

# **THE SCHOOLS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND**

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A. F. Leach

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HISTORY OF EDUCATION

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ENGLAND

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*By*

A. F. LEACH

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#### **Publisher's Note**

The publisher has gone to great lengths to ensure the quality of this reprint but points out that some imperfections in the original copies may be apparent.





WINCHESTER COLLEGE, c. 1460

FROM A DRAWING BY WARDEN CHANDLER IN MS. LIFE OF WYKEHAM, AT NEW COLLEGE,  
OXFORD

# THE SCHOOLS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

BY

A. F. LEACH

WITH FORTY-THREE ILLUSTRATIONS

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## PREFACE

**T**HIS is the first attempt at a history of English Schools before the Reformation, reckoned from the accession of Edward VI. It is surprising and yet not surprising that such a history has never been attempted before. It is surprising in view of the interest of the subject and the wealth of illustrative material; but it is not surprising when it is remembered that, before the year 1892, few guessed and fewer knew that there were any public or grammar schools—two terms for the same thing—in England at all, except Winchester and Eton, before the reputed creation of schools by that boy king. If anyone was pressed with the problem how learned persons from John of Salisbury in the twelfth to Cardinal Wolsey in the sixteenth century obtained the schooling which fitted them for their university careers, the solution was invariably sought in some monastery near their birthplace, which was, without the smallest proof, credited with keeping a school. If one asked what was taught in these monastic schools one was told, psalm-singing and a little elementary Latin grammar: a fine preparation truly for the Poly-craticus, or the statutes of Cardinal College.

Dr. Furnivall, the author of the best historical account of education and schools of England, in the introduction to his *Babees' Book*, published by the Early English Text Society in 1868, informed me in 1892, in answer to a request for help in research into the history of grammar schools, that there were no grammar schools in England before Edward VI. Soon convinced to the contrary, he was always ready to impart instances of earlier schools which he came across in his wide reading in ancient manuscripts and books.

Yet long after the facts had been published, when the

Head Master of a certain considerable Midland school asked for information as to its origin and history and was told that there was evidence of its existence in the days of Edward the Confessor, he responded by entreating me not to try and make a fool of him. Yet I found he firmly believed in the fable of the foundation of Oxford University by Alfred the Great; the demonstration of its absurdity by Parker, and the revelation of the true origin of universities by Denifle and Rashdall not having reached him.

Some idea of the true history of our schools has now penetrated to scholastic circles, but it has certainly not reached most antiquaries or historians, still less the general public, in spite of the detailed stories, beginning before the Conquest in many cases, already published in the *Victoria County History of England* of more than a dozen counties. So the invitation to contribute this volume to Messrs. Methuen's popular series of *Antiquary's Books* was readily accepted. The plan of these books, however, excludes references to authorities: an exclusion peculiarly unfortunate for historical statements, many of which are so contradictory to received opinions that they will appear at first sight incredible to a great many people, and which rest largely on manuscripts still for the most part unprinted and unpublished. There is, however, not a single statement in this book not founded on verifiable authority. The relevant extracts from many of the manuscript and other recondite sources have now been printed verbatim, or detailed references given, in previous publications. A list of these in which the authorities, so far as they are not given in the text, can be verified in detail, is appended.

ARTHUR F. LEACH

34 ELM PARK GARDENS, S.W.

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# THE SCHOOLS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

## CHAPTER I

### OUR OLDEST SCHOOL—CANTERBURY

SCHOOLS in England are coeval with the coming of Christianity. Before its introduction a school, whether word or thing, was unknown. Schools no doubt existed in Roman Britain both before the introduction of Christianity and after. For already, in the latter part of the first century, Juvenal relates that eloquent Gauls are teaching the Britons to plead causes and Thule is discussing the establishment of a Rhetoric School. But whatever other institutions of Britain, if any, survived its conversion into England, churches and schools did not.

For 150 years after the Conquest the English remained heathen, and no traces of Roman culture are to be found among them. They held no intercourse, except in war, with the Britons in the west of the island. If any Britons remained in Saxon England, they were a remnant saved as slaves and serfs, and there is no evidence that they remained Christian. For the rest, says the latest investigator of the subject, Professor Oman, "the unconquered Britons of the West and North made no effort to convert their adversaries. . . . The only reference to the English that can be detected in the surviving notes of British Church-Councils is a clause in the Canons of the Synod of *Lucus Victoriae* (569 A.D.), imposing a penance of thirteen years on a man who shall have acted as guide to the barbarians. Even in later days, in spite of Saxon exiles at British Courts, there is no attempt at conversion. Not one solitary legend survives to hint at such an endeavour."

