

School for secular education / [George Combe].

Contributors

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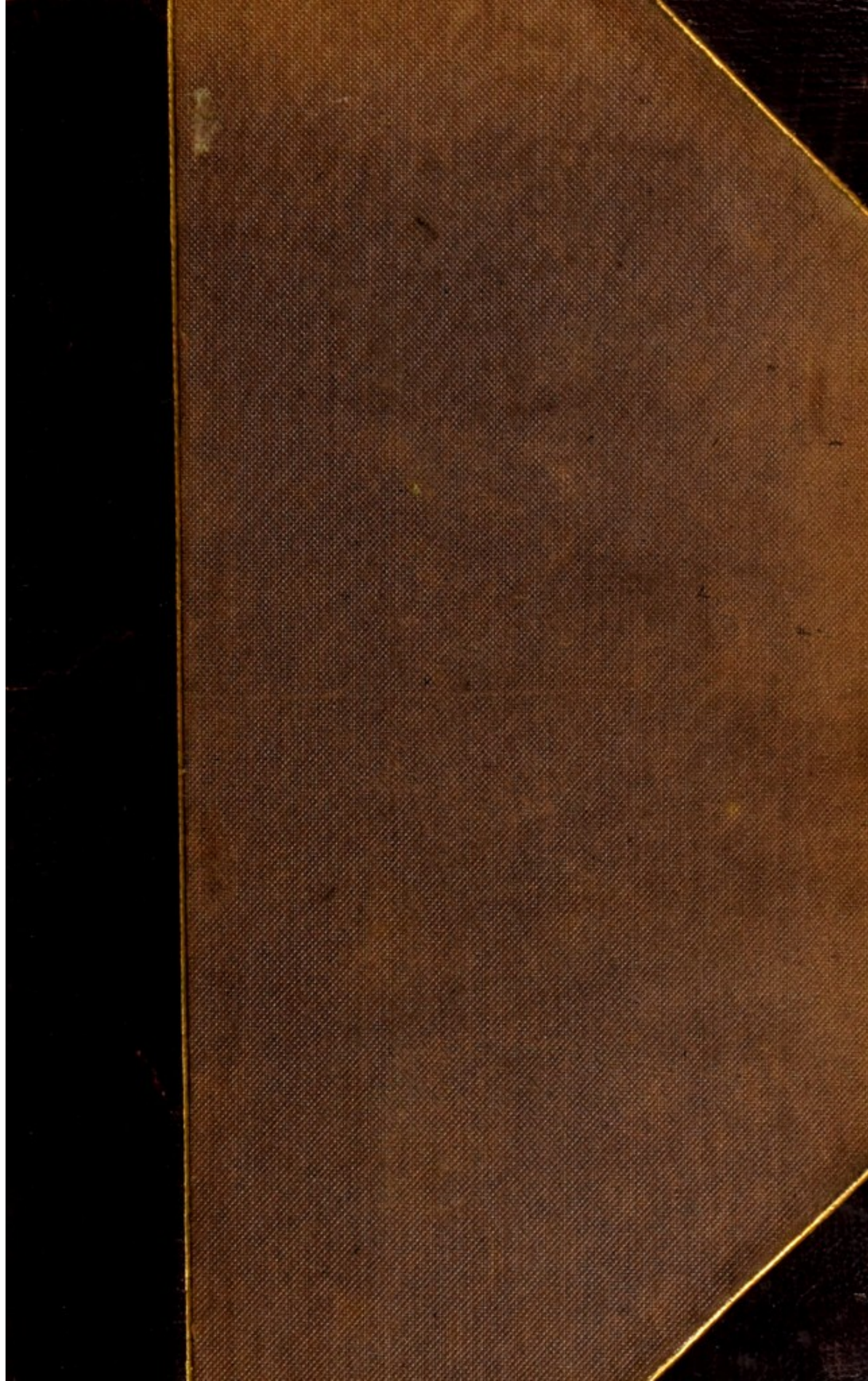
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Dr Charles Mackays poem
"The Souls of the Children".
at the end of 4th Report of Williams's
Secular School.

