

THURSDAY, JUNE 7, 1888.

TECHNICAL EDUCATION.

WE are glad to see that the Government Bill for the Promotion of Technical Instruction (which we print elsewhere) is down for second reading as first order of the day on June 14. The objects effected by this Bill are substantially the same as those of the Government Bill of last year, and of that already introduced by Sir Henry Roscoe and other friends of education, this year, on behalf of the National Association for the Promotion of Technical Education. That is to say, it is an enabling Bill, giving powers to localities, if they think fit, to apply local rates to the purpose of promoting technical instruction.

In Clause 6, "technical instruction" is defined to mean "instruction in the principles of science and art applicable to industries, and in the application of special branches of science and art to specific industries or employments." It does not include teaching the practice of any trade, or industry, or employment; but, subject to this reservation, it includes "instruction in the branches of science and art with respect to which grants are for the time being made by the Department of Science and Art, and any other form of instruction which may for the time being be sanctioned by that Department by a minute laid before Parliament, and made on the representation of a School Board or local authority that such a form of instruction is required by the circumstances of its district." This definition appears good, so far as it goes, but in our opinion it does not go far enough, for it does not specifically include, as Sir Henry Roscoe's Bill does, the commercial subjects and modern languages. This, however, may easily be amended by a slight alteration of the wording of Clause 6, which should read: "Technical instruction means instruction in subjects applicable to industry and commerce, and in the application of special branches of science and art to specific industries and employment." It is, however, to be noticed that Clause 5 suggests the possibility of Imperial grants in aid of instruction in technical subjects in the words, "Every minute of the Department of Science and Art with respect to the condition on which grants may be made for technical instruction shall be laid on the table of both Houses of Parliament." What the precise nature and amount of such grants may be is not stated, and we shall await with interest the explanation of the Government on this essential point.

In any case, however, it will be necessary that such grants should be accompanied by inspection under Imperial authority, but this does not necessarily form part of the Bill, which, after all, is one simply for giving rating power, and only contains one compulsory clause, viz. that in which School Boards availing themselves of the provisions are required to grant similar powers to voluntary schools in their districts claiming such powers, up, be it always understood, to the limit of one penny in the pound.

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There are many points of difference between this Government Bill and that of last year. In the first place, the clause giving powers, granted by the last Bill, to fifty ratepayers to demand a poll is very wisely omitted from this Bill. In the second place, under the Bill of last year the powers of promoting technical instruction could only be exercised by School Boards or by Town Councils where School Boards do not exist. No provision was made for districts in which neither exist. Under the present Bill, where a School Board does not exist, the powers may be exercised by any local authority which can carry out the Public Libraries Acts, and this gives, of course, a much wider sphere of action than the former Bill. But, more than this, the present Bill gives power to Town Councils and other local authorities to grant aid from the rates (even where a School Board exists) to supply higher technical instruction, whereas under the former Bill technical instruction both of an elementary and of a higher character was in the hands of one authority, viz. that of the School Board. Another new point is that the annual rate in aid for technical instruction is limited to one penny in the pound in the case of that levied by the School Board, and at twopence in the pound where the powers given under the Public Libraries Acts are exercised concurrently. In the Bill introduced on behalf of the National Association no such limit is named. Possibly, in view of Parliamentary objections, some limitation is advisable, although very serious objections may be raised to this proposal. Admission to technical schools and classes, may, under Sir Henry Roscoe's Bill, be granted to all comers who pay the required fees; powers being, however, given to Boards and local authorities to institute an entrance examination in reading, writing, and arithmetic, should they think fit. The Government adhere to their former proposal to restrict all attendance in these schools and classes (with the exception of those in which manual instruction alone is given) to such pupils as shall have passed an examination equivalent to that of the Sixth Standard. The exception made this year in favour of manual instruction is a step in the right direction. We should have preferred perfect freedom of admission in the Technical, as is now the case in the Science and Art Classes of the Department, or at least to leave it to the locality to determine whether any such entrance examination is advisable or not.

No powers are granted in the Government Bill respecting payment of fees to deserving students or for the establishment of scholarships, as in Sir H. Roscoe's Bill. These seem to be minor defects, which can be easily remedied. A more important point, and one concerning which not only much discussion in the House of Commons may be expected, but upon which the success or failure of the Bill will probably depend, is the much-vexed question of whether, and, if so, under what conditions, any aid from local rates can be given for the special purposes of technical instruction to public elementary schools not under control of a School Board, *i.e.* to voluntary or denominational schools. Here the difference of opinion between the two great political parties is very marked. One party will not on any consideration sanction payment from the rates

