

Prospectus of a school for the secular education of boys.

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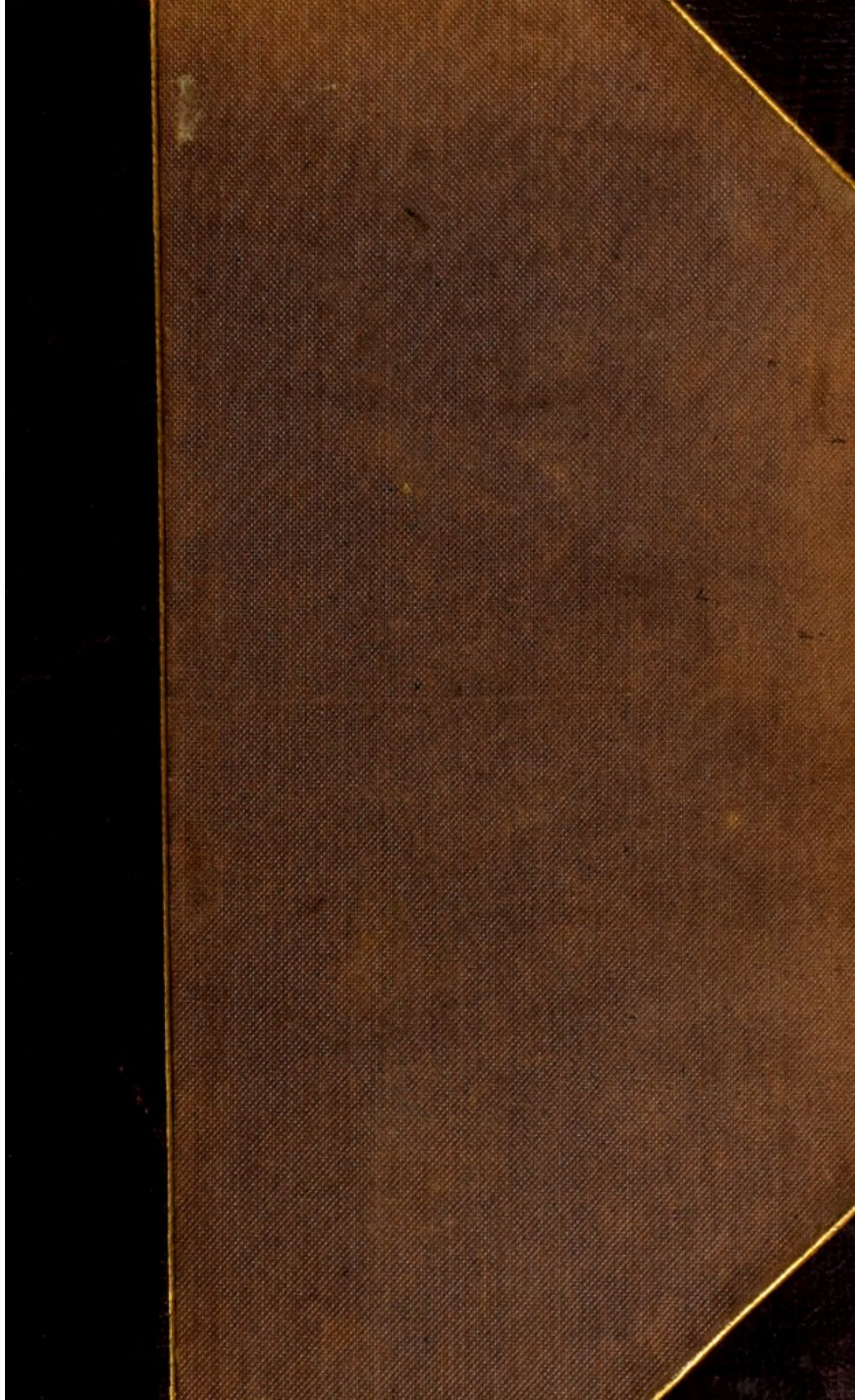