When, at the end of the sixth century, Christianity came to

## 2 THE SCHOOLS OF MEDIEVAL ENGLAND

England, it came, not from the Celtic Britons, nor even from the neighbouring and kindred Franks, but, "bret hot from Rome," a direct importation from Italy. The Frankish wife of King Ethelbert of Kent, with her Christian chaplain, had no doubt prepared her husband's mind for the admission of the Roman missionaries. But it was the prestige of the missionaries direct from Rome and from Pope Gregory the Great himself, under the leadership of Augustine, the Prior of Gregory's own monastery of St. Andrew on the Cælian Hill, which caused Kent, and through Kent England, to become part of the "Holy Catholic Church," to establish Christian churches, and, as a necessary concomitant, schools. For not only were the ceremonies of the new religion a foreign product imported by foreigners speaking Latin, but the language in which the ceremonies were performed had itself by 500 years' usage acquired as the language of the religion of Rome the halo of immemorial antiquity and therefore of sanctity. To understand the rudiments of the new religion, to take part in the new religious worship, it was necessary for the English to learn Latin. The modern missionary, the Protestant missionary at all events, endeavours to adapt the religion he imports to the understanding of his hearers. Though the Authorized Version of the Bible and the Common Prayer Book are sanctified by a usage twice as long as that of the Vulgate when first introduced into England, the missionary of to-day does not seek to impose them on his converts in the English tongue. He presents them with a translation in their vernacular, so that the Gospel is preached to each man, as in the Acts of the Apostles, in the tongue in which he was born. Not so acted Augustine, "the Apostle of the English". The whole of Western Europe had been Romanized first and Christianized long afterwards. Hence the Roman service had been naturally performed in the Roman tongue which had become the official, if not the vernacular, tongue. When the barbarians in successive hordes invaded Gaul they adopted the language as well as the religion of the conquered. It never seems to have occurred to St. Augustine or Gregory the Great that in this respect England differed from Italy and from Gaul, that, in a word, England was no longer Britain. Augustine therefore imported and

was successful in imposing on the English the Roman ritual and the Roman religious books in "the veray Romain tongue," as Dean Colet called it, as it was spoken, or supposed to be spoken in the days of St. Paul, of Jerome, and of Gregory.

To do this, the missionaries had to come with the Latin service-book in one hand, and the Latin grammar in the other. Not only had the native priests to be taught the tongue in which their services were performed, but the converts, at least of the upper classes, had to be taught the elements of grammar before they could grasp the elements of religion. They could not profitably go to church till they had first gone to school. So the Grammar School became in theory, as it often was in fact, the necessary ante-room, the vestibule of the church. But, as there were no schools any more than there were churches in England, Augustine had to create both.

There is every reason to believe that he established the first school in England at Canterbury at the same time with, and as part and parcel of, the first church. Augustine landed in the spring of the year 597. On 2 June that year Ethelbert was baptized. Later, Augustine went over to Gaul and was consecrated bishop by the Bishop of Arles. When he returned, probably in the spring of 598, "Ethelbert," says Bede, "did not delay giving his teachers a place befitting the dignity of their seat in Canterbury his metropolis, and at the same time conferring on them necessary possessions of various kinds". That is to say, he endowed the archbishop and his see. Augustine, "as soon as he had obtained his episcopal see in the royal city, with the King's assistance, recovered possession of a church which had been formerly built by the work of Roman Christians, and dedicated it in the name of Jesus Christ," and Christ Church the cathedral has been called ever since.

It may be safely asserted then, that in this year, 598, as an adjunct to Christ Church Cathedral, or rather as part of it, and under the tuition of himself and the clerks who came with him and whom Ethelbert endowed, Augustine established the Grammar School which still flourishes under the name of the King's School, not from its original founder, Ethelbert, but from its re-founder, Henry VIII. It cannot, indeed, be proved directly that the school was established in 598. But the inference that it was rests on the unimpeach-



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able evidence of Bede, speaking of a time little more than thirty years later, in which the school appears as a model for a new school founded in another English kingdom.

"At this time," i.e. 631, according to Mr. C. Plummer in the latest and most learned edition of Bede, "Sigberct presided over the kingdom of the East English. He, while in exile in Gaul . . . received baptism. After his return, as soon as he had obtained the kingdom, wishing to imitate what he had seen well done in Gaul, he founded a school in which boys might be taught grammar (*scolam in qua pueri litteris erudiantur*), with the assistance of Bishop Felix, whom he had got from Kent, who provided them with ushers and masters (*pedagogos ac magistros*) after the custom of the Canterbury folk." The word in the original is *Cantuariorum*, which may be also translated Kentish folk. It is, however, immaterial whether we translate "Kentish" or "Canterbury" folk, since Canterbury, as the metropolis of the Kentish kingdom, and as the royal and archiepiscopal city, was naturally the seat of the chief school, as it was also, by the express testimony of a Saxon writer, "of the Supreme Court of the Kentish kingdom". But if the school had already a custom of its own and was established enough to become a model for other kingdoms in 631, by whom could it have been established except by Augustine, or at what epoch could it have been established except at the first establishment of the see? Felix was a Burgundian who had come over to England and been consecrated by Archbishop Honorius, one of the last survivors of Augustine's original band of missionaries. That Sigberct and Felix should have thought it necessary to establish a school on the christianization of East Anglia and the founding of the East Anglian see, in 631, strengthens the inference that St. Augustine and King Ethelbert had done the same in the establishment of the see at Canterbury in 598.

