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## SCOTTISH POPULAR EDUCATION.

### A HISTORICAL SKETCH.

PREVIOUS to the Reformation in 1560, our knowledge regarding common schools in Scotland is scanty, and somewhat uncertain. This only is established, that they were in existence in considerable numbers long before that period. The precise date at which they were first introduced is hid in obscurity. Probably they were coeval with the introduction of Christianity, about the year A.D. 565. Education was a special object of regard to Columba and his followers, who about this time took up their abode on the surf-beaten shore of Iona. Young men flocked to their seminaries from all quarters, even from distant Norway and Sweden. To these was given such a training as was well suited to fit them to become missionary pioneers and heralds of the glad tidings that Columba had come to Scotland to announce. To a mental training, extended, yet minute, was added a physical training, not less necessary, to enable these primitive teachers not only to be self-supporting, but to lead the way in the arts and improvements in civilization. There is nothing new under the sun. Industrial schools, supposed by many to be a feature peculiar to modern educational effort, are found in Scotland coeval with the dawn of history. In one thing the system of St. Columba, otherwise so admirable, is surprisingly deficient. It not only fails to recognise, but positively brands as dangerous, one of the educational agencies that now-a-days is justly held to be among the most powerful and effective. We refer to the elevating and humanising influence exercised by the mothers of a people. Not only was no special provision made for training women to the proper discharge of

their important duties, as holding in their hands the future destinies of nations, but their very presence in the holy isle was guarded against. Cows were not permitted to come within sight of Columba's sacred dwelling, for this very cogent reason, "Where there is a cow there must be a woman, and where there is a woman there must be mischief." These opinions would no doubt become modified among his followers, the Culdees, but to what extent we know not. The curtain of darkness falls upon Scotland, and for five hundred years we can but guess her probable educational condition.

Charlemagne, who became sole King of France in 771, we know, held the principle, by many supposed to be comparatively a modern one, that wherever there was a church there should be a school. The intercourse between France and Scotland was, from the remotest ages, peculiarly close and intimate; in the time of the great ruler, markedly so. The most favoured guests at his table were learned men from Scotland. Scots scholars founded the University of Paris, 791; and thus procured privileges to their own nation which feudal subjects of the French king did not possess. Nor are proofs altogether wanting that Scotsmen, or the scholars of Scotsmen, founded the University of Shafhausen, as well as several of those in Switzerland, Germany, and Franche Compté.\* Perhaps Charlemagne owed his liberal views on education to his Scottish friends, perhaps not. In either case, it supplies fair presumption that the rule of church and school may have been adopted in our own country. Be that as it may, we find schools in existence in various parts of Scotland at almost the earliest period in our documentary history. In 1124 we find one of the witnesses to a charter of confirmation styling himself "Berbeadh, rector of the schools of Abernethy." "Master of the schools of the city of St. Andrews" appears also in a charter between 1211 and 1216. "Adam, master of the schools of Perth," was, about 1213, one of the judges named by Pope Innocent III. for settling some controversy that had arisen between the monks of Paisley and William, clerk of Sanquhar. There were schools in Perth even earlier than 1213. Robert, bishop of St. Andrews between the years 1152-1159, confirmed to the monks of Dunfermline "the church of Perth and that of Stirling, and the schools." And again, in the period 1163-1172, Bishop Richard grants "to the Church of the Holy Trinity of Dunfermline, the school of Perth and the school of Stirling, and all the schools which

\* See Muller's History of Switzerland, published at Vienna about 1796.