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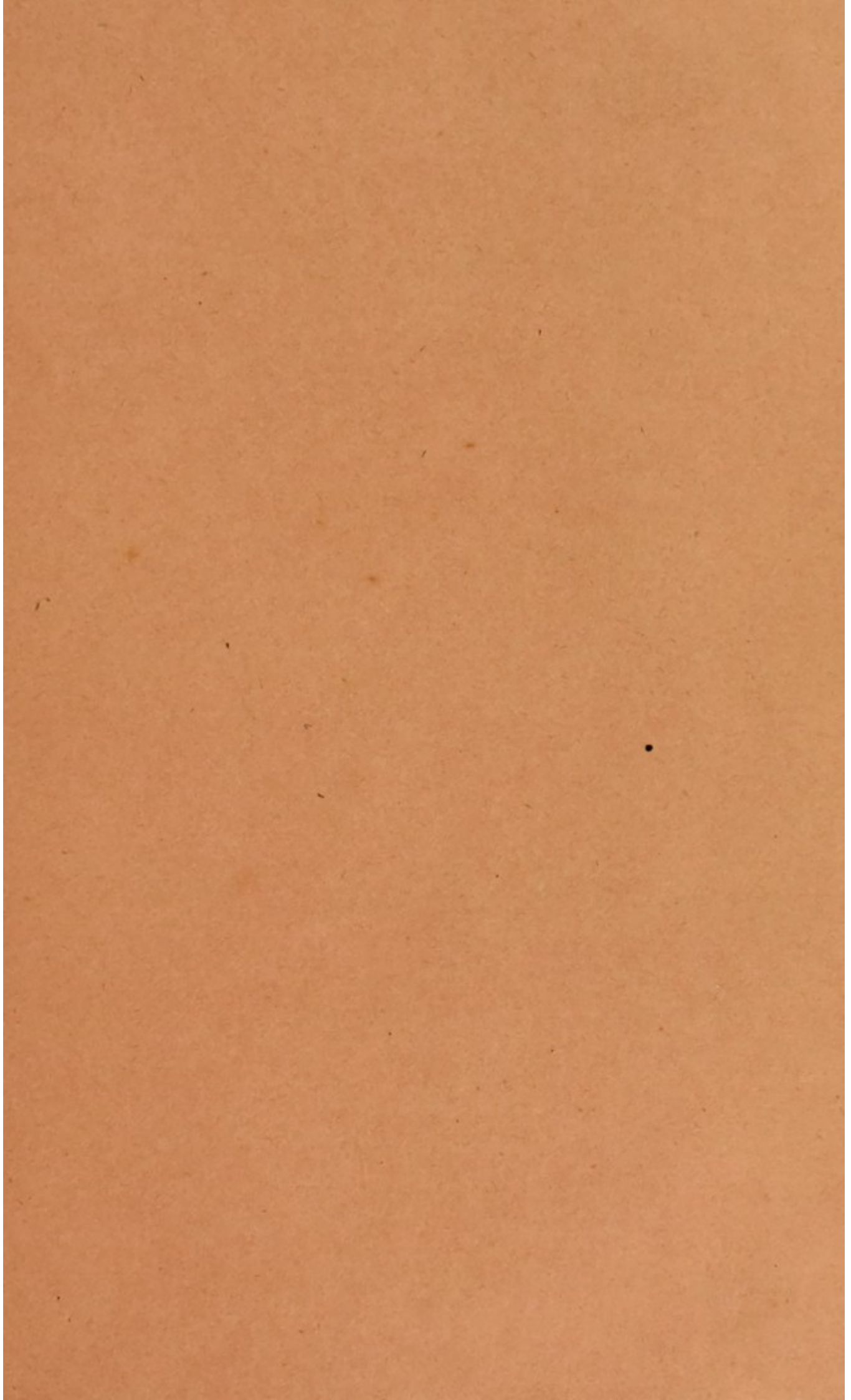
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PROSPECTUS