We need not discuss and dissect the unwarrantable claim that Sigberct's school was at Cambridge. The East Anglian see was settled at Dunwich—and Dunwich has been rightly claimed by the East Anglian historians as the seat of Sigberct's school, and, wrongly, as therefore the oldest school in England. But this is through the default of the Canterbury historians who went astray seeking the founder of

their school in the Greek archbishop Theodore, of whom more hereafter. It is obvious that the school which was taken as the model, and which furnished the first masters to the school founded on its model, like Winchester to Eton 800 years later, must be older than the copy. Even if Dunwich School had not perished, the primary place among the schools, as among the churches, of England must be assigned to Canterbury.

The vexed question of which is "Our Oldest School" is therefore settled in favour of the ancient Grammar School of the city or cathedral church of Canterbury—the terms are convertible—known, though only since the eighteenth century, as the King's School, Canterbury.

Recently, the claim of Canterbury, generally accepted since its first assertion in *The Times* of 14 September, 1896, reinforced by detailed exposition in articles in the same paper of 7 September, 1897, and in *The Guardian* of 12 and 19 January, 1898, has been questioned, and the priority sought to be assigned to Rochester Cathedral School. The basis of the Rochester claim was eventually reduced in a letter to *The Times* of 4 January, 1911, to a statement in "an old history of Rochester," that "in the year 604 Justus endowed six secular priests for the instruction of youth" there. This statement, involving a school with five assistant masters, a number unheard of and undreamt of in English schools before the eighteenth century, is absolutely incredible. Even if the "old history"—the date and provenance of which have been asked for but have not been vouchsafed—were accepted as an authority comparable to that of Bede, it could not make us accept Rochester as the older school. To do so would be to set the disciple above his master. For the See of Rochester was an offshoot of and subordinate to Canterbury. "In 604," says Bede, "Augustine, Archbishop of Britain, ordained two bishops, Mellitus and Justus, the first as bishop of the East Saxons with his see at St. Paul's, London, and the other as bishop at Rochester; in which the king built St. Andrew's church, and he gave to the bishops of each of those churches many gifts as he had done at Canterbury; and added lands and property for the use of those who were with the bishops"—their clerks or chapters.

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If it is inferred from this—and it is a perfectly fair inference—that Rochester School and, by parity of reasoning, St. Paul's School, London, were established as a part of those episcopal establishments in 604, from the very same inference, and on the authority of the same record, it must be admitted that Rochester and London were later than Canterbury, their mother, mistress, and model, by six years.

Two years after the establishment of Dunwich Grammar School on the model of Canterbury, we hear of the establishment of a Song School at York, for which also Canterbury was the model. When Paulinus, one of Augustine's Canterbury mission, after Christianizing King Edwin and York in 627, fled from it after the battle of Heathfield, in which Edwin was defeated and killed by an unholy alliance between the heathen Penda of Mercia and the Christian Welsh in 633, he left behind him James, the deacon who "though an ecclesiastic, was also a saint". Bede, writing as a monk, thought none but monks really holy. When peace was restored in the province—i.e. after Oswald had recovered it by the battle of Heavenfield in 635—"when the number of the faithful increased, James acted as master to many in church chanting after the Roman or Canterbury fashion," i.e. the Gregorian as distinguished from the Ambrosian or Milanese chant.

These Song Schools became even more general than the Grammar Schools. The Song School at Rochester is expressly mentioned by Bede in Theodore's time as being derived from Canterbury. Putta, whom Archbishop Theodore found at Rochester, and made bishop there, is described "as well instructed in ecclesiastical learning, . . . and especially skilled in the art of chanting in church after the Roman fashion, which he had learnt from the pupils of the blessed Pope Gregory himself". This Putta, when Rochester was ravaged by the King of Mercia in 675, settled down as a simple parish priest in Mercia and went about "teaching church singing (*ecclesiae carmina*) wherever he was asked".

The twin schools of Grammar and Song, which have often been confounded as if they were one school, are found side by side in connexion with all the great churches, that is in all the great centres of population, from the age of Augustine and Ethelbert to the age of Cranmer and Edward VI, as distinct

foundations, completely differentiated in function as they were in their teaching, and generally in their government. In small places they were sometimes united under one master. Though as late as 1519 a school-author, who had been Headmaster first of Eton and then of Winchester, William Horman, asserted in echo of Quintilian, himself copying the Greeks, that, without a knowledge of music, grammar cannot be perfect, yet the teaching of singing and music, so often rashly asserted to be the main work of the pre-Reformation school, and the Song Schools which gave it, were always subordinate and secondary to the teaching of grammar and the Grammar School. To a large extent the Song Schools performed the function of Elementary Schools, while the Grammar Schools were the Secondary Schools, and, before the days of Universities, gave university or higher education as well. Our main task is to follow the foundations and fortunes of the Grammar Schools.

