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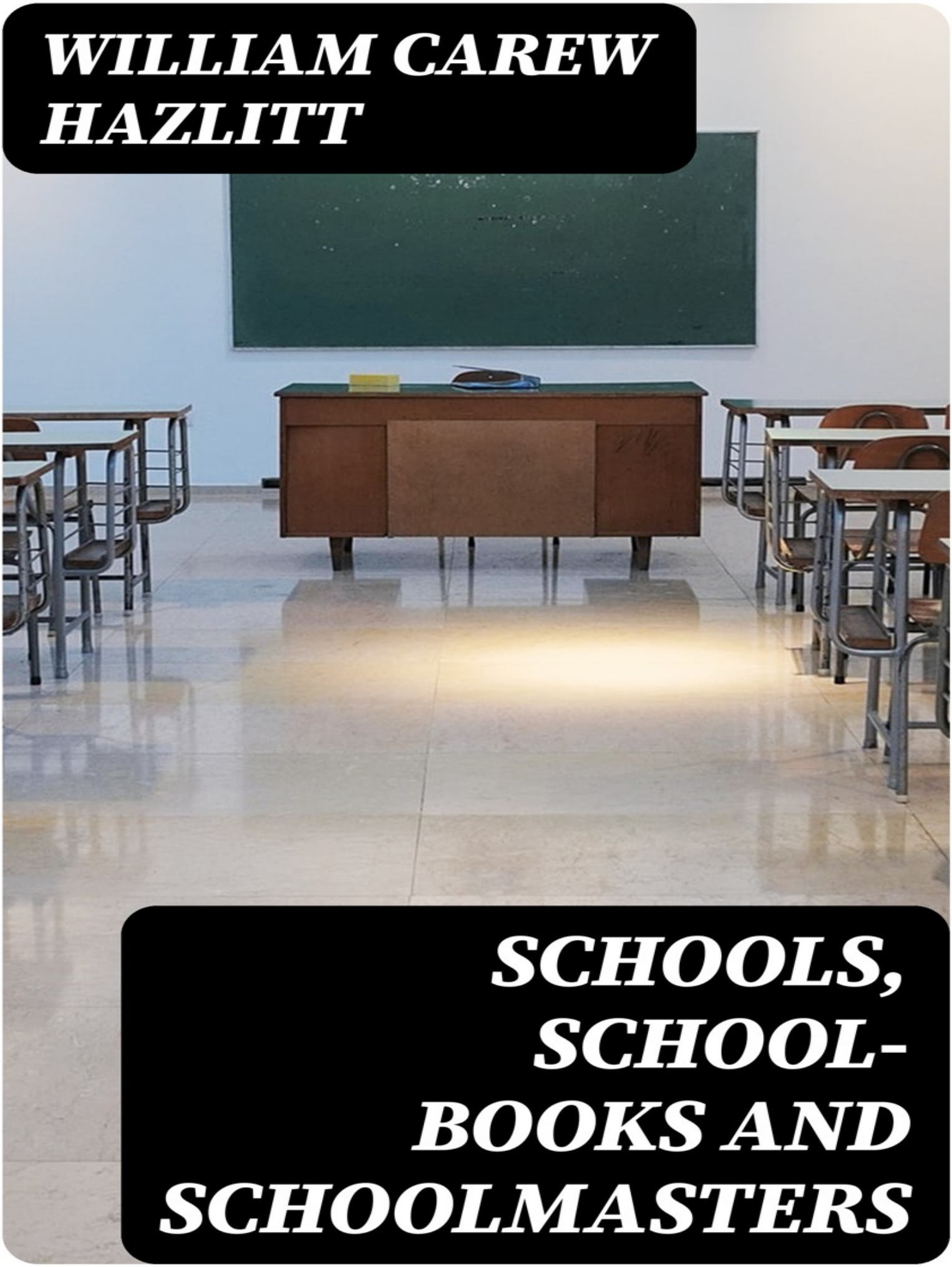

SCHOOLS, SCHOOL-BOOKS AND SCHOOLMASTERS

William Carew Hazlitt

Schools, School-Books and Schoolmasters

A Contribution to the History of Educational Development in Great Britain

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Table of Contents

PREFACE.