See three other pamphlets by G. Combs
bound in Collection marked. Phrenology

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all the above by
George Combe.

Williams's Secular School in
Edinburgh. - Six Reports.

† What should Secular Education embrace.

stand and perform their duties as members of society, and to enable them to diffuse the greatest amount of happiness among their fellowmen. The Children are classified according to age and attainments, and the payments regulated accordingly; for the highest Classes *Sixpence weekly*; and the lowest Classes *Fourpence*. The Parents provide all writing-books and drawing-materials, which are afforded at cost prices. The Course of Instruction comprises:—

READING.	ALGEBRA.	HUMAN PHYSIOLOGY.
WRITING.	GRAMMAR.	FACTS of TRADES and
SPELLING and DERIVA- TION of WORDS.	COMPOSITION.	MANUFACTURES.
ARITHMETIC.	ELOCUTION.	NATURAL HISTORY.
MENSURATION.	GEOGRAPHY.	DRAWING.
BOOK-KEEPING.	HISTORY.	MAPPING, and
GEOMETRY.	SOCIAL ECONOMY.	VOCAL MUSIC.
	OUTLINES of SCIENCE.	

The School Hours are from half-past nine in the morning till three in the afternoon, with an interval of half an hour for the Children to take such refreshments as they may bring with them. This plan is adopted to accommodate those who come from a distance, as well as to guard the Children against the pernicious consequences, that too often occur from their playing in the public streets. Instead of the usual two half holidays, there is no schooling on Saturday; lessons are given for that day to practise at home. Regularity of attendance, and punctuality at the school hours, are especially required, as best contributing to the efforts of the teacher and the attainments of the children; and in all cases of illness, or unavoidable absence, a note from the parent is required. The Superintendent, Principal Master, Assistant Master, and other Teachers for particular Classes, conduct the business of the Boys' School.

Such has been the success attending the Boys' School, and so many the applications for the admission of Girls, that we have engaged a Female Teacher and Assistant, and have resolved on opening a Girls' School, in a large commodious room in the Institution, on the 13th of next month. The course of instruction will be similar to that in the Boys' School, with the addition of their being taught needlework, and such domestic matters as are suited for the other sex. The Payments, School Hours, &c., will be the same as for the Boys.

You will perceive, that our School is purely secular: not that we undervalue religious instruction; but as the attempt to introduce any particular form or creed, or religious teaching, would naturally call forth distrust among those parents whose feelings were opposed, or whose own peculiar views were rejected, we deem it wise to exclude from education all such questions of dispute. If the great precept of "Love one another," be made the basis of educational discipline, and if the moral and intellectual virtues be developed in the minds of the children, we think parents will perceive, that more genuine Christian charity is likely to result than if they were drilled in the constant reading of what they could scarcely comprehend, or by repeating precepts by rote, without their importance being exemplified by practice. We think that when abundant time can be found for imparting religious instruction beyond that dedicated to the School, and when so many religious instructors of all denominations are willing to impart their peculiar views, it would seem more in accordance with the teachings of Christ to remove all sources of contention, and endeavour to *dwell in peace and union*, which are the great essentials of religion, than, by our selfish desires and sectarian jealousies, suffer ignorance, vice, and disunion to prevail.

Trusting that you will pardon this long letter, and wishing your object may be realised, I remain yours very truly,

WM. LOVETT.

SCHOOL FOR SECULAR EDUCATION.

(From the Scotsman of 2d December 1848.)

A meeting of such of the working classes as take an interest in secular education, was held in the Freemasons' Hall, Niddry Street, on Monday evening the 27th November. The meeting was called at the instance of Mr George Combe and Mr James Simpson, and the call was most heartily responded to, the room being crowded by a most respectable assemblage of the working classes.