For the Song Schools were in essence special or professional schools for those engaged in the actual performance of the services, and useful mainly for them, whereas the Grammar Schools gave a general education, as much needed by the statesman, the lawyer, the civil servant, and the clerk as by the priest or cleric. For a Grammar School meant a school which taught the classics, especially the Latin language and literature; the terms being interchangeable. All schools, in the ordinary parlance, schools *simpliciter*, schools without an epithet, schools other than special schools, such as schools of law, of medicine, or later, of theology, or of song, or writing, or of arms, or dancing, or of needlework, were Grammar Schools, *scole gramaticales, ludi literarii*. These schools descend direct from Rome and indirectly from Alexandria.

They were no creation of Christianity or of Christian times: no development of catechetical schools or of church officers. For it is certain that our schools are not derived, as sometimes alleged, from the catechetical schools, beginning with that of St. Mark at Alexandria, whom the learned nun, Miss Drane, depicted as teaching a sort of elementary school in which the grey barbarian learnt the rudiments side by side with the Christian child. The smallest study of the meaning of catechumen and the object of catechetical teaching should

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have prevented this hypothesis from ever being presented, or rather, such a wild guess from ever having been made.

Catechetical schools, so called, were nothing more than courses of lectures to catechumens, who, whether they were new converts or long-standing Christians, were grown-up people being prepared for baptism by catechesis, that is oral instruction, in the principles of the Christian faith. In the first three centuries of the Christian Church no one dreamt of baptizing infants. To do so would have seemed not so much profane, though it would have been that, as preposterous. Baptism was the supreme rite, the admission to the highest grade in the Christian gild, not as now the first initiation into it. Tertullian, writing in the third century on Baptism, exhorts the faithful to get over the business of marriage and founding families before they incur the awful responsibilities of baptism, a regeneration, a new birth of the soul, which was freed from all sin thereby, a "baptism of repentance". He asks, referring to the proposal made by some that children of three or four years old—no one had suggested new-born babies—should be baptized, why should the age of innocence be in a hurry to get its sins remitted? A century and a half later, when Augustine, at the age of fourteen, clamoured to be baptized, his mother told him to wait until he was older and had a deeper sense of responsibility. To be baptized was to be illuminated, and a passage in the Epistle to the Hebrews had given rise to, or perhaps rather expressed, the current belief that mortal sin committed after baptism could not be forgiven. "For as touching those who have once been illuminated . . . but then have fallen away it is impossible to renew them again unto repentance." The age of thirty, the traditional age at which Christ was baptized, was regarded as the normal age for baptism, but many put it off to their death-beds, and then risked being unable to receive it because through physical or mental weakness they were unable to repeat or understand the formulas.

Catechumens therefore were grown persons being informed or instructed in the mysteries of Christianity, translated by the Latin *audientes*, hearing or audience.

There are two sets of early catechetical lectures extant. The famous Didache or Teaching of the Apostles, now recog-

nized as being a guide to catechists, is simply an exposition of the doctrines and services of the Church, a theological treatise. The Catechetical Lectures of Cyril of Alexandria, Bishop of Jerusalem, delivered in 347, are eighteen homilies or expository sermons, addressed to grown-up congregations. The title of the first is "To those to be enlightened," the *illuminandi*. The second is on the necessity for "Repentance and remission of sins," and the third expounds that "Baptism gives remission". The last thirteen go steadily through the Creed, expounding and explaining the meaning and importance of its articles. There is not a word in them to suggest that this catechist is educating the young. Chiefly he is arguing against the heathen as a missionary nowadays might in preaching to Hindoos, Brahmins, or Chinese sages.

The Great Catechism of Gregory of Nyssa, written about 380, was lately cited in the *American Cyclopædia of Education* (1912) as giving him "a place in the realm of pedagogy". Nobody who had ever looked at it could possibly claim it as a pedagogical work. Like Clement of Alexandria's *Pedagogue* of 150 years before, it is a theological textbook pure and simple, which did not even, as the *Pedagogue* had done, treat the Church under the metaphor of a school, of which the tutor was Christ. So too Augustine of Hippo's work *On catechizing beginners* (*De catechizandis rudimentis*), written in the year 400, is no treatise on educational method, but a handbook of that which is called, in the title of one of the divinity professors at Oxford, pastoral theology, a series of hints how to meet the difficulties presented to or by catechumens of varying degrees of education and intelligence. Its object may be seen at once from the opening words, "You said that when you were a deacon at Carthage, you often had those brought to you who were to be instructed in the Christian faith".

There was not even any building set apart for the catechizing, which could be called a Catechetical School. When Origen in 203 was employed at the age of eighteen as catechist by Bishop Demetrius of Alexandria, he is said to have been given the duty of teaching in the church. By Ambrose of Milan in 380 the baptistery itself was appropriately used for the purpose. He relates how when, after reading and expounding the lessons, he had sent away the bulk of the catechumens,



he taught the competent (*competentes*), the advanced catechumens who were candidates for actual baptism at the ensuing Easter, the Creed itself.