Table of Contents

Although the commencing section has been thrown into the introductory form, it has seemed to me necessary to annex a few lines by way of preface, in order to explain that the following pages do not pretend to deal exhaustively with the subject of which they treat, but offer to public consideration a series of representative types and selected specimens. To have barely enumerated all the authors and works on British education would fill a volume much larger than that in the hands of the reader.

My main object has been to trace the sources and rise of our educational system, and to present a general view of the principles on which the groundwork of this system was laid. So far as I am capable of judging, the narrative will be found to embody a good deal that is new and a good deal that ought to be interesting.

The bias of the volume is literary, not bibliographical; but its production has involved a very considerable amount of research, not only among books which proved serviceable, but among those which yielded me no contribution to my object.

W. C. H.

Barnes Common, Surrey,
November 1887.

SCHOOLS, SCHOOL-BOOKS,
AND

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I.

Table of Contents

Introductory survey of the old system of teaching—Salutary influence of the Church—Education of Englishmen in their own homes and on the Continent—Severity of early discipline—Dr. Busby.

I. A fair body of authentic evidence has been collected, and is here before us, exhibiting and illustrating the origin and progress of the educational movement, and the opportunities which our ancestors acquired and improved for mental cultivation and literary development.

An attentive consideration of the ensuing pages may bring us to the conclusion that the English and Scots, at all events, of former days were not ill provided with facilities for mastering the rudiments of learning, and that the qualifications necessary and sufficient for ordinary persons

and careers were within the reach of all men, and, as time went on, women, of moderate intelligence and resources.

Moreover, when the taste for a more elaborate and extended system of training, and for a circle of accomplishments, set in with the Stuarts, the appliances of every kind for gratifying and promoting it were superabundant; and London and other cities swarmed with experts, who either attached themselves to academies or worked on their own account, waiting on their clients or receiving them at their own places of business. The youth of family who had passed from the grammar-school or the tutor to the University, enjoyed, from the moment when professors began to flock hither from France, Italy, and Germany as to the best market, greatly increased facilities for completing themselves in special departments of science, as well as in such exercises as were thought to belong to gentlemen. As our intercourse with the Continent became more regular and general, its fashions and sentiments were gradually communicated to us, and we began to overcome our old insular prejudices. A familiarity with other languages and literatures than our own, and with the pursuits and amusements of countries which a narrow strip of sea separated, was the beneficial consequence of the French and Italian sympathies which the union of the crowns, after the death of the last of the Tudors, introduced into England.

We are scarcely entitled to plume ourselves on the elevation from which it is our privilege to look back on obsolete educational theories and principles. The change which we witness is of recent date and of political origin. It

is within an easily measurable number of years that the democratic wave has loosened and shaken the direct clerical jurisdiction over our schools and our studies. What more significant fact can there be, in proof of the conservative bigotry of those who so long exercised control in schoolroom and college, that a primer compiled in the first quarter of the sixteenth century was still substantially the standard authority less than a hundred years since?

When we regard a History of English Literature, and the works which either constitute its principal strength and glory, or even such as, rather from the circumstances connected with them than their own intrinsic importance, lend to it a certain incidental or special value, it becomes natural to inquire by what process or course of training the men and women whose names compose the roll of fame became, or were aided at least in becoming, what they were and remain?

As for the women, they followed their studies at home under governesses and professors; and Ballard’s volume on Learned Ladies will shew what was capable of accomplishment in a few isolated and conspicuous cases, before any scheme for the higher education of the sex had been broached. But it is with the men that I have more particularly to deal.

Every eminent Englishman who has done more or less to augment and enrich our literary stores, and an infinitely greater number who have adopted other vocations, passed of course through the scholastic ordeal. They were sent to school, and perhaps to college; and they had books put into their hands, as our boys have books put into theirs—books

written by the scholars of the time up to the knowledge and opinion of the time.

With the fewest exceptions, the boy was the father of the man, and what he had himself acquired he was content to see his children acquire. There were centuries during which the lines of instruction and the scope of culture varied little.

The greater part of our early English teachers came across the sea, or had been educated there; our best books were modelled on those of French or Roman grammarians, and the improvement in our system was due, when it came, to the *gymnasia* and academies of the Continent.