OF A

SCHOOL FOR THE SECULAR EDUCATION OF BOYS.

Promoters, { GEORGE COMBE, 45 Melville Street.
 { JAMES SIMPSON, 33 Northumberland Street.

The year 1848 will long be memorable in history for the revolutions by which the Continent of Europe has been agitated, and from which the British Islands have, although not without alarm, escaped. Ancient dynasties and governments have been overthrown by the efforts of armed citizens of the middle and lower classes of society, whose object has been to found new political institutions, more conducive, in their opinion, to individual happiness and social prosperity, than those which they have destroyed. But hitherto their efforts have not been crowned with success. Wreck of property, derangement of trade, loss of employment to the operative classes, general suffering in the present time, and fear of evil for the future, are the chief consequences hitherto produced by these convulsions.

Among other causes of this unfavourable condition of European society may be reckoned the imperfect education of the great body of the people. In many countries their instruction has been greatly neglected, and even in those in which the best efforts have been made to teach them, the knowledge imparted has rarely embraced an exposition of the natural laws by which individual and social wellbeing is determined. Moreover, they have not been trained to submit, in their practical conduct, to the requirements of these laws, as necessary conditions of prosperity.

Believing that a general instruction and training of the young, is the best remedy that can be applied to existing evils, and the surest protection against future misfortunes, it is proposed to establish a SCHOOL for Boys in Edinburgh, in which the following subjects will be taught, in the expectation that, if it prove successful, it will lead to the institution of other similar Seminaries ; namely,

**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**.

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**.

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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.

One great object of the teaching in these Schools, will be to convey to the minds of the young a perception of their actually living under a scheme of Divine Government which favours temperance, industry, intelligence, morality, and religion, in this world; and to train them to refer, in their judgments of men and things, and in their own actions, to the laws by which this government is maintained and enforced.

The School-Hours will be from Nine in the Morning till Three in the Afternoon (Saturday excepted), with the usual interval at Twelve o'clock.

The Fee to be 4d. per Week for each Boy, or 3s. 6d. a Quarter. The boys not to be under six years of age. The Quarter days to be the first Monday in December, March, June, and September.

All Fees to be paid in advance.

The School will be opened in the New Trades' Hall, Infirmary Street, on Monday the 4th day of December 1848, at Nine o'clock A.M.

Applications may be made to Mr WILLIAM MATTIEU WILLIAMS, Teacher, at the Trades' Hall, during the School hours.



## NOTE IN EXPLANATION OF THE FOREGOING PROSPECTUS.

THE progress of National Education is at present obstructed, and effort is paralysed, because no general agreement has been reached as to the things that should be taught in schools for the people. Some individuals consider Reading, Writing, and Arithmetic, with Moral and Religious Instruction, to constitute a sufficient education for the labouring classes. Others regard instruction in the Natural Sciences, in addition to these branches, to be necessary for their proper cultivation. Some, who concur in this opinion, nevertheless view religion as the only sound basis of all education, and desire to teach the catechism of their own church, as well as the sciences of nature. Others, again, regard Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, the Physical Sciences, and also Religion and Morality, to have a basis in the constitution of the human faculties and of physical nature, and think that these may be usefully taught as secular education, irrespective of catechisms, leaving dogmatic religion to be instilled by the parents and clergymen of the pupils.

These differences of opinion appear in the highest quarters, and it is not to be wondered at that humbler men are perplexed. For example, the late Dr Chalmers and Archbishop Whately appear to be at variance on what must necessarily be a first and fixed principle, lying at the bottom of all sound action on the subject of education, viz., whether it is necessary to teach the people a knowledge of the laws of nature, under the idea that these determine their physical, economical, and physiological condition; or if it be sufficient to teach them religion and morality. In an article in the third number of the North British Review, on the Political Economy of the Bible, Dr Chalmers seems to lay down the doctrine that it is *not necessary* to teach the laws of political economy to the people, but only the morality and religion of the Bible, and that public prosperity will result from the sum of private duties duly discharged, in virtue of the governing laws of Providence. Archbishop Whately, on the other hand, in his address, delivered on the 19th of June 1848, to the Statistical Society of Dublin, states that, in his opinion, it is a mistake to suppose that "even sound religion and the purest morals would secure a people from destructive revolutions, if they possessed not a competent knowledge of those circumstances on which the welfare of empires depended." "It was not religion or morality that would teach them whether certain things *were possible*. If they were possible, they ought to be accomplished. If *impossible*, political economy (and other sciences) would shew that they were so."