The early Church as a whole was opposed to education, because the usual school education, being based on the study of the poets, was necessarily mixed up with the pagan mythology, and the higher education in the "philosophy of the Greeks" was mistrusted. So though the Church was wise enough to make use of learned converts when it got them, these were often compelled to defend themselves and apologize for their education and learning. Thus Gregory of Nazianzus in his Panegyric on his friend St. Basil, delivered about 382, while descanting on their life together at the University of Athens, has to defend "that external culture which many Christians ill-judgingly abhor as mischievous and dangerous and keeping us afar from God". "As we compound healing drugs from reptiles, so from secular literature we receive principles of inquiry and speculation while we reject their idolatry. They aid us in our religion by our knowledge of the difference between the worse and the better. We must not then dishonour education because some do so, but rather set down those who do as boorish and uneducated, desiring all to be as they are in order to escape the detection of their want of culture."

So elaborate a defence of education and culture in a bishop could hardly have been needed if there were schools of the church itself which gave this very education and culture. With scarcely an exception all the early Fathers who made their mark in Christian literature and apologetics are known to have been educated in the ordinary pagan grammar and rhetoric schools. Thus the first recorded so-called master of the Alexandrian Catechetical School, Pantænus, who taught in the reign of the Emperor Severus, A.D. 181, had been himself a Stoic philosopher, and is said by Jerome to have been sent to India as a missionary to the Brahmins and philosophers there. Eusebius places him "finally at the head of the Alexandrian school,"—doing what? giving a general education to the young? No — but "commenting on the treasures of God's truth, both orally and in writing". Clement of Alexandria, his colleague and successor, had also been a

student in the philosophy schools of Greece and Italy before he became the convert of Pantænus. His *Stromata*—patch-work or miscellanies—are full of classical and philosophical learning acquired in his pagan days. His disciple and successor as catechist, Origen, had been a pupil of Ammonius Saccas, the Neo-Platonist philosopher, and was supporting himself and his mother and six brothers as master of a Greek grammar school when he was made master of the catechetical school on the flight of Clement from persecution. We are expressly told that he thereupon gave up his school and sold his library. Later he had to leave Alexandria and went to Athens and Rome, and on his return appointed as assistant-catechist, "Heracles the priest, who continued to wear the dress of a philosopher". The phrase shows that Heracles' learning too was derived from the ordinary schools. Origen afterwards taught a school of philosophy at Cæsarea. Dionysius, the next in succession, in 232, was also a heathen, and brought up in the heathen schools before being converted by Origen; he continued to act as catechist until he became Bishop of Alexandria in 247. Little appears to be known of their successors as given by Jerome. But it can hardly be doubted that they had one and all been educated in their youth in the public schools.

For in the next century precisely the same education in the grammar, rhetoric, and philosophical schools was enjoyed by the two great Fathers, Basil and Gregory of Nazianzus. They, unlike those before mentioned, were born Christians. But they went to school at Cæsarea in Cappadocia under Carterius. Of Basil, Gregory says that he was brought up by his father a "common," i.e. public, teacher of virtue, but he was brought up in religion by his grandmother Macrina. Basil afterwards went to Cæsarea in Palestine to study Greek and Latin literature, i.e. to a grammar school. Here, according to Jerome, Origen, who after his flight from Alexandria had set up a school of philosophy, "gradually introduced the matter of faith in Christ". But this sounds legendary. Basil's contemporary Gregory makes no mention of Origen or Christian teaching there. If true, the story shows, not that the school kept by Origen was a catechetical school giving general education, but that he took a mean advantage as teacher of a



professedly undenominational school of philosophy to use it for denominational propaganda.

When Gregory and Basil met again as students at Athens, Gregory tells how "two ways were known to us, the first of greater value, the second of smaller consequence, the one leading to our sacred building and to our teachers there, the other to secular instruction". So speaks the bishop in after years. We may be pretty sure that as the object of their going to Athens was to learn the classics, rhetoric, and philosophy, the road to the secular schools was the important one at the time. Even in the funeral oration on Basil, from which these facts are derived, this peeps out. While Gregory tells us nothing about their going to church or their catechetical instruction, he enlarges on their University life, their initiation as freshmen, being subject to a mock debate and argument, ending with a triumphant procession to and sham storming of the Public Bath. Gregory extols the abilities and application of Basil, not in Christian but in pagan learning, his knowledge of languages, acquired before his arrival at Athens, his powerful rhetoric, his attainments in grammar "which perfects our tongues in Greek, compiles history, presides over metres and legislates for poetry, and in philosophy, practical and speculative, and particularly that part of it concerned with logical demonstration called Dialectic". Basil was, however, no mathematician. Astronomy and geometry he grasped, but "excessive application to these he despised as useless for those who sought after piety". Medicine he learnt, both theory and practice, because of his own physical delicacy and with a view to visiting the sick.

This prodigy, "whose ship was loaded with all the learning attainable by man," though he is represented as treating rhetoric as a by-work merely to assist him in Christian philosophy, was, like Gregory himself, not baptized till after he had been a student at Athens for five years, though Gregory had, during a storm on his way to the University, vowed to be baptized, if he escaped shipwreck.

Even after leaving Athens Basil spent some time as master of a public rhetoric school before he became a priest and an ascetic, when he inflicted on the world and himself the first coenobite rule. Though he himself confessed the failure of his monastic

life, "though I have left the city as the source of innumerable ills, yet I have not learned to leave myself . . . so I have got no great good from my retirement"; yet in his later days he wrote, "The choice lies between two alternatives, a liberal education, which you may get by sending your children to the public schools, or the salvation of their souls, which you may secure by sending them to the monks. Which is to win, learning or salvation? If you can unite both, do so; but if not, choose the most precious." Here again the learning of the public schools is contrasted with the religion of the monks.