II. We all know that the Church in early times, before it became a conflicting and mischievous influence, did much valuable work toward the development and progress of literature and art, and was instrumental in preserving many monuments of ancient learning and genius, which might otherwise have perished. But the strong clerical element in the old social system operated beneficially on our English civilisation in another equally important way.

For a vast length of time the schools attached to the monasteries were not only the best, but almost the sole seminaries where an education of the higher class could be obtained. They were, in point of fact, the precursors of the similar establishments subsequently attached to some of the colleges; and it is further to be remarked, that, besides the ordinary features of a mediæval scholastic *curriculum*, they taught music for the sake of keeping a constant succession of candidates for the choir of the chapel. It was through the monks and through an ecclesiastical channel

that we derived both our most ancient schools of music and our primitive educational machinery, the two alike destined to become sensible, in course of time, of a potent secular influence, scarcely imaginable by their monastic institutors.

Bishop Percy says that the system of instruction appears to have consisted of learning the Psalms, probably by heart, and acquiring the principles of music, singing, arithmetic, and grammar. Some of the boys, he adds, who had made the art of music their profession, assisted in later life at the religious services on special occasions, while others relinquished their original callings, and sought their fortune as minstrels and instrumental players.

Altogether, it is evident that music and other branches of a liberal training were primarily indebted at the outset, and long subsequently, for their encouragement and diffusion to the only class which was at the period capable of undertaking tuition. We have to seek in the Church of the Middle Ages the source of all our scholastic erudition and refinement, and of all the humanising influence which music, in all its forms, has exerted over society.

III. Carlisle, in his well-known work on the Endowed Schools, supplies us with some very desirable facts touching the cathedral institutions which preceded the lay seminaries, and over which the bishop of the diocese presided *ex officio*. The pupils in these institutions were termed the scholastics of the diocese; and one of the latest survivals of the system was, perhaps, the old St. Paul’s, which Colet’s endowment eventually superseded. The preponderant element here was, of course, clerical; the boys were, as a rule, educated

with a view to ecclesiastical preferment; and those studies which lay outside the requirements of the early Church were naturally omitted. It was a narrow and warping course of discipline, which lasted, nevertheless, from the days of Alfred to the age of the Tudors.

But these cathedral schools themselves had grown out of the antecedent conventual establishments, of which hundreds must have at one time existed among us, and consequently the former represented a forward movement and a certain disposition to relax the severity and exclusiveness of purely religious education. As we see that subsequently it was the practice to attach to a college a preparatory school, as at Magdalen, Oxford, so in the mediæval time almost every monastic house had its special educational machinery for training aspirants to the various orders. This point does not really come within my immediate scope; but I thought it well to shew briefly how, as the lay schools evolved from the cathedral schools, so the latter were an outcome from the conventual. There seems, however, to have been one marked difference between the monastic or conventual and the cathedral programmes, that in the latter the sciences of law and medicine, having become independent professions, were abandoned in favour of the academies, where youths on quitting school were specially inducted into a knowledge of those Faculties.

Prior to the institution of colleges and schools of a better class, the nobility and gentry often sent their children to the monasteries and convents to be initiated in the elements or first principles of learning. The sort of education obtained here must have been of the most meagre character; the

course was restricted to grammar, philosophy of the cast then in vogue, and divinity; the classics were treated with comparative neglect, and a study of the living languages was still more remote from their design.

Even so late as the Tudor time, those who could afford to send their children abroad found the education better, and probably cheaper; some distinguished Englishmen, driven from their country by political or religious differences, brought up their families whitherever they fled as a matter of necessity.

Sir Thomas Bodley, in the account of his life written by himself in 1609, acquaints us with the fact that when his father was living at Geneva, the great centre of the Protestant refugees, and he was a boy of twelve, he was sufficiently advanced in learning, through his father's care, to attend the lectures delivered at that University in Hebrew, Greek, and divinity, in which last his teachers were Calvin and Beza; and besides these studies he had private tutors in the house of the gentleman with whom he boarded, including Robertus Constantinus, the lexicographer, who read Homer to him. On the return of the Bodleys to England upon the accession of Elizabeth, the member of the family who was destined to immortalise their name was sent to Oxford.