Mr COMBE stated that the object of the meeting was to consider the subject of secular education. It was not intended as a meeting for discussion, or to put any resolution, or to pledge them to anything; but his design was to present to them the project of a school for the education of boys, on an improved plan, which it was intended to open in Infirmary Street, in the course of next week. In explaining the views which he held on education, they were not to understand that he was asking their concurrence in any particular views which he might state. He allowed every man to judge for himself. All that he proposed doing was to submit certain propositions, which he left to their own disposal. If they thought them useful, he claimed their support. If they dissented from them, he submitted to their right of private judgment, and did not find fault with them for not following him. Before explaining the nature of the school which it was intended to institute, he proposed to make a few remarks on the subject of education itself.

Education was generally divided into secular and spiritual; and in their day, they had had an extraordinary extent of discussion on the merits of secular education, and whether there should be an education given to children apart from religious instruction. As he should use the word secular on the present occasion, it would mean instruction concerning the things of this world, and it was intended to stand in opposition to spiritual instruction rather than religious instruction, for religious instruction might embrace the things of this world. Secular education, then, referred to the things connected with this life, and spiritual instruction referred to the interests of eternity. They would understand that his present observations referred to the things of this world and to its interests.

The first question which he wished to submit to their consideration was this—what need had men of education at all? It might appear to many to be unnecessary to enter on this subject, but doing so, would enable him the better to introduce the views on which this school was to be founded. Some of them were aware that, since he had last the honour of addressing a public audience in Edinburgh, he had made a visit to the United States, and had lectured to numerous audiences in that part of the world. About eighteen months ago, he received a letter from a person in Lowell, in Massachusetts, where there were a great many cotton and spinning mills, as in Glasgow and Manchester. This individual put the question to him—"As you have taken a great interest in the welfare of all classes, can you tell me how we, the working men of Lowell, are to be delivered from the iron hoof of capital; for we find ourselves here in the midst of great mill-owners who are dividing yearly 15 and 20 per cent. from the profits of our earnings, while we have only a bare subsistence for our labour?" He (Mr Combe) sent an answer, and the first point which he endeavoured to explain was, what constituted capital. Capital, he understood, consisted of everything that was useful to man, produced by human skill and labour. He did not count water capital in a country like this where we had a superabun-

dance of it, except when it was brought into our houses, where it became the representative of capital, in so far as the pipes and conduits that brought it in were capital. In illustrating the advantages of capital, he instanced the cases of two men who should proceed to the United States for the purpose of reclaiming part of the large tracts of country there that were not yet possessed by man—the one having capital in his axes and saws to cut down the trees, in food to support him, in harrows and ploughs to till the ground, and in other instruments by which he could render the soil productive, and his own life comfortable ; and the other having nothing but muscular strength, a willing heart, and a desire to reclaim the wilderness. The question, then, came to be how these two men, the one with capital, and the other with none, were to be brought to an equality in their acquisitions of profit from the soil ? He knew no means except the simple process of robbery. (A laugh.) But if they proceeded on that principle, the next new comer would just rob the two that had been before him ; so that, by-and-by, the capital would disappear and they would all be left in the lurch together.