To clinch the argument we may cite the words of Gregory, when the Emperor Julian in 362 is said to have aimed a deadly blow at Christianity by closing the public schools to Christians. Gregory attacked the edict in unmeasured terms, insisting that he preferred learning to all earthly riches, and held nothing in the world dearer, next to the joys of heaven and the hopes of eternity. But why should Gregory have regarded the prohibition as a grievance if the Church had its own ecclesiastical schools in which it itself gave literary and philosophical instruction. What was the antithesis between education and salvation if the monasteries gave a liberal education?

No. The true models and source of the schools of England are not the schools of the Church but the schools of heathendom, the schools of Athens and Alexandria, of Rome, of Lyons, of Vienne. They were in fact the very same "heathen" or "pagan" or, in other words, Græco-Roman institutions, in which Horace and Juvenal, Jerome and St. Augustine had learnt the scansion of hexameters and the accredited methods of speech-making and argument. To understand the medieval and the modern school, we must therefore know what the Greek and Roman schools, both of classical times and of the so-called Dark Ages, from which they were descended, were like.

## CHAPTER II

### THE GREEK AND ROMAN MODELS

**A**NCIENT Greece, the Hellas of the golden age of Athenian ascendancy, knew no organized schools in our sense. There were private tutors in various subjects, music, reading, and gymnastics for boys; peripatetic and migratory lecturers *de omnibus rebus et quibusdam aliis*, physics, law, ethics, divinity, philosophy, not only for youths, but also for men who "in trim gardens took their pleasure," and there found "retired leisure," σχολή, whence *schola* and school, which they devoted to discussion. The organized school was developed in Macedonian Greater Greece, at Alexandria and Pergamus. A Mime of Herondas, called the Master (διδάσκαλος) is the earliest literary picture of a school, c. 250 B.C. A mother takes her boy to the grammar school (γραμματεῖον) and asks the schoolmaster to give him a good flogging. He has stripped the very roof off her house by his losses, gambling at odd-and-even and knucklebones, while his writing-tablet lies neglected in a corner, and he says his repetition at the rate of a word a minute. The master, nothing loth, brings out his leather strap. The boy is hoisted on the back of another, with two others to hold his hands and legs, and the strap is applied till the boy is "as mottled as a water-snake," while the mother still cries, "give it him, give it him," and threatens him with gag and fetters. We can hardly imagine the Athenian boy of the age of Pericles and Socrates being thus flogged into the service of the Muses and threatened with the treatment of a slave. But this method became the usual one. The only actual picture that remains to us of an ancient Roman school, a painting now at Naples, reproduces a similar scene.

At Rome, schools began, if not with the study of Greek, at all events as a result of Greek influence. When captive Greece captured Rome, it did so mainly by carrying schools



ATHENIAN GRAMMAR AND MUSIC SCHOOLS. SIXTH CENTURY B.C.  
FROM A KYLIX, BERLIN MUSEUM



into the conquering city. Plutarch attributes the first schools in Rome to an innovator in moral as in intellectual matters, Spurius Carvilius, and his Greek freedman, in the year 260 B.C. Suetonius, *c.* 121, 'attributes them to Livius Andronicus and Ennius, the first Roman poet, both of them Greek freedmen, in 204 B.C., and to Crates of Mallos, a Greek ambassador from Pergamus in 157 B.C., who, having broken his leg by falling into a hole in a drain, stayed in Rome, and set up a school. At first, says Suetonius, the grammar school masters were called *literati*, a translation of the Greek *grammatici*, which word superseded it. Oddly enough, the term *ludus literarius*, grammar school, is used by Plautus in one of his plays, which were of course translated from the Greek, a century or two before the word *schola grammatica*, of which it is a translation, is found, though probably in ordinary talk grammar school was always used then as it certainly was from the first to the nineteenth century. According to Suetonius, at first the same masters taught both grammar and rhetoric; but these subjects were afterwards taught in distinct schools. The grammar school's proper function was considered to be teaching and explaining the poets, while the historians and orators were left for the rhetoric school. But in Quintilian's day, *c.* A.D. 90, the grammar school had encroached on the rhetoric school, and had taken the exposition of the historians and orators as well as the poets into its curriculum.