Bishop Waynflete appears to have been among the earliest men who perceived the necessity, at all events, of grounding boys more thoroughly in grammar, and he was the prime mover in the establishment of schools at Waynflete, Brackley, and Oxford, where the Accidence and Syntax were taught on an improved plan. The last-named

seminary was within the precincts of Magdalen College, and became by far the most important and most famous of the three, in consequence of its good fortune in having among its masters men like Anniquil and Stanbridge, who took a real interest in their profession, and bred scholars capable of diffusing and developing the love of acquiring knowledge and the art of communicating it.

As Knight observes, grammar was the main object; but then the method was a great advance on the old monastic plan. Even Jesus College, Cambridge, was merely erected and endowed for a master and six fellows, and a certain number of scholars to be instructed in grammar.

At the time of the Civil War, John Allibone, a Buckinghamshire man, and author of that rather well-known Latin description of the University as reformed by the Republicans in 1648, was head-master of Magdalen School.

In the English *Ship of Fools*, 1509, which is a good deal more than a translation, Barclay ridicules the archaic system of teaching, and Skelton does the same in his poetical satires. It was by the indefatigable exposure of the inefficiency and unsoundness of the prevailing modes of instruction that reforms were gradually conceded and accomplished. In all political and social movements the caricaturist plays his part.

It is not surprising to find Ascham in his turn, fifty years later on, taking exception to the school-teaching and teachers which had educated, and more or less satisfied, so many anterior generations.

We naturally encounter in much of the literary work of the seventeenth century advice and information in matters

relating to scholastic and academical culture wholly unhelpful to an inquiry into the training of the middle class. In the section of a well-known book, entitled *The Gentleman's Calling*, 8vo, 1660, dedicated to our immediate subject, the anonymous author observes: "Scarce any that owns the name of a *Gentleman*, but will commit his Son to the care of some Tutor, either at home or abroad, who at first instils those Rudiments, proper to their tenderer years, and as Age matures their parts, so advances his Lectures, till he have led them into those spacious fields of learning, which will afford them both Exercise and Delight. This is that *Tree of Knowledge* upon which there is no interdict...."

The preceding extract points to a sphere of life which was wont to conclude its preparatory stage with the Grand Tour and an initiation into the profligacy of all the capitals of Europe; but we see that it deals with a case in which a tutor took a youth almost, as it were, from his nurse's apron-strings, and does not merely indicate a finishing course. The volume from which the passage comes has a promising title, and might have been intensely interesting and truly important; but it was written by some dry and pedantic scribbler, and, like Osborne's *Advice to a Son*, 1656, and many other treatises of a cognate character, is a tissue of dulness and inanity. It is characteristic of the whole that portraits of Jeremiah and Zedekiah are selected as appropriate graphic embellishments.

From a woodcut on the back of the title-page of a *Grammatica Initialis*, or Elementary Grammar, 1509, we form a conclusion as to the ancient Continental method of instruction. This engraving portrays the interior of a school,

apparently situated in a crypt; the master is seated at his desk with a book open before him, and above it a double inkstand and a pen, both of primitive fabric. The teacher is evidently reading aloud to his four scholars, who sit in front of him, a passage from the volume, and they repeat after him, parson-and-clerk-wise. They learn by rote. They have no books before them. They represent a stage in the teaching process before the science of reading from print or MS. had been acquired by the scholar, and copies of school-books were multiplied by the press. There was no preparation of work. The quarter wage included no charge for books supplied. The teaching was purely oral. So it was probably throughout. It was thus that Stanbridge, Whittinton, Lily, and their followers conducted their schools, long after the cradle at Magdalen had been reinforced by other seminaries all over the country.

There is no written record of this fashion of communicating information from the master to the pupil, so diametrically opposed to modern ideas, but conformable to an era of general illiteracy; it is a sister-art, which lends us a helping hand in this case by admitting us to what may be viewed as an interior coeval with Erasmus and More.

The modern school-holidays appear to have been formerly unknown. In the rules for the management of St. Paul’s and Merchant Taylors’, for instance, where a vacation is called a *remedy*, no such indulgence was permitted save in cases of illness; and it is curious that in the account which Fitzstephen gives of the three seminaries already established in London in the reign of Henry II. the boys are

represented as spending the holy days (rather than holidays) in logical or rhetorical exercises and disputations.

