

**THE NECESSITY OF A REFORM IN
THE PAROCHIAL SCHOOL
SYSTEM OF SCOTLAND: BY ONE
WHO HAS LONG WITNESSED ITS
EXISTING DEFECTS**

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The Necessity of a Reform in the Parochial School System of Scotland: by one who has long witnessed its existing defects by Anonymous

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ANONYMOUS

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Formula 1.2

THE
NECESSITY OF A REFORM
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PAROCHIAL SCHOOL SYSTEM
OF
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IN
A LETTER TO THE
RIGHT HON. ANDREW RUTHERFURD, M.P.,
HER MAJESTY'S LORD ADVOCATE.

EDINBURGH:
ADAM AND CHARLES BLACK;
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A

LETTER, &c.

MY LORD,

YOUR high official position, and well-known anxiety to promote every substantial improvement connected with Scotland, induce me to address the following remarks, on an important subject, to your Lordship, and respectfully to crave for them your careful and favourable consideration.

The efforts of those distinguished men who succeeded in accomplishing the Reformation of Religion in Scotland, in the sixteenth century, were, at the same time, strenuously directed to promote the efficient education of the people. In the "First Book of Discipline," which was sanctioned

by the General Assembly, 29th May 1560, and subscribed by a great portion of the members of the Privy Council, it is very explicitly set forth : “ Of necessitie, therefore, we judge it, that every several kirke have one schoolmaister appointed, such a one at least as is able to teach grammar and the Latine tongue, if the town be of any reputation: If it be upaland, where the people convene to the doctrine but once in the week, then must either the reader or the minister there appointed, take care of the children and youth of the parish, to instruct them in the first rudiments, especially in the Catechisme, as we have it now translated in the Booke of the Common Order, called the Order of Geneva. And, further, we think it expedient, that in every notable town, and specially in the town of the superintendent, there be erected a colledge, in which the arts, at least logick and rhetoricke, together with the tongues, be read by sufficient masters, for whom honest stipends must be appointed: As also provision for those that be poore, and not able by themselves nor by their friends to be sustained at letters, and, in speciall, those that

come from landward ;"—“ the fruit and commodity hereof shall suddenly appear. For, first, the youth-head and tender children shall be nourished and brought up in vertue, in presence of their friends, by whose good attendance many inconveniencies may be avoided in which the youth commonly fall, either by overmuch libertie, which they have in strange and unknown places, while they cannot rule themselves ; or else for lacke of good attendance and such necessaries as tender age requires. Secondly, the exercise of children in every kirke shall be great instruction to the aged. Last, the great schooles called the Universities, shall be replenished with those that shall be apt to learning ; for this must be carefully provided, that no father, of what estate or condition that ever he may be, use his children at his own fantasie, especially in their youth-head ; but all must be compelled to bring up their children in learning and vertue.”

The enlightened views, so distinctly expressed in the above quotation, continued to exercise their influence on the Reformers, with results varying greatly, in the different circumstances of the

country, until the Revolution. In 1696, the Act of King William was obtained, which is usually considered as the charter of the Parish School System in Scotland. In this act it was declared "That there be a school settled and established and a schoolmaster appointed in every parish not already provided, by advice of the heritors and minister of the parish." But it is chiefly to the statute of 43d George III., cap. 54 (1803),—"An Act for making better provision for the parochial schoolmasters, and for making further regulations for the better government of the parish schools in Scotland," that our attention must be particularly directed in the course of the following remarks.

The object which I have in view in this communication is, to lay before your Lordship a plain statement of matters of fact, furnishing what appears to me to be a demonstration that our existing parochial school system is exceedingly imperfect, being inadequate to the wants, and unsuitable to the present condition, of society. If I succeed in convincing your Lordship of the real amount of existing evils, I may, at the same time,

convey to the public, information which may serve to quicken their exertions in pressing upon the Government the necessity of considering the subject in all its bearings. Prompt efforts to awaken the attention of Government are indeed called for by the avowed intention of the Privy Council to allocate a portion of the public money, under certain conditions, to the Parish Schools, for increasing the endowment of the Teachers, while the defects of the system are to be suffered to remain in all their magnitude. Such an appropriation of any part of the Grant for Educational Purposes, will irritate every individual in Scotland, who looks upon the Parish Schools as public property, and fitted, under suitable management, to become great national blessings, but who sees in their existing state, evils of which the public have just reason to complain, and which it is the duty of Government speedily to remove.

For many years past the unsatisfactory condition of the Parish Schools of Scotland has been severely *felt* by a large portion of the population, and several substitutes have been devised to avert the evils of a defective education, con-