We know very little about the Roman schools before Quintilian. But we gather from stray passages of Martial, Horace, and Juvenal that the schools were distinguished by early hours and much flogging. The edification or cult of character, which some modern "Educationists" seem to regard as a new idea for schools, was as much insisted on as the instruction in literature, and was effected by beginning school at dawn and shouting at and flogging the boys with the rod or cane (*ferula*), the tawse (*scutica*), and the birch (*flagellum*), very much as in the English schools down to 1850. In the Greek grammar schools, Homer, and in the Latin grammar schools, Virgil, were the supreme authors studied; but Horace and Claudian became classics and entered the schools while they were still alive. Quintilian's Institutes of Oratory or Rhetoric, written about A.D. 90, is a detailed treatise on educational

theory and practice. Like all Latin literary efforts, it is founded on Greek originals. Eratosthenes, he says, maintained that boys should not be taught at all before seven years old, but Quintilian decides with Chrysippus that they should begin at three years old, if learning is made pleasant. He recommends for teaching reading the ivory letter game. Writing was to be learnt by going over with the stylus letters ready engraved on the wax tablet. A quick and good handwriting, which was apt to be despised and neglected by gentlemen (*honestis*), should be early cultivated. Moral sentences should be used as copies, that the boy may imbibe morals insensibly. When boys are set to serious learning, the question at once arises, "Are boys better taught at home or in schools?" The objections to schools are chiefly on the score of morals, but an immoral private tutor or bad parents are worse. "And boys take vice to school from home, they do not bring it home from school." Moreover, as the orator has to live a public life, he must not be brought up alone, when he would lose the "almost sacred friendships of school," and the common sense learnt by mixing with his equals. Quintilian decides therefore in favour of the public schools.

The first was the grammar school under the *grammaticus*. This school should be not too large and not too small. How many boys were too few or too many we are not told. Classes are mentioned, but as to how many classes there were and how many in a class, no indication is given. An usher is contemplated, but other assistant masters seem unknown. It is certain that an Eton of 1000 boys never entered the dreams of Greek or Roman. We may safely fix 100 as the upward limit of a school.

Grammar teaching Quintilian divides into two parts, the science of correct speech and the explanation of the poets, though it should not be confined to poets. The former includes also correct writing, and the latter correct editing of MSS. A grammar schoolmaster must know music, since he has to teach metre, besides philology and grammar; astronomy and philosophy, as he has to explain Empedocles and Lucretius; and must have no small knowledge of rhetoric since he has to explain everything fully and clearly. "Grammar," he says, "is a necessity to boys, a pleasure to their elders, an

agreeable companion in retirement, and is the only branch of study which is of more use than show." Grammar schools, Quintilian complains, then encroached on the rhetoric schools. The rhetoricians would not teach anything but forensic or parliamentary speaking (*deliberativas judicialesve materias*), leaving to the grammarians speaking in fictitious characters (*prosopopoiias*), as e.g. in that of Hannibal relating the passage of the Alps, and persuasive arguments (*suasorias*), as e.g. whether it is better to follow pleasure or virtue. "So that those old enough for more advanced studies remain at school and learn rhetoric of grammarians, with the absurd result that a boy is not thought fit to go to a master of speech before he has learnt how to speak." Quintilian fixes no age at which boys should leave the grammar school for the school of rhetoric; except "when they are fit". While, however, he complains that the grammar school overlaps the rhetoric school, he would have the rhetorician trench on the grammarian's province, and, restricting the latter to the explanation of the poets, begin with reading the historians and the orators. These recommendations, however, certainly did not prevail, and the historians and orators were read in grammar schools, and rhetoric and declamations practised in them at Rome and afterwards throughout Christendom till at least the eighteenth century. In another general practice, which Quintilian wished to change, he was equally unsuccessful. Though Chrysippus had approved, he strongly disapproves of corporal punishment, as fit only for slaves, and tending to harden, not to reform. "Besides," he asks, "after you have driven the boy by flogging, what will you do with him as a young man, when you cannot hold this over him, though his tasks are more difficult?"—a question which our ancestors answered by the very simple method of extending the rule of the rod to the University as well as to the school.

The rhetoric school, except for the very select few, like Cicero or Quintilian himself, who went to what is sometimes called the University of Athens, seems to have performed for the upper classes the function of the Secondary School and University, as well as that of the Inns of Court and Theological Colleges. The one aim of Roman education was to fit a boy for public life, as advocate or



statesman, and generally both, and this was done by training him for public speaking. Besides the foundation of grammar, in its wide sense, Quintilian would have every budding orator learn mathematics, including geometry, from the mathematician, music from the musician, and the art of gesticulation from the actor. For these last items he is only repeating Greek formulæ and does not represent actual Roman practice.

The rhetoric school itself laid down formal rules for the construction of speeches, and an analysis of the figures of speech, which strikes the modern as pedantic to the last degree. The over-subtle Greek mind, in its analysis of oratory as of philosophy, ran into precisely the same sort of excesses as the medieval mind did in the analysis of theology. In fact, the Greek rhetorician was the intellectual father of the Oxford schoolman. In the rhetoric school, the boys at once began to practise public speaking. They began with narration, i.e. stating a case in the best way and language possible; then proceeding to speeches in supporting or attacking the statement (*ἀνασκευή* or *κατασκευή*). The examples given are of a puerile kind, e.g. whether the stories of the wolf of Romulus and the Egeria of Numa are true. Next followed panegyrics or censures; and contrasts, e.g. whether Alexander or Cæsar were the greater man. Plutarch's "Lives" is one of the results of such exercises. Then commonplaces (*communes loci*), declamations against gaming or adultery, generalities to be used in particular cases of attack against e.g. Clodius or Milo. Next, theses, e.g. is town or country life better? is a successful lawyer or a successful soldier the greater man? "Conjectural causes" followed. "Why the Lacedæmonians represented Venus armed?" "Why Cupid carried arrows and a torch?" Lastly, preparatory to the Senate, the praise and blame of laws, i.e. speeches on the model of a minister introducing a bill or moving to repeal an act; and trying fictitious cases, preparatory for the Courts.

