

CHAPTER XIX

THE SMALL SCHOOLS UNDER QUEEN ELIZABETH

SO FAR, we have for the most part been examining the large and powerful schools, with at least a master and an usher, together with somewhat weaker ones which were yet in some way able to adapt the systems of these schools. We may now fix our attention upon a group of schools less fortunately circumstanced. Some grammar schools could afford but a single teacher. How did these proceed? They simply adapted the organization to their man power, but aimed to teach exactly the same curriculum by exactly the same methods as did the powerful schools.¹

Two schools founded by Robert Pursglove are of special interest here, since they represent, as it were, the lowest possible common denominator. None the less the common denominator is there. These schools are important because they probably represent a frequent organization in the smaller schools, which have naturally left comparatively little record. Robert Pursglove founded two grammar schools, one at Tideswell in Derbyshire 1560; the other at Guisborough in York 1561. The provisions in both are practically the same. Pursglove was an ex-prior, and thoroughly old-fashioned in his views. It is thus not likely that a more conservative curriculum would anywhere be found than the one he desired. He had, however, himself spent his nine years at Paul's, and one naturally wonders how much the curriculum there influenced his own statutes. Leach's summary of the curriculum at Tideswell may be quoted in full.

The boys were to be instructed in 'grammar and other godly learning freely without taking any stipend, wages, or other exactions of any schollers thither resorting to learn.' No scholar was to continue in the school over one month, except he have books requisite for his form, or else daily write his lessons with his own hand. The first form was to contain 'the petties, coming to learn the figures and characters of letters until such time as they could read perfectly and sound and pronounce their words distinctly.' The master was not, however, bound to teach these children himself, but by a system of pupil teachers. 'But only to appoint such of his scholars placed in the 3rd and 4th forms of his school as should suffice to teach the said young beginners'; though he was to 'bestow every week 2 hours at least in teaching them to pronounce and sound their words.' He was bound in his

¹ For an interesting illustration in minute detail of exactly how five groups could be managed by one teacher, the reader is referred to *Nicolai Agricolae Liber De Liberali, Et Pia Institutione iuventutis. Pro Schola Ratisponensi . . . Ratisponae . . . 1561* (University of Illinois Library).