

1877.

NEW ZEALAND.

BOYS' AND GIRLS' HIGH SCHOOLS, DUNEDIN.

(REPORT OF COMMISSION OF INQUIRY.)

Presented to both Houses of the General Assembly by Command of His Excellency.

TO HIS EXCELLENCY THE MOST HONORABLE THE MARQUIS OF NORMANBY, GOVERNOR
OF NEW ZEALAND.

MY LORD,—

In pursuance of the Royal Commission issued by Your Excellency on the twentieth of September of the present year, appointing us to be Commissioners to examine and inquire into various matters and things therein specified relating to the Boys' and Girls' High Schools established in Dunedin, we have the honor to submit the following Report:—

We are enjoined by the terms of the above-mentioned Royal Commission to inquire into—

- (a.) The circumstances and causes which led to William Norrie, the late Rector of the said Boys' High School, resigning his said office as Rector.
- (b.) The condition and state of the said Boys' and Girls' High Schools, and the management and proposed management thereof by the Board of Education or by the Committee thereof, and generally into the management of the said schools and the proposed alteration in such management.
- (c.) Representations made that the action of the Board of the Education District of Otago (under whose control the said high schools are placed) has been arbitrary and unjust towards the Rector of the Boys' High School, and that the arrangements purposed respecting the future arrangements of the Girls' High School are such as to shake confidence in its future success.

The Commissioners have, in the performance of the duties imposed upon them, and in the exercise of the powers conferred upon them, examined the witnesses whose evidence is hereto appended. Those witnesses who testified to matters of fact were examined on oath; those who merely stated their opinions were not so examined.

Besides the evidence thus formally recorded, the Commissioners have had the advantage of hearing the opinions of various gentlemen interested in the success of the High Schools, who have, at informal interviews, furnished them with valuable suggestions upon the general subject not immediately within the scope of the inquiry.

The Commissioners, before opening the Commission, invited, by advertisement inserted in the local newspapers, those upon whose request your Excellency was pleased to issue the Commission to give any information which they might possess relating to the subject. In answer to this invitation a deputation from these memorialists waited on the Commissioners, and with them it was arranged that, with a view of putting the points at issue in a precise form, and in order to bring out distinctly the points of the case, the memorialists should be represented by a gentleman of the legal profession. At the request of the Education Board, a gentleman of the legal profession was also present to watch the case on its behalf. It was thought by the Commissioners that, under the circumstances, the inquiry would be more searching and the true facts more easily elicited if the investigation, during its continuance, were not altogether open to the public. It was the opinion of the Commissioners that the witnesses would speak more unreservedly if this method were adopted, and it was accordingly determined not to admit the reporters for the Press. Assurances were at the same time given, to all whose proceedings might be called in question, that they should have every opportunity of disproving or of explaining any evidence which might seem to impute blame to them.

There was, moreover, this further reason for not allowing the proceedings of the Commission to be published during the course of the inquiry. The Commissioners are charged with the duty of reporting direct to your Excellency, and they considered that there would be a certain impropriety in allowing the proceedings and evidence to go forth to the public in anticipation of the presentation of the report.