

## CHAPTER XV

### THE ETON SYSTEM UNDER QUEEN ELIZABETH

WHEN WE NOW TURN to the Eton system, we find that it also has received changes similar to those we have found elsewhere, and is transmitting them to other schools. Fortunately, we have the Eton curriculum early in the reign of Queen Elizabeth, dating probably about 1560.<sup>1</sup> This enables us to see what changes have occurred at Eton in the intervening thirty years from 1530. Since this account gives a full picture of the curriculum of probably the most influential school of the period, just before Shakspeare was born, it may be well to quote pertinent sections of it in translation.<sup>2</sup> The boys were called at five, but we are not interested here in their routine till school starts at six.

#### SIX O'CLOCK

The usher enters and in the upper part of the school begins prayers on bended knees, which being finished, he descends to the first and lowest class, demanding from them both a part of speech and a verb, which on the preceding day he had given to be conjugated.<sup>3</sup> From the first he turns to the second, from the second to the third, from the third, if it seems desirable, to the fourth, which sits in his part till seven o'clock, there to be examined if anything rather obscure should arise. Meanwhile one of the prepositors of school, going to the prepositors of each form in the part of the master as well as of the usher, brings from them the listed names of those absent from morning prayers, and gives them to the usher. Likewise another prepositor (who by himself always performs this duty) having inspected carefully the hands and face of each individual, if perchance any have come to school with unwashed hands; these he presents to the master immediately upon his entrance.

#### SEVEN O'CLOCK

The fourth form transfers from the part of the usher to that of the master.

<sup>1</sup> Creasy, *Etonians*, pp. 77 ff.; *Etoniana*, December 6, 1905. The latter appears to be from the authentic form.

<sup>2</sup> There is a translation of the whole in *Etoniana* for December 6, 1923, which I did not see till my own translation had been made. Some of the technicalities have not been fully grasped. I have noted each time differences in curriculum as they occur in Baker's transcript of the Eton statutes (Creasy, *Etonians*, pp. 77-84), in the Westminster curriculum as transcribed in 1568 (University of Illinois Library), and in the Westminster curriculum after 1574 (Leach, *Educational Charters*, pp. 496-525, reprinting from Cathedral Commission Report of 1854, p. (59), which purports to be from Pat. 2 Eliz. pt. xi, but is not).

<sup>3</sup> Final clause not in Westminster copies.