

Kyd was baptized November 6, 1558,²¹ and entered Merchant Taylors' on October 26, 1565,²² very close to his seventh birthday. George Peele was in Christ's Hospital 1565-1571.²³ Since Peele was born 1557 or 1558,²⁴ he was seven or eight at entrance, and thirteen or fourteen at completion. In the *Pilgrimage to Parnassus*, Ingenioso warns Philomusus,

take heede I take youe not . . . twentie years henc . . . interpretinge *pueriles confabulationes* to a companie of seaven-yeare-olde apes.²⁵

Shakspeare's famous schoolboy, being the second act of the seven ages, is also of this approximate age.

And then the whining school-boy, with his satchel
And shining morning face, creeping like snail
Unwillingly to school.

Early in the seventeenth century Brinsley still planned his grammar school work,

That so all schollers of any towardlinesse and diligence may be made absolute Grammarians, and euey way fit for the Vniuersitie, by fiteene yeeres of age; or by that time that they shall bee meete by discretion and gouernment.²⁶

One reason for continuing to begin at seven was the practice in classical times. But the Renaissance inherited its general age provisions from the Middle Ages.

A fact interesting to note in this connexion is mentioned by Abbot Gasquet, viz. that the degree courses in the University were parallel to the ecclesiastical advance of the student. The course of education of the cleric was: at seven years of age a boy might receive the tonsure;²⁷ between seven and fourteen whilst at school, he would help the priest 'to serve mass' and receive the minor orders of 'door-keeper,' 'lector,' 'exorcist' and 'acolyte.' From fourteen to eighteen at the University he could qualify for the degree of Bachelor of Arts, and at eighteen he could become sub-deacon in the Church. When Bachelor of Arts, he must take seven years to qualify as Bachelor of Divinity. Simultaneously at twenty-five years of age he could

²¹ Brooke, J. M. S., and Hallen, A. W. C., *The Transcript of the Registers of the United Parishes of S. Mary Woolnoth and S. Mary Woolchurch Haw*, p. 9.

²² Robinson, *Merchant Taylors' School*, Vol. I, p. 9.

²³ Lockhart, A. W., *List of Exhibitioners* (1885), pp. 8-10.

²⁴ Dyce, A., *The Dramatic and Poetical Works of Robert Greene & George Peele* (1861), p. 324.

²⁵ Macray, *Parnassus*, p. 21.

²⁶ Brinsley, *Ludus Literarius* (1627), p. B1v; cf., pp. 8, 308.

²⁷ At Eton, the boy was supposed originally to have received the tonsure before entrance at eight or to receive it within a year after entering (Lyte, *Eton* (1911), p. 582).