

**LIGHT ON DARK PATHS: A HAND-BOOK
FOR MEMBERS OF SCHOOL BOARDS,
TEACHERS, PARENTS OF BLIND
CHILDREN, AND ALL WHO SEEK IN ANY
WAY TO BE "EYES TO THE BLIND"**

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Light on Dark Paths: A Hand-Book for Members of School Boards, Teachers, Parents of Blind Children, and All Who Seek in Any Way to Be "Eyes to the Blind" by Robert Meldrum

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ROBERT MELDRUM

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MEMBERS OF SCHOOL BOARDS, TEACHERS, PARENTS OF BLIND
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"EYES TO THE BLIND."

BY

ROBERT MELDRUM,

TWENTY-FOUR YEARS MISSIONARY TEACHER OF BLIND.

WITH PREFACE BY

JOHN DOVE WILSON, LL.D., ADVOCATE.

New and Enlarged Edition.

"Surely we, the Blind, are not the least care of God. . . . He seems, indeed, to have brought this darkness upon us, not so much by the bedimming of our eyes as by the overshadowing of His heavenly wings."—MILTON.

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1891.

TO THE PRESIDENT AND MEMBERS OF THE
SCOTTISH OUT-DOOR BLIND TEACHERS' UNION
TO THE TEACHERS IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS THROUGHOUT SCOTLAND,
WHO, PRIOR TO THE 1ST OF JANUARY, 1891, ADMITTED
BLIND CHILDREN TO THEIR CLASSES ;
AND SPECIALLY TO
THE REV. DR. SALMOND,
CHAIRMAN OF THE ABERDEEN SCHOOL BOARD,
THE FOLLOWING PAGES ARE VERY
RESPECTFULLY INSCRIBED.



CHAP. I.

INTRODUCTORY.

A book is in no sort like a cable, to be judged by its weakest inch,
A chain to be condemned because some of its links are faulty ;
If the tree have any well-ripened fruit, produce them for the banquet,
And let the sourlings be. — *Zupper.*

SINCE the first issue of *Light on Dark Paths*, much has happened of the deepest importance to the blind. Death has been busy among their friends. The Rev. Thomas Blackstock, blind himself, the best of missionaries and happiest of men, as was fitting in a nature so loving and a life so busy as his ; The Earl of Mar and Kellie, who like his father before him concerned himself in all that concerned the welfare of the blind ; Sir James Watson, to whose efforts the Glasgow Mission owes much, its fund for fostering the home industries of the blind especially ; Mr. David Paton—"A prince in Israel has fallen ;" Dr.

Armytage, founder, promoter, and life and soul of the British and Foreign Association for the education and employment of the blind. These and many more have gone. But other friends have come, and not alone from these accessions is progress to be measured. The public understanding has been educated, the public conscience quickened regarding the condition of the blind in these islands ; and conviction has come home,—in measure at least—that compared with continental nations and especially with the United States, our legislative record respecting the blind is humiliating reading.

The appointment of a Royal Commission to enquire into, and report upon the condition of the blind, was an effect of that conviction, while the records of its investigations and the issue of its report have in turn strengthened the desire to do all that legislation may, to better the condition of the blind and deaf and dumb, with whom the blind were bracketted for the purposes of the Commission. This bracketting produced some difficulties, but had advantages in the increased importance it gave to the enquiry, and facilitating the passing of the Act of 1890.

If seven cities claimed the honour of Homer's nativity, an equal number of organizations claim that their endeavours brought this Royal Commission to its birth, if born it was, for it came by instalments, and so it may have only "*grewed*." At all events, as it increased in size it grew in fitness for its purpose. It was the child of many prayers, not alone of the parliamentary kind, but the inarticulate cryings of mothers of blind children who were inexpressibly dear to them, knowing not what to ask, but in bitterness of soul saying,

