

Grammar schools

During the 16th and 17th centuries the setting up of grammar schools became a common act of charity by nobles, wealthy merchants and guilds; The usual pattern was to create an endowment to pay the wages of a master to instruct local boys in Latin and sometimes Greek without charge.

The dawn-to-dusk teaching was mostly the rote learning of Latin. To encourage fluency, some schoolmasters recommended punishing any pupil who spoke in English. Pupils took several years to learn to construct a sentence in Latin, and did not learn to translate passages until their final years at the school. By the end of their studies, they would be quite familiar with the great Latin authors, drama and rhetoric. Other skills, such as numeracy and handwriting, were neglected, being taught in odd moments or by travelling specialist teachers such as scribes.

Guilsborough Grammar School

Founded in 1668, there was a headmaster and 2 ushers (assistants), it provided for 50 boys (only boys were entered) from Guilsborough, Cold Ashby, Cottesbrooke and a 4 mile radius.

Curriculum.

Although Hoole describes this curriculum as for 'the best grammar school', it was most likely taught at the nine leading schools, some which were boarding, a country grammar school must have taught a very similar, if not shorter, curriculum.

In the preparatory or 'petty' school, Hoole requires that the alphabet should be taught by means of play. Reading requires a capable teacher. Not only books of religion and manners are to be used but also delightful books of English history. Herbert's *Poems* and Quarles' *Emblems*. This is apparently the first instance of the recommendation of English literature for school teaching. Erasmus's *de Moribus* and Hawkin's *Youth's Behavior* should be taught for 'manners'. The Prime, the Psalter, the Bible are to be used for teaching, spelling and reading. Writing and casting accounts are to be taught. The Lord's Prayer, the Creed, the Ten Commandments and the Catechism are to be known to all. Hoole would have elementary Latin learned by even those whose education didn't proceed beyond the elementary stage for he thought a little Latin was useful in the understanding of *English* authors.

Coming to the grammar school proper, the curriculum should be following closely Hoole's account of the syllabus (form by form)

Form I. This form to be occupied for a year in preparing the pupils for the Latin tongue by teaching them the perfect use of the accidence, helping them to a vocabulary of words, and showing how to vary them. The *Introduction* to the Latin Grammar, and *Sententiae pueriles*, and a little *Vocabulary* are to be used as text-books. In this form Hoole recommends the use of Comenius's *Orbis Pictus* (a pictorial Latin primer), so as to encourage the training of observation. The principles of Christianity were to be taught on Saturdays.

With regard to the work of Form 1, it should be stated that Statutes of some grammar schools lay down that for admission, boys should be well grounded in accidence, know the concordances and be competent in reading and writing. With regard to the boys who came to grammar schools not having passed through either a preparatory or petty school, Hoole requires that either the boy can

write or that he be sent concurrently to a writing school, an institution in the largest towns, conducted by a private school-master, for fees, in which writing and arithmetic were taught. In country grammar schools, a scrivener went from place to place, staying a few weeks at a time to try to establish the writing of the boys, and then left the teachers to keep it in practice, but teaching writing was no part of a free grammar school, and if taught, was paid for as an extra.

Form II is to be exercised in:

1. Repeating the accidence.
2. The parts of nouns and verbs.
3. Learning a larger vocabulary.
4. Learning *Qui mihi* [i.e. Lily's version of life and manners of a grammar school boy], and afterwards *Cato* twice a week, and *Pueriles Confabulationum* twice a week.
5. Translating a verse out of English into Latin every evening at home.

Thus they may be made to know the genders of nouns, preter-perfect tenses and supine of verbs, and be initiated to speak and write true Latin in the compass of a second year.'

In this form the children were to have little paper books where they were to enter choice phrases from classical authors, and so avoid Anglicisms.

Form III. To be employed about three-quarters of a year:

1. In reading four or six verses out of the Latin Testament every morning.
2. In repeating syntaxes and accidence.
3. In *Aesop's Fables*.
4. In *Comenius's Janua Linguarum*.
5. In *Baptista Mantuan's Eclogues* and *Helvicus's Colloquies*.
6. In the Assembly's Latin Catechism-on Saturdays.
7. In translating every night two verses out of the Proverbs into Latin-and two out of the Latin Testament into English.