In all the public schools, indeed, holidays were at first intimately associated with the recurrence of saints' anniversaries and with festivals of the Church, and were restricted to them. The modern vacation was not understood; and the first step toward it, and the earliest symptom of a revolt against the absence of any such intervals for diversion from studies and attendance at special services, was an appeal made in 1644 to the Court of the Company by the scholars of Merchant Taylors "for play-days instead of holy-days."

The object of this petition was to procure a truce with work and an opportunity for exercise and sport, in lieu of a system under which the boys, from their point of view, merely substituted one kind of task for another; but the time had not yet arrived for reform in this matter; our elders clang tenaciously to the stern and monotonous routine which they found established, and in which they had been bred; and the feeling in favour of relaxing the tension by regular intervals of complete repose is an incidence of modern thought, which betrays a tendency at the present moment to gravitate too far to the opposite extreme.

A quite recent report of one of the great schools in the United States—the West Point School—manifests a survival of the old-fashioned ideas upon this subject, carried out by the Pilgrim Fathers to the American Plantations; and whereas in the mother country the original release from work in order to attend religious services has resolved itself into the latter-day vacation or holiday, the modern

educational system beyond the Atlantic seems to withdraw the boys from the church, not in favour of the playground or the country, but as a means of lengthening the hours of study.

IV. Ingulphus, who lived in the reign of Edward the Confessor (A.D. 1041-66), furnishes us with the earliest actual testimony of a schoolboy's experiences. "I was born," he tells us, "in the beautiful city of London; educated in my tender years at Westminster: from whence I was afterwards sent to the *Study of Oxford*, where I made greater progress in the Aristotelian philosophy than many of my contemporaries, and became very well acquainted with the Rhetoric of Cicero." It is very interesting to learn further that, when he was at school at Westminster, and used to visit his father at the Court of Edward, he was often examined, both on the Latin language and on logic, by the Queen herself.

Insights of this kind at so early a period are naturally rare, and indeed we have to cross over to the Tudor time and the infancy of Eton before we meet with another such personal trait on English ground.

Thomas Tusser, author of the *Points of Good Husbandry*, admits us in his metrical autobiography to an acquaintance with the severity of treatment which awaited pupils in his time at public schools, and which, in fact, lingered, as part of the gross and ignorant system, down to within the last generation. We have all heard of the renowned Dr. Busby; but that celebrated character was merely a type which has happened from special circumstances to be selected for

commemoration. Tusser, describing his course of training, says:—

> “From Paul’s I went, to Eton sent,
> To learn straightways the Latin phrase;
> Where fifty-three stripes given to me
> At once I had.
> For fault but small, or none at all,
> It came to pass that beat I was:
> See, Udall, see the mercy of thee
> To me, poor lad!”

But this kind of experience was too common; and it had its advocates even outside the professional pale: for Lord Burleigh, as we learn from Ascham, was on the side of the disciplinarians.

Sir Richard Sackville, Ascham’s particular friend, on the contrary, bitterly deplored the hindrance and injury which he had suffered as a boy from the harshness of his teacher; and Udall himself carried his oppression so far as to offend his employers and procure his dismissal.

Nash, in *Summer’s Last Will and Testament*, 1600, makes Summer say:—“Here, before all this company, I profess myself an open enemy to ink and paper. I’ll make it good upon the accidence, body of me! that in speech is the devil’s paternoster. Nouns and pronouns, I pronounce you as traitors to boys’ buttocks; syntaxis and prosodia, you are tormentors of wit, and good for nothing, but to get a schoolmaster twopence a week!”

In a French sculpture of the end of the fourteenth century we have probably as early a glimpse as we are likely to get

anywhere graphically of a scene in a school, where a mistress is administering castigation to one of her pupils laid across her knees, the others looking on. But it soon became a favourite subject for the illustrator and caricaturist.

The strictness of scholastic discipline existed in an aggravated form, no doubt, in early days, and formed part of a more barbarous system of retribution for wrong done or suffered. The principle of wholesale and indiscriminate flagellation for offences against the laws of the school or for neglect of studies marched hand in hand with the vindictive legislation of bygone days; and doubtless, from the first, the rod often supplied a vent for the temper or caprice of the pedagogue.

