REMARKS ON THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION IN EAST ANGLIA.

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The very name of education is terrible to many people. Some associate it with divers pains and penalties of a corporal description, from which, as will be seen, it was no more free in earlier days than at present. With others it seems to be connected with aching heads and sorrow-stricken faces, the fruitless calling on a defective memory to supply something to satisfy the stern presence of inspector or examiner, or to manufacture matter for an untouched sheet of paper on which the candidate's eye vaguely rests. Much of this, however, is mere bogey-talk, and those who see educational machinery at work know that neither class-room nor examination-hall have exerted much noxious effect in damping the natural spirits of young people.

A few remarks on the progress of education in East Anglia from the formation of the See of Dunwich to the Reformation, may, perhaps, find a fitting place in the Journal of our Society.

In all great towns of the Roman Empire schools arose, teaching geometry and arithmetic, grammar and metre, rhetoric and logic, according to the wants, or the tastes of the inhabitants.

France, so much nearer to the great Imperial centre, was better illuminated and warmed by the rays which emanated from it, than could have been the case with our island, cut off from the whole globe; and perhaps no town in France, in spite of its casualties, exhibited the elastic power of education so fully as that now obscure place, Autun. The half-rebel Tetricus burnt the place down in 270, but Constantine rebuilt it, and restored its studies. In 406 the Vandals burnt the new city, and only eight years afterwards it suffered another conflagration at the hands of the Burgundians. Here they established their first kingdom, which underwent a rude shock and another combustion from the Huns in 451, but recovered itself, and apparently flourished in the arts of peace till 539, when the Franks once more reduced the city to ashes. The first Burgundian kingdom then perished, to revive in a new form after the lapse of three centuries, but the Burgundian name survived; and to us of East Anglia the survival of the name has a peculiar interest, for in 630, in the interval between the two Burgundian kingdoms, came the Burgundian Felix to Dunwich, first Bishop of the East Angles, and a zealous promotor of all sound learning as well as religious education.

The troubles which had disturbed East Anglia, about the time of the assassination of King Erpenwald, had driven his half-brother Sigebert out of the country. He had sojourned in Burgundy. Here he had been baptized, and on his return to East Anglia, in imitation of the Schools of Burgundy, he established a School for youth to be instructed in letters. In this he was helped by Felix, sent into East Anglia, to work amongst his people, by Archbishop Honorius. Amongst the labours of Felix was the organization of this school, which he furnished with masters and teachers after the manner of Kent, whence he had lately come.*

It was well that the torch of learning should have been lighted over Western Europe, for while this School,

* Bede. Eccl. Hist. III. 18.

probably at Dunwich, was struggling into existence, the flames of the Alexandrian Library proclaimed that terrible destruction of the records of the past, from which the literary world can never recover.

At that ancient and venerable church called the "Old Minster," close to Southelmham Hall, connected by tradition with the name of the Burgundian Apostle, may be seen the wall which stretches nearly across the building and forms the *narthex* at the western end, where the *audientes* were allowed to stand and listen, but not to join in the prayers, or receive the benediction.

The names of the successors of Bishop Felix are to us names and little more; nor is it till we come to the earlier Benedictine Houses and Colleges of Priests that any glimpse of the advance of education is discernible, and thus it is merely local. Such houses there were at Hadleigh, Hoxne, and Stoke-by-Nayland; and such a College there was at Bury S. Edmund's, before the body of the Martyr-King was entrusted to Benedictine hands.

Afterwards, when houses of various orders were founded all over the district, each house would have its School, and thus no neighbourhood was destitute of teaching. Promising boys were eagerly picked up, often with the intent of attaching them to the order to which the house belonged, and when trained as far as local effort could carry them were passed on to the Universities.

