arabic and Persian and in History and Geography I am in a position to speak of only these Boards. The indiscriminate manner in which these Boards seem to have been constituted cannot but reflect discredit upon the learned Fellows of the University. Some of the members of these Boards, I regret to have to say, are not quite

competent to judge of the merits of books referred to them. Some time ago a gentleman who did not know even the alphabet of the Arabic and Persian languages was elected, if I remember aright, a member of the Arabic and Persian Board simply because he happened at the time to be the Principal of an Oriental college. On the History Board also there are not many members who have, as far as I know, reputation for a special knowledge of the subjects on which they are required to give their opinions. Some of the members, it is believed, either for want of time on account of professional engagements or for want of interest in the subjects, do not carefully go through the books referred to them. The result is that text-books on History and Geography seem to have sometimes been selected as a matter of patronage and interest and not of merit and fairness, and there has been in consequence more frequent change of these books than desirable. This is a very regrettable state of things and the sooner it is put a stop to the better.

At present the only qualification for being elected a member of a Board of Study is to be a Fellow of the University. Every Board, in my opinion, should consist of specialists in the particular subject or subjects for the consideration of which it is constituted. It is not desirable to put on these Boards those who write such text-books as are considered by them or those who are connected with their printing or sale. Men of established reputation and studious habits, who would carefully read the books referred to them, should be elected members of the different Boards of Studies. At present the Syn-

dicate has a nominal voice in the selection of text-books. The recommendations of the different Boards are almost invariably approved. It is desirable that the Boards of Studies, like the recently formed Text-Book Committees, should be advisory bodies, and the final decision in the matter of selection of text-books should rest with the Syndicate.

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