One quarter of the year should be spent chiefly in getting *Figura* (i.e. the 'figures' of rhetoric) and *Prosody*. This third year will be 'well bestowed in teaching children of between nine and ten years of age the whole grammar and the right use of it'

As to *Aesop's Fables* Hoole declares that it is a book of great antiquity and 'of more solid learning than most men think.' For it teaches morality by its epiloques, 'which do insinuate themselves into every mans mind.' In Form III each pupil keeps a book *in quarto* in which to enter rules and exceptions, and to make collections of 'pregnant examples' from Latin authors.

At this stage the pupil passes from the usher, or under-master, to that of the master, who will test closely the pupil in his exact knowledge of grammar, *i.e.* in Lily's grammar before he receives him.

Form IV. Scholars of this form are required:

1. Every morning to read six to ten verses out of the Latin Testament into English, that then they may become well acquainted with the matter and words of 'that most holy book'; and after they are entered in Greek to proceed with the Greek Testament in like manner.
2. To say over again, once a quarter, the whole Latin grammar. Each pupil is to have a paper book of two quires in quarto, into which, under right heads, he is to note all niceties of grammar, with which he meets. The older critical grammarians are to be consulted and perused. Every school should have its library, in which should be placed all the best grammars. Boys should then be

encouraged to read them and to cite what they find striking in them, and place it under its proper head, in the paper book.

3. Rhetoric, three mornings a week. Textbooks: *Elementa Rhetorices*, that lately printed by William Dugard, of Merchant Tayors' School, together with that by Talaeus and that of Charles Butler. They are to make a synopsis of Dugard's text-book and to enter into a commonplace book 'whatever they like' from other writers of Rhetoric.

4. When they have passed through a course in Rhetoric, the time given to it should be transferred to Greek grammar. 'And because' says Hoole, 'in learning this language as well as Latin, we are to proceed by one rule which is most common and certain; I prefer Camden's *Greek Grammar*, though perhaps it is not so facile or so complete as some lately printed, especially those that are set out by my worthy friends, Mr. Busby of Westminster and Mr. Dugard of Merchant Tayors'.

The first quarter of a year should be taken up with going over Greek letters, accents, and parts of speech, articles, declensions, conjugations, adverbs, conjunctions and prepositions, and exercises in writing (including accents) The next half-year the whole grammar is covered. Every morning the pupils are to use their Greek Testaments after prayers, beginning with the Gospel of St John. 'If you would have them learn to speak Greek let them make use of Posselius's *Dialogues*, or Mr. Shirley's *Introductorium* in English, Latin and Greek.'

5. Terence, to be read four mornings a week, taking about half a page at a time till the pupils begin to relish him. The most significant words and phrases are to be culled out, and entered into a paper book.

6. The *Janua Latinae Linguae* of J. A. Comenius, to strengthen vocabulary.

7. Cicero's *Epistolae* or the *Epistolae* of Textor. Double translation should be employed. This should lead to the writing of epistles. Two epistles to be written every week, one in answer to the other.

8. For a half-year, two afternoons a week, Ovid's *de Tristibus*, six or eight verses at a lesson to be repeated by memory. English verses to be written, with models in George Herbert's and Quarles' poems. In the second half-year, Ovid's *Metamorphose* are prescribed. Pupils may also translate passages into Latin every night out of *Wit's Commonwealth* and then translate into Greek. On Saturdays: The Assembly's Catechism.

Form V.

1. Every day twelve verses at least in the Greek Testament.
2. Repeat the Latin and Greek grammars and the *Elementa Rhetorices*.
3. Let them pronounce orations out of Livy, etc., three days a week.
4. Read Isocrates, for three-quarters of the year, and in the fourth, Theognis.
5. Read Justin's *History*, Caesar's *Commentaries*, Lucius Florus, intermixing some of Erasmus's *Colloquies*.
6. The *Janua Linguarum Graeca* for vocabulary.
7. Virgil.
8. Aesop's *Fables* (in Greek), Aelian's *Histories*, Epictetus, or Farnaby's *Epigrammata*.
9. The making of Themes.
10. Writing verses in Latin.
11. Nowell's *Catechism*, or the Palatinate Catechism, to be learned.