He would now proceed a step further, and they would see the bearing of this. It appeared to him, that the bountiful Creator had presented them with a soil capable of cultivation, with minerals below the ground and timber growing above it, and with a great number of elements which might all be converted into instruments for their enjoyment, and He had also given his creatures vigorous bodily powers to turn these gifts to account, as well as intellectual powers to bend the elements to their will. If man, then, would do his duty, he would find the practice of it agreeable ; and the reward would be great and rich, and such as would bring satisfaction to his faculties. If this was a correct view of the state of this world, the only way by which working men could deliver themselves from the "iron hoof of capital," was to qualify themselves to acquire capital for their own use ; for it was capital that made capital. This brought him a little nearer the point. What was it that constituted the extraordinary differences that they saw between different classes of the community in all the civilised countries of the world ? He had, as he had already remarked, visited the United States of America ; he had been for two years resident in Germany ; he had travelled through Italy from Naples to the Alps ; and he had seen a considerable part of France ; and, in all these countries, the condition of the people was the same. They had rich and poor ; men ill to do and men well to do. But what was particularly striking was, that, although the United States of America presented all the elements necessary to human enjoyment, which most people conceived were wanting in this country ; viz., universal suffrage, a fine climate, and an unbounded territory, not one-fourth peopled ; still there also working classes complained of being crushed down by the iron hoof of capital, and that they had nothing but a bare subsistence for their labour. Let them investigate the causes of this. He did not believe that God Almighty acted as a partial Father. He did equal justice to all, and the inequality lay in the differences which they themselves made. He ascribed the success of the middle-classes in acquiring capital, to the extraordinary amount of cultivation they bestowed on the minds of their children, which produced a mental capacity to deal with this world's causation, and to accumulate wealth. As the world is full of springs of activity, and everything proceeds from causation, it requires acute human observation to understand the causes, and to extract the benefits they are calculated to yield. He saw then, one class of the community bestowing the utmost pains to drill the minds of their children, so as to enable them to cultivate the natural elements presented to them by Providence ; while he saw, on the other hand, the labouring class, in a great many instances from necessity, but, to speak the plain truth, in not a few cases from sloth, stupidity, and recklessness, stinting their children of that education and preparation necessary to cope with the difficulties of this world. It was education alone, he contended, that would enable the working-classes to raise

themselves to that position of wealth, influence, and respectability which he had no doubt they were destined to occupy.

This being the case, the next question was, What constituted education? Education had hitherto been supposed to consist in learning reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, and other similar branches; but these were the mere instruments or means by which the knowledge of the world was to be acquired. It appeared to him that education would never be adequate to man's wants until it aimed at teaching him the qualities of the natural elements which Providence presented to him, how he might deal with them so as to extract the greatest amount of benefit from them, and the relationship between them and his own constitution. This was what he called education. Hitherto in most of the schools, reading and writing had constituted the chief education of children; but to learn to read was merely acquiring the means of ascertaining what books contained. The mere art of reading did not give us information, and would not unfold the powers of nature unless we were taught them specially. Reading, however, was indispensable to enable us to search the records of human knowledge, and was therefore the first element of human education; but the extent of the knowledge it will convey will depend on the books read. The schools we have hitherto had have been confined too much to the acquiring of the means for gaining knowledge. It appeared to him that the first step in education was to add a knowledge of the elements of nature; a knowledge of the causes which produce good and evil in this life, and which make us feel that we have acted wisely or unwisely. The school which it was proposed to establish was to be founded on these principles, and in it were to be taught the following branches:—English reading, writing, arithmetic, geography, history, book-keeping, and the elements of mathematics and the physical sciences; a knowledge of the natural sources of wealth, and of the natural laws which govern its production and distribution, as unfolded in the science of political economy; and a knowledge of the constitution of the human body and mind, and of their relations to external objects, and the natural laws by which their functions are regulated, as these are unfolded in the sciences of physiology and phrenology. The prospectus declared that "The practical applications of these branches of knowledge to the conduct of individuals, will be taught, with a view to enable the young to comprehend the manner in which the laws of God's providence determine their health and sickness; their individual and domestic happiness; their social condition; their success or failure in business; and the physical, moral, and economical condition of their offspring. From this knowledge will be deduced, also, conclusions concerning their temporal rights and duties as individuals and members of society. Particular attention will be paid to moral training, based on the principle that the *mere teaching of moral precepts* is not sufficient, but that the young must be trained to carry them out in practice." Mr Combe then gave an example of the method of instruction it was proposed to follow in the case of a boy who was intended for the trade of a shoemaker, and showed the manner in which the principles of political economy as affecting his trade might be brought to bear upon his mind. He then at some length demonstrated the value and importance of introducing physiology and phrenology as branches of education. With such a course of instruction the child would go forth from school understanding what he was, and where he was; possessing a degree of intelligence that could otherwise be acquired only after many years' experience in the world. Mr Combe then remarked that it was to be a school for secular instruction alone, and that they were to teach no dogmatical religion in it. (Applause.) He was gratified extremely by their approbation of this announcement. They would observe from what he had said that they meant to teach reverence for the Supreme Being. They meant to teach most sedulously the great, and important, and all-pervading principle that He made the world and made man, and adapted the one to the other; that He intended