These two opinions represent the two bases on which most of the advocates of religious education, and of secular education, take their stand. If any one will visit our parish or other schools which are under the chief guidance of the clergy of any denomination, or of religious societies, they will find that the instruction communicated in them consists mainly of Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, the religious Catechism of the sect, and general moral and religious instruction drawn from it and the Bible; but omitting to a great extent the doctrine of physical, physiological, and economical causation, on the right understanding of which—in addition to morality and religion—according to the Archbishop, the prosperity or adversity of the individual in this life really depends. These schools are constituted on Dr Chalmers's principle, that if individuals discharge their moral and religious duties aright, God's Providence will evolve prosperity, without their knowing how. The advocates of secular education, on the other hand, maintain that it is a part of God's Providence to connect suffering and enjoyment with certain natural causes which He has instituted and adapted to the nature of man; that the systematic exposition of these causes and their effects is not contained in the Bible and Catechism; that, nevertheless, an adequate knowledge of these causes and their effects is necessary before temporal prosperity can be reached, and before even moral and religious duty, in relation to the affairs of this world, can be fully understood; and that, therefore, any religious teaching which omits science is incomplete for secular purposes. Nay, more, that as these natural causes of prosperity and adversity have been instituted by God, it is actually a part of moral and religious duty to study them, and to act in conformity with them; and that all existing schools, in which this teaching is omitted, are really, so far, deficient in communicating moral and religious instruction.

Dr Chalmers's view appears to us to be not so much erroneous, as incomplete. God's Providence is *moral*, and, as a general rule, prosperity is attached to moral, and adversity to immoral conduct; but the defect of Dr Chalmers's theory lies in this—



that the elements and conditions of man's wellbeing in this world are *not exclusively moral*; and in this respect there is a great distinction between temporal and eternal happiness. The elements and conditions of the latter are *wholly moral and religious*; and the Bible is, therefore, in regard to them, generally viewed as the only and all-sufficient guide; but not so with respect to man's temporal interests. These depend on *physical*, on *physiological*, and on *economical* causes, as well as on moral and religious causes; and, in many instances, an individual is not in a condition to judge soundly regarding *what is his duty*, if he be ignorant of the first, second, and third of these departments of causation. For example—The Bible explicitly declares that “he that provideth not for his own is worse than an infidel.” If the individual who reads this injunction be a farmer, he may deduce from it the inference that he is required by Scripture to manage his land in the best manner, that he may draw from it as large a provision as possible for his family; but the Bible tells him nothing concerning the most advantageous method of draining, manuring, labouring, and cropping his fields. Science, however, which means knowledge of God's natural laws and works, will teach him this; and, therefore, before he shall be able competently to fulfil this item of his moral and religious duty, he must study agriculture as well as religion and morality. Again—“providing for his own” implies that he shall rear his children in the best possible health; but the Bible does not fully instruct him concerning the influence of improper diet and clothing, of ill-aired and crowded rooms, of unhealthy localities, of too much study, and other physical and moral influences on the health of his offspring. Physiological science, however, would communicate to him this information, and, therefore, a knowledge of it also is necessary to him before he can successfully fulfil this scriptural precept. Farther, in order to be able to study either religion or science with intelligence, and to practise with advantage the rules of conduct which they dictate, the intellectual faculties must be cultivated and trained to observe, to reason, and to act. But the Bible does not contain an exposition of the art of teaching and training the mental powers. Science, however, does so; and again it appears that in order to cultivate even the religious, moral, and intellectual faculties of children, and to train them to proper action, it is necessary to go beyond the precincts of the Bible. This is no disparagement to the Bible, because apparently it was not designed to absolve man from the duty of studying the Divine will expressed in the constitution of nature, and presented to him for his investigation and guidance. On the contrary, one of the offices of religion and morality, in so far as this world is concerned, appears to be to enforce the study of nature and obedience to her precepts as a duty, in order that we may fulfil the Divine will in regard to our sublunary existence.