“ I am a woman of a very sorrowful spirit.” Promised by Mr. Gladstone’s Government, the promise was promptly endorsed by that of Lord Salisbury ; and on the 28th of July, 1885, the Commission was appointed. Two members were added in August, and on petition of the Scottish Blind Teachers’ Union, W. A. Arrol, Esq., Glasgow, was also appointed. In January, 1886, the Commission was revoked and remodelled—The Duke of Westminster disappeared as Chairman, Lord Egerton of Tatton taking his place. It is doubtless due largely to its Chairman and to Mr. Arrol, that its report is so complete and its recommendations so catholic in their character. That Report and these recommendations it has been our task to condense and exhibit in such order as suited the plan of our hand-book. The census with which the report begins, we have relegated to the last chapter, substituting in *our* introduction a table from the census returns of Scotland which the Commissioners do not give in their Report. Reference to page 155 will show that in the opinion of the Commission the census returns are rather understated, while a glance at this table will show that an extensive seaboard and a high blind rate go together, as witness Shetland, with 69 blind to a population of 31,000 or more than 2 blind persons for every 1000 inhabitants, while in the general population of Scotland there is only 1 in every 1,182.

Total number of Blind in Scotland, at the Census of 1881, 3158, of whom, 1556 are Males and 1602 Females. Blind from birth, 288—134 being Males and 146 Females ; while 2807 became so after birth—1422 Males and 1456 Females.

Proportion of blind to the population of Scotland is 1 in every 1182. Males 1 in every 1156. Females 1 in every 1208.

From birth 1 in every 13,341 of the population is Blind, the proportion being 1 in every 1298 in those who by disease or accident became so after birth.

NUMBER OF BLIND IN EACH OF THE COUNTIES OF
SCOTLAND IN 1881.

COUNTIES.	Males	Females	Tot.	COUNTIES.	Males	Females	Tot.
Sutherland	30	39	69	Dumbarton	23	21	44
Orkney	15	27	42	Argyll	38	43	81
Caithness	23	46	69	Bute	8	0	17
Sutherland	19	22	41	Renfrew	61	68	129
Ross and Cromarty	46	73	119	Ayr	84	89	173
Inverness	54	60	114	Lanark	411	324	735
Nairn	5	5	10	Lindithgow	13	11	24
Elgin or Moray ..	14	21	35	Edinburgh	238	212	450
Banff	13	20	33	Haddington	16	20	36
Aberdeen	122	190	312	Berwick	4	11	15
Kincardine	5	13	18	Peebles	3	7	10
Forfar	98	98	196	Selkirk	—	2	2
Perth	45	61	106	Roxburgh	18	10	28
Fife	49	52	101	Dumfries	34	26	60
Kinross	4	3	7	Kirkcudbright ..	21	15	36
Clackmannan	4	19	23	Wigtown	19	15	34
Stirling	26	32	58				
					1556	1602	3158

The first issue, doubtless, owed much of its acceptance to the kindness of Sheriff Dove Wilson, and the renewal of his prefatory notice now makes us his debtor in double measure.

Dr. Moon of Brighton, Mr. Boyle of London, Wm. Harris, Esq., Leicester, Wm. Ferguson, Esq., of Kinmundy, Messrs. Macdonald and Mathie, of Glasgow Mission, and many helpers more have our most grateful thanks. We have drunk, of course, at those public wells of knowledge, the Encyclopædias, and at many rills besides—

Have slaked our thirst without a thought
Of whence the waters came.

BONNYMUIR PLACE,

ABERDEEN, February, 1891.



CHAP. II.

HISTORICAL AND BIOGRAPHICAL.

"I am blind ;
Men point at me as smitten by God's frown,
Afflicted and deserted of my mind,
Yet, am I not cast down.

I am weak—yet strong,
I murmur not that I no longer see ;
Poor, old, and helpless, I the more belong
Father, Supreme, to Thee."

MILTON.

"Master, who did sin, this man or his parents, that he was born blind?
Jesus answered, neither this man nor his parents."

THERE is no very early history of education or of industries amongst the blind, for the good reason that, in the olden time, there was no education for them, and, as to industry, that seems to have been confined to begging in the streets and by the wayside. Judging from the effects which this kind of life has on those who practise it now, the character of the blind then, could hardly have been of an elevated type ; and when it is considered that their neighbours regarded