

**SCOTTISH PAROCHIAL REGISTERS.
MEMORANDA OF THE STATE OF THE
PAROCHIAL REGISTERS OF SCOTLAND,
WHEREBY IS CLEARLY SHOWN THE
IMPERATIVE NECESSITY FOR A NATIONAL
SYSTEM OF REGULAR REGISTRATION**

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Scottish Parochial Registers. Memoranda of the State of the Parochial Registers of Scotland,
Whereby Is Clearly Shown the Imperative Necessity for a National System of Regular
Registration by William B. Turnbull

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WILLIAM B. TURNBULL

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BY WILLIAM B. TURNBULL, ESQ.

ADVOCATE, F.S.A. SCOT.

&c. &c. &c.

"Is it upon record? or else reported
Successively from age to age?"—*Rich. III. iii. 1.*

"From what I have had occasion to observe, I conceive there is nothing of
more importance than the endeavouring to deposit in some secure place the
Registers of Births, Baptisms, and Funerals."—*Mr Baron Garrou.*



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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THE matter comprised in the text of the subsequent pages was originally intended to form part of a volume of *Origines Genealogicæ Scoticæ*, based upon the plan of Mr Stacey Grimaldi, and destined for private circulation among such of my friends who, like myself, amuse their leisure hours with questions of pedigree and topographical science. In order to this, I had began to note the dates at which the various records, both general and particular, commence; to point out the offices wherein they are deposited, and to exemplify the numerous ways whereby they may serve enquiry; foremost among which documents naturally come Parochial Records. But the prosecution of this had for more than a twelvemonth been interrupted by less genial pursuits, and had almost escaped my memory,—when the preposterous opposition and narrow-minded clamour elicited on the introduction to Parliament of the Bills for Registration of Births,

Deaths, and Marriages, by Her Majesty's Advocate, (and factiously persisted in, despite of every effort at conciliation save abandonment of the principle,) induced me to set forth, by the plainest and most palpable evidence, the positive and urgent necessity for a legislative interference, as well as the impropriety of all attempts to thwart improvement in such matters. For this purpose, as the most violent antagonism to the Registration Bills has proceeded from a few of the Established Clergy of Scotland, supported by the selfish prejudices of certain county *lairds*, I select from the New Statistical Account of that country,* by the ministers of the respective parishes, the entire information which they themselves have supplied as to the state of the Parochial Records. This scanty, but of course accurate, testimony, defies gainsay.

It will, at a single glance, be obvious that the light thrown upon this vital point of statistics by the contributors to the new work, is of the most meagre quality ; and, which is more to be regretted, it will be manifest that, with many marked and commendable exceptions, the value of this element of civil polity appears not merely to be unappreciated, but literally unperceived by the clergy. Hence, instead of deprecating its neglect, or specifying the absence or existence of a systematic registration in their parishes, we sometimes find them under the head of "Parochial Records" providing lengthy extracts from sessional records, containing incidents curious enough in themselves, and amusing to the antiquary, but quite remote from the great object for which the information sought at their hands was required.

* Edinburgh, 1846, 16 vols. 8vo.