Thus Robert Grosseteste, born at Stradbroke in 1175, must surely have come under the notice of John of Oxford, Bishop of Norwich, then living at Hoxne, only three miles off; and probably the choice of Grosseteste's University was owing to the Bishop's grateful memory of the place of his own education. It appears that he owed nothing to the patronage of nobles, for we have on record a remarkable answer of his to Henry III., who asked where it was that he, a man of humble birth, had acquired that nature which enabled him to train young nobles. "In the house" replied he, "of Kings greater than the King of England, because I learned the manner of life in the

house of King David, King Solomon, and others, by understanding the Scriptures."*

The well-known Chronicle of Jocelin of Brakelond, a monk of Bury S. Edmund's in the time of Richard I. and John, gives no hint of any instruction except to the novices, though the period of his Chronicle runs beyond 1198, the foundation of the New School at Bury; and the earliest detail with which I am furnished is that from the College of Priests at Mettingham. Here fourteen boys were "boarded, clothed, booked, washed, &c.," to quote from Squeers's prospectus. Their work would begin at 5 a.m.; so that without much fear of going wrong the imagination may picture them with noses blue with cold and pinched fingers, all but the newest tiros with their heads shaven in the first tonsure, learning to read, write and cast accompt, to copy and illuminate manuscript, and to master prick-song on the ancient tonic sol-fa system of the four-line staff and the moveable *ut*. We can think how they had to run the gauntlet from the unlettered churls of their own villages, who, like another critic of the period, would say:

> "For methinks it serveth to no thing,
> All such pevish prykeryd song."

Those who will be at the pains of reading through such lists of medieval incumbents as may be found in Suckling, will be struck at the number of local names, and may reflect how many of these men probably received their education under the secular priests of these Colleges. Yet there was a fitfulness and uncertainty about the work. Secular Priests were bound by no vow of poverty, and could retain their private property. Should it happen that no member of the College cared to be troubled with

* "Sanctæ memoriæ *Robertum* Cognominatum *Grodsted* dudum *Lincolniensem* Episcopum, Regi *Henrico* quasi admirando cum interrogavit, ubi Noraturam didicit, quâ Filios Nobilium Procerum Regni, quos secum habuit Domisellos, instruxerat, cum non de nobili prosapiâ, sed de simplicibus traxisset *Originem*, fertur intrepide respondisse, In Domo seu Hospitio Majorum Regum quam sit Rex Angliæ; Quia Regum, *David*, *Salomonis*, and aliorum, vivendi morem didicerat ex Intelligentia scripturarum."

John de Athon, quoted in Furnivall's Forewords to *The Babees Book* (E. E. T. S.) p. viii.

the management of boys, the work could be done by deputy. This brings us to the *grammaticus* or graduate in Grammar. When John Wilby became master of Mettingham College, in 1403, xvjd. was paid to the Schoolmaster of Beccles for the schooling of two clerks.

The *grammaticus* had to be qualified for his work, to graduate at his University, and to be licensed by the Bishop of the Diocese in which he was to serve. Among other subjects in which the Schoolmaster had to approve himself was Corporal punishment, on which light is thrown by the Bedell's book of the University of Cambridge:—"Then shall the Bedell purvey for every master in gramer a shrewde Boy, whom the master in gramer shall bete openlye in the Scolys, and the master in gramer shall give the Boye a grote for hys labour, and another grote to hym that provydeth the Rode and the Palmer* etc." It was not, we fear, without reason that Erasmus in his Praise of Folly calls the grammarians of his day the most miserable of all men, growing old as they labour surrounded by herds of noisy boys, and poisoned by the closeness of the atmosphere, whose only solace seems to have been in the tortures and terrors at their command. If the pain of a service is an estimate of its value, these men doubtless rendered great service to the state. The raw material was of the most raw. We have a picture of the typical Suffolk school boy in Lydgate's account of himself. He was born in that village about 1370, and from his after-connection with Bury S. Edmund's, it may be that he was educated at the School attached to the Abbey, but from his mentioning his frequent lateness and his lies to excuse himself, it may be surmised that he was under some village *grammaticus*. He stole apples, spared neither hedge nor wall to get at grapes, made mouths at people "lyk a wantoun Ape," gambled at

*The "Pancake" as boys used to call it, was a small disc of polished wood, three or four inches across. In the middle, flush with the wood, a small piece of steel was let in, which had a square hole in its centre. To this disc was attached a handle some ten inches long. When it was slapped down on the outstretched palm the square hole in the steel raised a blister.

cherry stones, was late to rise, dirty at meals, chief shammer of illness, with other unfavourable points. If this be the future poet, what is to be said of the general crew?

