

"Every Form holds *Sixteen*; and he that is Head or Captain of each Form, has a little kind of *Desk* by way of Preeminence." The Latin appears to indicate a total of sixteen to the form, and not seventeen, as Knight's translation would permit. But we have a tempting coincidence. If the school proper originally contained eight forms, as we have seen reason to believe, and if there was besides a class of catechumens intended for the vestibule, our total of classes is nine, and nine times seventeen is one hundred and fifty-three. This solution would make the description of Erasmus completely consistent with itself, and with other known facts. Of the nine equal groups of sixteen in form and one each time in a special desk, the first group, that of catechumens, was to have been in the vestibule. The eight forms of grammarians should then have been arranged systematically along two sides of the grammar school in such a way that those of the usher might be separated from those of the master by a curtain. Here it should be noted that Erasmus was in England from 1509 to the summer of 1514 and was certainly consulted by Dean Colet on various points connected with the school. He ought to have known, and I have no doubt he has here presented accurately the original plan.

The question is as to whether the original plan was ever in effect. Officially, there was no chaplain until 1523, and Dean Colet had provided in 1518 that this chaplain should help in the school. By 1560 the chaplain was in reality only an under usher in charge of the first form. The symmetrical arrangement of forms makes it certain, I believe, that when the chaplain began to teach the first form, he did so in the grammar school and not in the vestibule. If the original plan was ever put into complete operation, it must have been changed before 1560 by fusing the catechumens with the first form, and it is strongly to be suspected that this fusion would have occurred at the appointment of a chaplain in 1523. Such a fusion would have involved a fairly complete physical rearrangement of the school by the addition of four seats to each of the first three forms, and one to each of the five upper forms. It is more likely that the plan was never actually in effect, and that the arrangement recorded by Knight is the one which was for some reason put into operation at the beginning. If so, the usher probably did the catechizing of the first form, as a few years later was the rule in all schools. Then we may suppose that when Rightwise from usher became master at the end of 1522 he invoked the founder's proviso for a teaching chaplain to get further help in the school. The only evidence I know that the original plan was actually put into operation is the fact that Robert Pursglove, one of the earliest boys, was at Paul's "thrice three whole years space,"¹⁹ but against this we might place the fact that about the same time John Aynesworth spent "six or seven years at Mr. Lilie's scole."²⁰ It is thus highly doubtful that the original plan as recorded by Erasmus and partially confirmed by the building itself was ever actually in operation. It would seem clear that from the beginning Paul's had eight forms, four in the lower school and four in the upper school.

¹⁹ McDonnell, *St. Paul's School*, p. 83.

²⁰ McDonnell, *St. Paul's School*, p. 81.