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unless the spending of this is placed under the definite control of the ratepayers; the other will not permit the Board schools to reap a distinct advantage which is withheld from those carried on by voluntary enterprise. The Bill of the Association summarily cuts the Gordian knot by specifically excluding voluntary schools from participation in income derived from the rates; naturally, therefore, denying to any higher institution of a distinctly denominational type similar assistance. Sir Hart Dyke's Bill, on the other hand, having in its first clause declared that "Any School Board in England may from time to time supply or aid the supply of such manual or technical instruction, or both, as may be required for supplementing the instruction given in any public elementary school in its district, whether under its own management or not," goes still further in its second clause, and makes distinct provision as to the equality of treatment between Board schools and voluntary schools such that, if the Board aids its own schools, "it shall, on the request of the managers of any other public elementary school in its district fulfilling like conditions as to the supply of manual or technical instruction in that school, aid the supply of such instruction in that school in like manner as it aids such supply in the school or schools under its own management, subject to such terms as may be agreed on or determined in pursuance of this Act." Moreover, if the managers object to these terms, the Department of Science and Art shall act as umpire. The support or opposition to this Bill by those who object to payment from the rates without representation, and therefore the probable success or defeat of the measure, will, we venture to think, much depend upon the exact meaning which the Government attaches to these "terms of agreement." If the expression may be taken to mean that the School Board shall have some direct representation by its members on the governing body of the voluntary schools to whom that Board makes grants, *quâ* the technical instruction given in such schools, some of the opposition may possibly be removed. But this should be distinctly expressed; indeed, it would be better to make such an arrangement imperative. If this meaning is not to be attached to these words, we fear that the Bill will lose the support of very many ardent educationalists in the House.

Another provision which we do not find in the Government measure is the one contained in the third clause of the Association Bill, and also in the fourth clause of the Government Bill of last year, in which School Boards may join together to contribute towards the promotion of technical instruction, power being already possessed for this purpose by local authorities under the Public Libraries Acts. This power, in the case of small or sparsely-populated districts, is especially important, with a view to the foundation of higher elementary technical schools, which from their nature do not need to be very numerous, and which the School Boards of many of the single areas of the kind included in the Bill would be quite unable to create or maintain.

The above by no means exhausts the points which may be brought up for discussion on this Bill. It will, however, serve to show the general scope of the Bill, which, unless greatly modified, cannot, we fear, be considered a satisfactory one.

OLD BABYLONIAN AND CHINESE CHARACTERS.

The Old Babylonian Characters and their Chinese Derivatives. By Terrien de Lacouperie. (London: Nutt, and Trübner and Co., 1888.)

PROF. TERRIEN DE LACOUPERIE has long been known as the advocate of a theory which would bring the ancestors of the Chinese from Western Asia, and see in the characters they employed derivatives from the cuneiform symbols once in use in Babylonia. The proofs of his theory have been gradually placed before the learned world. In two articles published in the *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society* he has endeavoured to trace the history of the Yh-King, the oldest and most mysterious of Chinese books, and to show that its earliest portions contain lists of characters and their meanings, ancient poems and similar fragments of antiquity, misunderstood and misinterpreted by successive generations of commentators. Elsewhere he has given us for the first time a rational account of the vicissitudes undergone by the Chinese system of writing, based upon the statements of the Chinese writers themselves. Lately he has communicated to the Philological Society an interesting and exhaustive description of the languages spoken in China before the arrival of the "Bak" tribes or Chinese proper, as well as of the modern dialects which are descended from them. Now we have the last instalment of his proofs in the shape of a comparison between the primitive forms of the Chinese characters and the pictorial forms out of which the cuneiform script subsequently developed. Prof. de Lacouperie claims to have proved in a typical number of instances that the correspondence is exact, or fairly so, as regards form, signification, and phonetic value; and that consequently an early connection between Chinese and Babylonian must be assumed. Since the Babylonian forms can be shown to presuppose those of China, we must bring the Chinese from the West, and not conversely the Babylonians from the East.

I am not a Sinologist, and therefore can pronounce no opinion on the Sinological side of the argument. Chinese scholars must determine how far Prof. de Lacouperie's restoration of the primitive forms and values of the Chinese signs is correct. Assuming it to be so, the resemblance between many of them and the corresponding characters of Accadian Chaldæa is certainly surprising.

On the Babylonian side, Prof. de Lacouperie has been at great pains to secure accuracy, and has left but little to criticize. *Zik*, however, it may be observed, is not a value of the Babylonian ideograph of "ship," but goes back to an erroneous conjecture of Dr. Hincks; and the original meaning of the character which has the value of *pa* was "the leaf" or "leafy branch" of a tree.

The Babylonians seem never to have forgotten that the cuneiform characters they used had originated in pictures. Indeed, their scribes long claimed the privilege of adding to them, the result being that hieroglyphic forms took their place in the texts by the side of forms that had long degenerated into a cuneatic shape. The original hieroglyphics had been the invention of the so-called Accadians, the early population of Chaldæa, who spoke agglutinative dialects, and were eventually superseded by the Semites-