At Cambridge, indeed, these grammarians were held in little esteem. Their one subject extended over three years, and could not vie with the wider Arts work, which occupied seven years. Thus we find that the University authorities were expected to attend the funerals of Arts masters or scholars, but not those of grammarians. No grammar degree has been granted in Cambridge since 1542.*

Yet an instance remains of a higher value set upon their labours. It is in the episcopate of the Northumbrian, William Alnwick. He had been serving this large diocese seven years, and after three more years' service he was translated to Lincoln, then far the most laborious See in the realm. There is an entry in the Norwich Institution Book, No. 9, to the following effect:—that on the 10th of October, 1433, the Bishop conferred the government of the Grammar scholars in Harleston on William Kyng, priest; and the remission of fees recorded in the margin implies that the post was not a very lucrative one.†

There is no mention of any building or endowment. Harleston boasted of no religious house, and the Cluniacs at Mendham were not the people to trouble themselves about this work or any other, seeing that two petitions were lodged against them at Rome about this time for neglect to serve two of their dependent chapelries. Probably William King and his predecessor before him kept school where they could, and earned a scanty living from their pupils' fees.

These two or three instances, Beccles, Lydgate's School, Harleston, may be regarded as typical. Further

* Mullinger, *History of the University of Cambridge*, pp. 344, 345.

† It'm die decimo mensis Octob'. anno domini suprascripto (1433) apud Hoxne p'scriptus Reu'endus pater Dñs Willūs (Alnwick) dei gracia Norwicen' Epūs contulit regimen & custodiam scolarium grammaticalium de Harleston Norwicen' dioc' vacant' & ad collacionem ip'ius Reu'endi patris pleno jure spectantem domino Will'mo Kyng presbitero Ip'umque, mag'rum prefecit canonice in eisdem." In the margin, "Scholeque grammaticalis de Harleston Dñs remisit feoda."

investigation would probably show but few of the towns of the diocese without a grammar master in the fifteenth century. The number of eminent lawyers as well as churchmen, successful merchants, and even Lord Mayors from the Eastern Counties are a testimony to the success of local rudimentary training. Shakespeare's Sir Hugh Evans in the '*Merry Wives of Windsor*,' and Town Clerk of Chatham in *Henry VI.*, may be mentioned as grand sketches of the schoolmaster of the period, a little transferred from Elizabeth's days to an earlier time, after the manner of the great Dramatist.

Books existed, sparsely of course; but Lydgate's account of himself as "straunge to spelle or reade," proves the assertion. The horn-book, containing the alphabet prefixed by the cross, and thus called the Criss-cross Row, or in some instances with the letters arranged in the form of a cross, the consonants in the vertical part, and the vowels in the horizontal part, must have been extensively used. Spurdens, who wrote in 1840, says that his Horn-book, of the latter description, would be a thing for a museum. The middle of this educational implement was made of wood, covered on one side with the alphabet on paper, and on the other side with the crucifix, both sides being protected with a sheet of horn, and fixed in a wooden frame with a handle. It is feared that there is no instance earlier than the days of Queen Elizabeth to be found.

Some of our older bells have alphabets on them, and it may be that these were used educationally. They are found more in other counties, the only instance in Suffolk being a fragmentary K L N O M at Barsham.

Certainly the art of letter-writing was widely diffused in the fifteenth century. The Paston letters give us not only the epistolary correspondence of that gentle family, but also communications from seamen,* bailiffs, and other dependents. They are generally expressed with clearness and vigour, and deserve the epithet of business-like.

Simple money calculations are properly carried out.

*1. 84.

In the *Boke of Brome*, which the lamented Lady Caroline Kerrison printed for private circulation, we have the accounts of Robert Melton, who seems to have been a steward of the Cornwallis family at Sturston, carefully kept, and, if we may judge from the use of the first personal and possessive pronouns, written in his own hand. This, however, is not universal. In the Cratfield Parish Papers, which were transcribed by the late Reverend William Holland of Huntingfield, we find at times the cost of keeping the account, a function performed by some local priest, and this is a common occurrence elsewhere.

Thus far concerning the three R's. The religious instruction of the Middle Ages, as traceable in East Anglia, is too important and extensive a subject to be entered upon at present.