At Merchant Taylors' in my time the cane was freely used, and the forms of chastisement were the *cut on the hand* and *the bender*, for which the culprit had to stoop.

The *régime* of the once redoubtable Dr. Busby at Westminster was a kind of survival of the Draconic rule of Udall at Eton when poor Tusser was there; and it is exceedingly probable that in the time of Charles II. notions of what was salutary for youth in the shape of *unguentum baculinum*, or stick-ointment, had undergone very slight alteration since the previous century. Busby, of whom there is a strange-looking portrait in Nichols' *Anecdotes*, was the most sublime of coxcombical Dons, and within his own pale an autocrat second to none of the Cæsars. Smaller luminaries in the same sphere paid him homage in dedicatory epistles.

Everybody must remember the traditional anecdote of the visit of Charles II. to Westminster, and of the King, with his hat under his arm, walking complacently behind Busby through the school, the latter covered; and of the head-master, when his Majesty and himself (*Ego et rex meus* over again) were beyond observation, bowing respectfully to Charles, trencher-cap in hand, and explaining that if the boys had any idea that there was a greater man in England than him, his authority would be at an end.

But there is a second story of Busby and a luckless Frenchman who threw a stone by accident through one of the windows while the lessons were in progress and the principal was hearing a class. Busby sent for the offender, thinking it was one of the boys in the playground; but when the stranger was introduced, it was “Take him up,” and a flogging was inflicted before the whole assembly. The Frenchman went away in a fury, and at once sent a challenge to Busby by a messenger. The Doctor reads the cartel, and cries, “Take him up,” and the envoy shares the fate of his employer. He, too, enraged at the treatment, returns, and demands compensation from Monsieur; but the latter shrugs his shoulders, and can only say, “Ah, me! he be the vipping man; he vip me, he vip you, he vip all the world.”

It was of Busby that some one said how fortunate it was for the Seraphim and Cherubim that they had no nether extremities, or when he joined them, he would have “taken them up,” as the Red Indian in his happy hunting-grounds still pursues his favourite occupation on earth.

Charles Burney, one of a famous and accomplished family, kept school at one time at Greenwich. He subsequently removed to Chiswick. There are still persons living who recollect him and his oddities. He was a great martinet—a miniature Busby; but a singular point about him was his habit of inserting in the quarterly accounts sent to the parents a charge for the birch-rods bought in the course of the term, and applied for the benefit of his pupils. This was a novel and ingenious method, a treatment of the question from a financier's point of view; and if black draughts and blue pills were recognised as legitimate items in the school-bill, why not the materials for external application?

The condition of the schoolmaster himself, on the other hand, and of his allies, the tutor and the usher, was as far removed from our present ideas as the code which he enforced and the books which he expounded. The freer diffusion of knowledge and an advanced civilisation have tended to liberate the schoolboy from the barbarous despotism of his teachers, the majority of whom were latter-day survivals of a decadent type, and to raise the latter in the social scale. The rod is broken, and Busbyism is extinct. But the successors of that renowned personage enjoy a higher rank and enlarged opportunities, and may maintain both if they keep pace with the progress of thought and opinion.

The schoolmaster has set his house in order at the eleventh hour, in obedience to external pressure, coming from men who have revolted against the associations and prejudices of early days, and inaugurated a new educational

Hegira; and the evolutions of this modern platform are by no means fully manifest.

The propensity of the class to adhere to ancient traditions in regard to the application of corporal punishment was, of course, to be checked only by the force of public opinion. Had it not been that the latter was gradually directed against the evil, the probability is that this would have ranked among those popular antiquities which time has not seriously or generally touched. But so early as 1669 a representation on the subject was actually laid before Parliament in a document called “The Children’s Petition: Or, A modest remonstrance of that intolerable grievance our youth lie under in the accustomed severities of the school-discipline of this nation.” This protest was printed, and facing the title-page there meets the eye a notice to this effect: “It is humbly desired this book may be delivered from one hand to another, and that gentleman who shall first propose the motion to the House, the book is his, together with the prayers of posterity,”—in which last phrase a double sense may or may not lurk.