We solicit attention to these considerations because, until the points involved in them be decided by public opinion one way or the other, no progress can be made in this momentous question. If Dr Chalmers's view be both sound and complete, the advocates of secular education should succumb; but if Archbishop Whately's principle be sound, then the adherents of dogmatic religious education may be expected to yield something to the claims of the people for a more extended instruction than in Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, the Bible, and the Catechism. If the Archbishop be in the right, we are defrauding the labouring classes of an important benefit of reason, by withholding from them an adequate knowledge of the causes of their temporal suffering or wellbeing; and it is unseemly to make zeal for our peculiar interpretations of Scripture an obstacle in the way of communicating this information, seeing that these interpretations have no necessary connection with the constitution of nature; and do not embrace the “*whole counsel of God*.”

In London, the experiment of teaching the children of the working classes the elements of political economy and physiology, in addition to reading, writing, and arithmetic, and omitting dogmatic religion, has been tried with success; and an additional school embracing these branches of instruction has recently been instituted, under the patronage of the Earl of Radnor, in connection with the London Mechanics' Institution: It is named the Birkbeck School.

The promoters of the School described in the foregoing Prospectus desire to ascertain whether or not parents belonging to the working classes of Edinburgh appreciate the advantages of a more extensive education for their children, than they have at present the opportunity of obtaining; and with this view, the school before mentioned will be opened in the New Trades' Hall, Infirmary Street, Edinburgh, on Monday, the 4th December 1848, at Nine o'clock in the morning.



THE  
BIRKBECK SCHOOL,  
LONDON MECHANICS' INSTITUTION.

UNDER THE PATRONAGE OF THE  
RIGHT HON. THE EARL OF RADNOR.

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THE Special Committee appointed to establish a Day-School in connection with the London Mechanics' Institution, beg to inform their fellow members and the public in general, that the Birkbeck School was opened in the Lecture Theatre of the Institution, on the 17th of July 1848, where every facility is afforded for the highest mental development of Boys from the age of seven years and upwards.

The Course of Education is purely secular.

The subjects taught, include Reading, Writing, Arithmetic, English Grammar, Composition, History, Geography, Drawing, and Vocal Music; the elements of Algebra, Geometry, Mensuration, Mechanics, and the Natural Sciences.

In addition to these, the children are made acquainted with *the laws of their own organisation*, in order that they may understand how much their health, general energy, physical happiness, and length of life, are dependent on their own conduct; also with the laws of SOCIAL ECONOMY, that they may properly understand their own position in Society, and their duties towards it. Particular attention will be paid to MORAL TRAINING.

The system of education adopted is that which modern science and experience have shewn to be most in accordance with the constitution of the human mind, and best calculated to strengthen, develop, and rightly direct all its faculties, by presenting to them the objects naturally adapted to call them into varied and healthy activity. Instead of forcing the Boys to commit long sentences to memory, by which so much mental labour is wasted, and the matter generally lost sight of in the effort to retain the words, the subjects of study are presented in a form the most enticing and agreeable to the minds of Children; thus their attention is maintained by the natural activity of the mental faculties, rather than by the fear of physical torture: the School becomes a place of amusement and happiness instead of tears and trembling, and the acquisition of knowledge is permanently regarded not as a laborious task-work, but as the most agreeable as well as the most elevating of pursuits.

The Moral Training is based on the principle, that the moral feelings, like the physical and intellectual powers, can only be strengthened by actual exercise; that *the mere teaching of moral precepts* is not sufficient, since they are but intellectual truths for the guidance of the feelings, and their acquisition an intellectual operation: they must therefore be carried out in practice, to which end the School is so organised as to form as nearly as possible a little model of the world without, and the conduct of the boys in their intercourse with each other so regulated, that on leaving the School they may enter society already trained to become worthy and orderly, as well as active and intelligent citizens.

The School hours are from half-past Nine in the Morning till Three in the Afternoon (Saturday excepted), with an interval of half an hour for the children to partake of such refreshments as they may bring with them.