It is clear from Quintilian that in his time the schools of rhetoric had got very far from life. Declamations were still modelled on Demosthenes and Cicero, though, from the loss of constitutional liberty, such subjects as the praise of tyrannicides and the *laus et interpretatio legum* had become empty verbiage. As Seneca said, "We learn for the schools, not for

life". Rounded periods, far-fetched conceits and out-of-the-way expressions gained applause in the schools, but they tended to destroy real oratory and hastened rather than hindered the decadence of public life.

It is in the age of Quintilian that we first find private persons endowing schools and founding exhibitions. The younger Pliny, A.D. 97-108, in a letter to a friend, sending him a copy of a speech he made to his fellow-citizens of Como on giving them a public library, incidentally mentions that, instead of a gladiatorial show, he had established exhibitions (*annuos sumptus in alimenta ingenuorum pollicebamur*), since to make any one willingly undergo the tedium and labour of education, not only premiums, but endowments were required.

The institution of both grammar and rhetoric schools becomes more organized and more widespread in every generation. Vespasian, A.D. 69-79, was the author of a system of endowed schools, being, according to Suetonius, "the first to endow Latin and Greek rhetoricians with a stipend of 100,000 sesterces" [= £800, says Mr. A. S. Wilkins in his *Roman Education*]. Antoninus Pius, A.D. 140-162, extended the system beyond Italy and "bestowed honours and stipends on rhetoricians and philosophers in every province". Hadrian, A.D. 117-138, had established an Athenæum including public grammar school buildings. Alexander Severus, A.D. 193-212, "established (*instituit*) salaries for rhetoricians, provided school halls for them (*auditoria decrevit*), and a system of exhibitions for the sons of poor men, if free-born (*discipulos cum annonis pauperum filios modo ingenuos dari jussit*)," a limitation which, whether through conscious imitation or mere coincidence of circumstance, was reproduced as to the qualification for fellowships at All Souls and scholarships at Eton in the reign of Henry VI. Constantius Chlorus, A.D. 305-306, with vicarious liberality, ordered the municipality of Augustodunum (*Autun*) to pay Eumenius, the master of the rhetoric school, from the public funds a salary of 600,000 sesterces (£4800 a year). The Christian Emperor Constantine in A.D. 321 relieved grammar schoolmasters and other professors (*professores*) from military and municipal service, while leaving them open to accept municipal honours, "so that they may more readily enter numerous pupils in liberal studies".

The anti-Christian Emperor Julian, in A.D. 362, forbade schoolmasters to teach except under decrees of the municipal councils, "and that higher honour may accrue to the city schools," directed that these decrees should be submitted for imperial confirmation. This, it has been conjectured, was with a view to preventing the appointment of Christians. According to Augustine and others, he also by edict prohibited Christians from teaching in the schools; but as there is no record of any such edict forthcoming, this accusation must be received with the caution due to all the statements made by early Christian apologists about their opponents. It is more probable that the centralizing edict was only to prevent town councils from appointing local favourites to the exclusion of better men from outside, and from cutting down salaries. For the Christian Emperor Gratian, in A.D. 376, went even further in extending the interference of the central authority, charging the Prætorian Prefect of Gaul that "in all towns which are called metropolis," equivalent in modern parlance to county boroughs, "notable professors should be elected," and paid according to a scale of salaries laid down, viz. masters of rhetoric schools, twenty-four *annonæ*, and masters of grammar schools, Greek and Latin, twelve *annonæ*. An *annona* was the yearly pay of an ordinary soldier or day labourer, so that the grammar schoolmaster was reckoned as worth twelve times, and the rhetorician twenty-four times an ordinary man. So that if £52 a year was the pay of a working man, the schoolmaster received £624 or £1248 a year. In Trier, or Trèves, then the capital of the Western Empire, the rhetoric master was to draw 30 *annonæ*, the Latin grammar schoolmaster 20, and the Greek grammar schoolmaster, "if a fit one can be gotten," 12 *annonæ*; a striking piece of evidence of the tendency to the disappearance of Greek from the schools of Northern and Western Europe, as the like words used by Colet in the statutes of his reformed St. Paul's School in 1518 are to its reappearance. In A.D. 414 Honorius and Theodosius extended the privileges of grammar masters, rhetoric masters, and philosophy preceptors, to their wives and children, their sons even being exempt from military service.

In the later Roman Empire endowed grammar and rhetoric schools were ubiquitous. The lives and writings of the



GREEK GRAMMAR SCHOOL MASTER OF CAPUA WITH WIFE AND SON  
(NOT, AS COMMONLY SAID, BOY AND GIRL PUPILS)  
IN NAPLES MUSEUM