It required many attacks on such a stronghold as the united influence and prejudice of the teaching profession to produce an effect, and probably no effect was produced at first; for in 1698 another endeavour was made to obtain parliamentary relief, and in this instance the address humbly sought “an Act to remedy the foul abuse of children at schools, especially in the great schools of this nation.”

These preparatory movements indicated the direction in which sentiment and taste were beginning to stir, not so much at the outset, perhaps, from any persuasion that

greater clemency was conducive to progress, but from a natural disposition on the part of parents to revolt against the senseless ill-usage of their boys by capricious martinets.

II.

Table of Contents

The Foundations—Vocabularies, Glossaries, and *Nominalia*—Their manifold utility—Colloquy of Archbishop Alfric (tenth century)—Anglo-Gallic treatise of Alexander Neckam on utensils (twelfth century)—Works of Johannes de Garlandia—His Dictionary (thirteenth century) and its pleasant treatment—The Pictorial Vocabulary—Anglo-Gallic Dictionary of Walter de Biblesworth (late thirteenth century).

I. The origin and history of a class of documents which may be viewed as the basis and starting-point of our educational literature have first to be considered. I refer to the vocabularies, glossaries, and *nominalia*, which afford examples of the method of instruction pursued in this country from the Middle Ages to the invention of printing.

Such of these manuals as we fortunately still possess represent the surviving residue of a much larger number; and from the perishable material on which they were written and their constant employment in tuition, it becomes a source of agreeable surprise that so many specimens remain to throw light on the mode in which elementary learning was acquired in England in the infancy of a taste for letters and knowledge.

In the small volumes on *Cookery and Gardening* by the present writer, he has, as a matter of course, called into requisition these early philological relics to illustrate both those subjects; and this fact testifies to the multiplicity of purposes for which such relics can be rendered serviceable. There is hardly, indeed, any aspect or line of mediæval life which these productions do not assist very powerfully in making more luminous and familiar. But their original design and destination were obviously educational. They were rude and imperfect vehicles, contrived by men of narrow culture and limited experience for the instruction of the young; and they were advisedly thrown, as far as possible, into an interlocutory form—the form most apt to impress circumstances and names on the memories of pupils. Some of these, which I shall presently describe a little more at large, were constructed on the interlinear principle, not, as among ourselves, for the edification of the learner, but, as Mr. Wright points out, for the preceptor's guidance in days when the latter was often a person of very mediocre attainments, and was incapable of dispensing with occasional assistance to his recollection. In other words, the majority of schoolmasters and ushers were merely the mechanical medium for conveying to the boys the lessons which they found set down in treatises prepared by persons of superior skill and erudition.

These primitive schoolbooks are, as a rule, easily susceptible of classification under the heads of Vocabularies, Dictionaries, Colloquies, and Narrative or descriptive texts, of which the two latter divisions are usually interlinear, either in part or throughout. Some of

these terms, again, were formerly understood in acceptations different from our own; for a Vocabulary was what we should rather call a Dictionary, and a Dictionary was what we should rather call a Phrase-Book.

II. The most ancient item in the collection before me belongs to that century of which King Alfred just lived to witness the opening, the Colloquy of Archbishop Alfric, in Anglo-Saxon and Latin, and known only from an enlarged copy or transcript made by the writer's disciple and namesake. The original is supposed to have been compiled while Alfric was a monk at Winchester. He succeeded to the archbishopric in 995, and his pupil and editor died about the middle of the following century. The professed object of the undertaking was the acquisition of the Latin language by the Anglo-Saxon youth in the intervals of leisure from other pursuits or duties; and the process of instruction is conducted on the plan of a dialogue in Latin between a master and boys, with an interlinear Saxon gloss. It is significant of the harsh discipline which prevailed in those days that one of the foremost points of inquiry is in relation to flogging. The teacher asks if the boys choose to be flogged at their lessons, and the answer is that they would rather be flogged and taught than be ignorant, but that they rely on his clemency and unwillingness to punish them, unless he is obliged. The entire work deals with the matters which were most familiar to the student and came nearest home to their everyday life and sympathies; and this feature constitutes for us its special value and beauty. The Latin itself is indifferent enough, and bespeaks the acquisition of the