

**AN APOLOGY FOR THE  
SYSTEM OF PUBLIC AND  
CLASSICAL EDUCATION**

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**AN APOLOGY**

FOR

**THE SYSTEM OF**

**PUBLIC AND CLASSICAL EDUCATION.**

**BY THOMAS MAUDE, ESQ. M. A.**

**OF UNIVERSITY COLLEGE, OXFORD; AND OF THE MIDDLE TEMPLE.**

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*"Proceed, great days! till learning fly the shore,  
Till birch shall blush with noble blood no more."—POPE.*

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## EDUCATION.

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PERHAPS there is no subject of a general and extensive nature, of which it is so difficult to treat in a general and comprehensive manner, as EDUCATION. In speaking of education in the abstract, it is obvious that allusion is made to that of the *upper classes* in society; though, at the present day, the education of *the lower orders*, adults as well as infants, forms a more prominent, as a more novel, topic of public discussion. That the proper instruction of the latter is a point of national interest and importance, no one capable of holding a sound opinion will deny; and, though the fittest means of carrying the plans of the philanthropist regarding them into

effect may admit of considerable argument, I content myself in this place with wishing well at large to the general cause, and proceed to say something of the education of the higher orders in society, and especially of that mode of instruction which has for many years prevailed in our more liberal seminaries of learning.

But connected with this question of *classical education* (for I need scarcely say that the prevalent system of which I speak is the *classical* system) there has arisen another question, of less "mark and likelihood," but still in itself of great moment, relative to the proper *sphere* in which boys should be educated; in other words, whether they should be reared in public or in private, at home or at school. This question, indeed, is not entirely new; for it was obviously agitated amongst a serious party at the time when the poet of the "Task" tauntingly demanded—

"Would you your son should be a sot or dunce,  
Lascivious, headstrong, or all these at once;  
That in good time the stripling's finish'd taste,  
For loose expense and fashionable waste,  
Should prove your ruin—and his own at last;  
Train him in *public* with a mob of boys," &c.\*

\* See "*Tirocinium*."

But at that period the great body of society were not prepared for such scruples; they had not then hurried into the extremes in which our wiser optimists and alarmists expatiate: the spirit of theory had not then unsettled the minds of men; and, if the general results of established practices were tolerably satisfactory, our ancestors never enquired further; they were not haunted or perplexed with those visions of ideal excellence which now prompt all who can think to think for the best, and moreover to endeavour to impress others with their own peculiar convictions. In the main *we* have unquestionably the advantage; generally speaking, we are more liberal, more enlightened than our ancestors; prejudices seem to be wearing out; and, if old *opinion* be still too often found, as Sophocles sagely described it, "stronger than truth," it is at least no longer, with the same depth of shadow,

—————"an omnipotence, whose veil  
Mantles the earth with darkness."

Yet it cannot be denied that there are some features in the moral aspect of the present times, not altogether so pleasing; and amongst these,



perhaps, a manifest and popular tone of disrespect or irreverence for things long respected and revered, is the most obvious and repulsive.

"I speak not of men's creeds—they rest between  
Man and his Maker—but of things allow'd,  
Averr'd, and known"————

To apply Pope's maxim, of "whatever *is* is right" to human institutions, however venerable, would be to adopt one of the worst principles of the narrowest bigotry; but, on the other hand, to act respecting these as if the *reverse were true*, is to exhibit a rashness altogether distinct from liberality, and nearly allied to insane, I should rather say, *empty-minded* wantonness.

Κλαίων φρενώσεις, ὣν φρενῶν αὐτὸς κενός.

The circumspection and care requisite in altering the common law of this country we all know: the wisdom of its parts is evinced by inconveniences almost invariably resulting from any hasty innovation. Now, surely, something approaching to a similar cautiousness would be but becoming in those who interfere with the long-established usages of the country in any

important matter whatever, conventional or not, —above all, in the transcendently important one of education.

The zeal of our era has endeavoured to fix a stigma on the cause of PUBLIC, as well as on that of classical education. Unchecked by any consideration of the general virtue and prosperity of the nation under a long experience of this system, our high-flown and somewhat zealous theorists are quite sure that the vices of the times (which are of course worse than any times preceding) are mainly owing to it. They just know (according to the copy) that "evil communications corrupt good manners," and logically conclude, that uncorrupt manners would naturally flow from a more restricted plan of education, wherein it would depend on the parents alone (the most interested persons certainly) whether their children should have any influential communications or none; and, if any, whether those should be good or evil. That people unacquainted with the world, and unaccustomed or unable to look to complicated results, (and the latter class of persons constitutes the great mass of society,) should thus weigh and decide the question, is not surprising. There is

about it a speciousness which may be to some minds imposing; but a very little sober consideration, and a glance from the nursery to the world—from the school of principles to the stage of action—will, I suppose, tend powerfully to cool the heated imaginations of the most zealous theorists of private, or the most thorough-paced opponents of public education.

In making these observations, it is almost unnecessary to explain, that I refer simply to the education of *boys*, and of boys in the higher classes alone. The object which I propose to myself at present, therefore, is a brief *illustration* of the two questions on which issue is joined, comprehending a succinct defence of the combined cause of public and classical education. I have only further to premise, that I shall consider the subject in a general light, and maintain *systems* without regard to *details*.

In dividing my subject—(for the two-fold nature of it seems to require something of the old-fashioned style of division)—I shall, *firstly*, consider the question of *private* education; *secondly*, give my own ideas respecting a right system of *public* education.

What, then, are the presumed and boasted