For the making of Latin Themes, pupils must first be taught how to collect the subject-matter, and where to help themselves with words and phrases, how to dispose the parts, and what *formulae* they are to use in passing from one part to another. They will thus have to learn how to find and use material, as for instance, in the following ways:-

Short historicis from Plutarch, Valerius Maximus, Justin, Caesar, Florus, Livy, *Medulla Historiae*, Aelianus. Apologues and tales out of Aesop, Phaedrus, Ovid, Natalis Comes. Adages from Erasmus, Drax, etc. Hieroglyphics from Pierius and Caussinus. Emblems and symbols, to be collected from Alciat, Beza, Reusner, etc. Ancient laws and customs are to be gathered from Plutarch, etc. Witty sentences from *Golden Grove*, *Moral Philosophy*, *Sphinx Philosophica*, *Wit's Commonwealth*, Tully's sentences, *Demosthenis Sententiae*, etc. Rhetorical exornations out of Vossius, Farnaby, Butler, etc. Topical places out of Caussinus, Tesmarus, *Orator extemporeus*, etc. Descriptions of things natural and artificial out of *Orbis Pictus*, Caussinus, Pliny, etc.

Form VI. Their constant employment is:

1. To read twelve verses out of the Greek Testaments every morning.
2. To repeat Latin and Greek grammar and *Elementa Rhetorices*.
3. To learn Hebrew, three days a week. Text-book: Buxtorf's Grammar.
4. To read Hesiod, Homer, Pindar, and Lycophron.
5. To read Xenophon, Sophocles, Euripides, and Aristophanes.
6. Study the *Breviarium Graecae Linguae* of Ant. De Laubegeois twice a week.
7. Read Horace, Juvenal, Persius, Lucan, Seneca's *Tragedies*, Martial and Plautus.
8. Lucian's *Select Dialogues* and Pontanus' *Progymnasmata Latinitatis*.
9. Cicero's *Orations*, Pliny's *Panegyrics*, Quintilian's *Declamationes*, Godwin's *Antiquities* to be read at leisure times.
10. Their exercises for oratory should be to make themes, orations, and declamations, in Latin, Greek and Hebrew, and for poetry to make verses upon such themes as are appointed every week.
11. To exercise themselves in making anagrams, epigrams, epitaphs, epithalamia, eclogues, and acrostics, in English, Latin, Greek, Hebrew.
12. The Catechisms to be used are Nowell and Birket (Berchet) in Greek, and the Church Catechism in Hebrew.

Hoole offers a 'Note of School Authors' for the school library running to between 250 and 300 books including classical authors, grammars, vocabularies, dictionaries, fables, dialogues, rhetoric, oratory, letters, phrases, anthologies etc., and leading works of reference on the professional subjects of the theologian, physician and lawyer.

Internal Life.

The entrance age was usually between ages six and eight years old, even if there was no tuition fees, there was often an 'admission' or registration fee. The reason is given that the poor scholar who is told 'off to sweep the school and keep it clean,' may be paid by receiving the 'money of the admissions.' It was no part of the duty of the schoolmaster to teach any of his scholars to write.

'If your child after reasonable season proved be found here unapt and unable to learning, then ye, warned thereof shall take him away, that he occupy not here room in vain'

The usual working hours in the summer were from 6 till 11 o'clock in the morning and in the afternoon from 1 o'clock till six o'clock. In the winter the general rule was from 7 till 11 o'clock in

the morning and 1 to 5 o'clock in the afternoon. Since the school hours in winter required the use of artificial light, it was custom for boys to be required to pay for their own candles.

Holidays were usually twice a year, of 16 days and 12 days, remedies or *'holidays for play were allowed'*

A boy stayed as a rule 6-7 years in the grammar school.

It may be that Thomas was on the tail-end of the 'old Grammar school' as after 1698 more 'free' or 'charity' schools became available, the type Lady Mullins founded in Rowley Regis, teaching a less 'classical' education.

Note: *Some of the words are from the original spelling, and are not my mistakes!!*

References:

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