mankind to do their duty ; and that nineteen-twentieths of their sufferings and sorrows arose from their own failures, in not acting in accordance with His laws. That was the kind of religion which belonged to a secular school. He conceived that every man had a right to judge for himself in forming his opinions on religious subjects, however widely these might differ from his own. He did not profess himself to be a sectarian, like the Pharisee who went into the temple to pray, and who thanked God that he was not like other men ; but he professed himself on this subject to be like the publican, who said, " Lord, be merciful to me, a sinner." It was every man's duty to train up his children according to his own convictions of religious truth. The moment they yielded the right to every man to teach his own children, that very moment they surrendered the right to force their own religion on the consciences of their neighbours. (Applause.) They had suffered in this country to an enormous extent from the contentions of sects ; in proof of which Mr Combe referred particularly to the state of Ireland. He passed a high eulogium on the national school system of that country, and expressed his satisfaction that, notwithstanding all the opposition which it had met with, it had continued to progress, so that, at the present moment, there were more children at the national schools than had ever been at any former period. As regarded the school which they were about to institute, they had come to the determination to leave the Saturdays and Sundays for the teaching of religion by the pastors and parents of the children themselves. Such schools were common in the United States, in Holland, and also in Ireland ; and last, and most important of all, several influential gentlemen in Lancashire, copying the American system, had brought a great scheme of secular education before the public in that county, and intended to apply for a bill to authorise the community to tax itself for the support of these schools, which were to be under the management of those who paid the taxes. The Edinburgh school would be opened in the Trades' Hall, Infirmary Street, on Monday next, and the fee would be fourpence per week for each boy above six years of age, to whom it would be at first confined ; but the founders were decidedly of opinion that if the experiment proved successful, the two sexes should afterwards be trained together. He begged to say that Mr Simpson and himself were not alone ; and that the idea of the school had originated from Mr William Ellis of London, manager of the Mutual Marine Insurance Company, who had practically tested the system in the metropolis, and who had placed at his (Mr Combe's) disposal a sum of L.100 to assist in the establishment of the school. (Applause.) This amount had been supplemented by subscriptions from other parties ; and it was worthy of remark that some of these had come from Ireland. (Applause.) He concluded by expressing a hope that the school which they were about to institute would be the means of introducing an improved system of education into Scotland, of which she might one day be proud. (Mr Combe resumed his seat amidst the plaudits of the meeting.)

Mr SIMPSON then shortly addressed the meeting. He said it gave him great pleasure and satisfaction to hear the principles to which he had given utterance about fifteen years ago in this city, so much better expounded and enforced that evening by his friend Mr Combe. (Applause.)

Mr COMBE said that Mr Ellis had not only most liberally contributed to the school, but he had also supplied them with a most able teacher in the person of Mr W. M. Williams, whom he had now the honour of introducing to the meeting. (Applause.)

Mr WILLIAMS made a few remarks, in the course of which he stated that his design would be not so much to communicate a knowledge of words, as to communicate a knowledge of ideas to the boys that might be intrusted to his care. He bespoke their indulgence for a week or two after the commencement of the school, but after that period he hoped to have matters in such a state as would exhibit in a favourable light, to all who visited the school, the system of education which he intended to pursue.

The meeting then broke up.

FIRST ANNUAL REPORT
OF THE
WILLIAMS SECULAR SCHOOL.

Man is approaching a more complete fulfilment of that great and sacred mission which he has to perform in this world. His reason being created after the image of God, he has to use it to discover the laws by which the Almighty governs his Creation ; and by making these laws his standard of action, to conquer Nature to his use—himself a Divine instrument.

Speech of Prince Albert at the Mansion House.—March 21, 1850.

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