

## ETON.

*(From Lysons' Magna Britannia.)*

ETON, in the hundred of Stoke and deanery of Burnham, is separated from Windsor, in Berkshire, by the river Thames, being 22 miles distant from London: it is chiefly noted for its College, founded by King Henry VI. in the year 1440, for a provost, ten priests, four clerks, six choristers, twenty-five poor grammar-scholars, and twenty-five poor men. Henry Sever was the first provost; his successor was William Waynfleet, founder of Magdalen College, in Oxford. This foundation was particularly excepted in the act for the dissolution of colleges and chantries, in the reign of King Edward VI. Its

establishment, however, has been somewhat altered, and it consists now of a provost, seven fellows, two school-masters, two conducts, seven clerks, seventy scholars, and ten choristers, besides inferior officers and servants.

The annual election of scholars to King's College, in Cambridge, founded by the same monarch, takes place about the end of July, or the beginning of August, when twelve of the head boys are put on the roll to succeed at King's College, as vacancies happen. The average number of vacancies is about nine in two years: at 19 years of age the scholars are superannuated. Eton College sends two scholars to Merton College, in Oxford, where they are denominated post-masters, and has a few exhibitions of 31 guineas each, for its superannuated scholars, towards whose assistance Mr. Chamberlayne, a late fellow, has bequeathed an estate of 80*l.* per annum after the death of his widow. The scholars elected to King's College succeed to fellowships at three years standing. The independent scholars at Eton, commonly called *Oppidans*, are very numerous, this school having been long ranked among the first public seminaries in this or any other country. The average number of independent scholars, for some years past, has been from 300 to 350: when Dr. Barnard was master, under whom the school was more flourishing perhaps than at any other period, the number at one time exceeded 530. To enumerate all the Etonians who have become eminent in the republic of letters, or have distinguished themselves as lawyers, statesmen, or divines, would be no easy task. From Harwood's *Alumni Etonenses*, which is confined to such scholars as have been on the foundation, may be collected, among others, the names of Bishop Fleetwood, Bishop Pearson, the learned John Hales, Dr. Stanhope, Sir Robert Walpole, and the late Earl Camden. Among such celebrated characters as have received their education at Eton, but not on the foundation, more immediately occur to notice the names of Outred the mathematician, Boyle\* the philosopher, Waller the poet, the late Earl of

\* Boyle was offered the provostship, but declined accepting it; upon which Waller was actually appointed, but the Chancellor refused to set his seal to the appointment, it being contrary to the Statutes (although there had been several precedents for it) that a layman should hold the office.

Chatham, Horace, Earl of Orford, Gray, West, and the late learned Jacob Bryant. A considerable number of the literary characters of the present day, as well as of those who are highly distinguished in public life, have received their education at this celebrated seminary of learning.

Before we dismiss the subject of Eton School, the ancient custom of the procession of the scholars *ad montem* may be thought not undeserving of notice. This procession is made every third year on Whit-Tuesday, to a *tumulus* near the Bath road, which has acquired the name of Salt-hill, by which also the neighbouring inns have been long known. The chief object of the celebrity is to collect money for *salt*, as the phrase is, from all persons present, and it is exacted even from passengers travelling the road.

The scholars who collect the money are called salt-bearers, and are dressed in rich silk habits. Tickets inscribed with some motto,\* by way of pass-word, are given to such persons as have already paid for *salt*, as a security from any further demands. This ceremony has been frequently honoured with the presence of his Majesty and the Royal Family, whose liberal contributions, added to those of many of the nobility and others, who have been educated at Eton, and purposely attend the meeting, have so far augmented the collections, that it has been known to amount to more than 800*l*. The sum so collected is given to the senior scholar who is going off to Cambridge, for his support at the University. It would be in vain perhaps to endeavour to trace the origin of all the circumstances of this singular custom, particularly that of collecting money for *salt*, which has been in use from time immemorial. The procession itself seems to have been coeval with the foundation of the College, and it has been conjectured with much probability, that it was that of the *bairn* or *boy-bishop*.† We have been informed, that originally it took place on the 6th of December, the festival of St. Nicholas the patron of children; being the day on which it was customary at Salisbury, and in other places where the ceremony was observed, to elect the *boy-*

\* One of the most appropriate perhaps, was "*Mos pro lege*."

† This part of the ceremony has been supposed by some to have originated from an ancient practice among the friars of selling consecrated salt. This custom was totally abolished in the year 1844.

bishop, from among the children belonging to the cathedral.\* In the voluminous collections relating to antiquities bequeathed by Mr. Cole, (who was himself of Eton and King's College,) to the British Museum, is a note, in which it is asserted, that the ceremony of the *bairn*, or *boy-bishop* was to be observed by charter, and that Geffrey Blythe, Bishop of Litchfield, who died in 1530, bequeathed several ornaments to King's College and Eton, for the dress of the *bairn-bishop*. From whence the industrious antiquary procured this information, which if correct would end all conjecture on the subject, does not appear. We cannot learn that there are any documents in support of it at King's College or at Eton, and the Prerogative Court of Canterbury, as well as the registries of the dioceses of London, Chester, and Litchfield, where alone there is any probability of its being registered, have been searched in vain for Bishop Blythe's will. Within the memory of persons now living, it was a part of the ceremony at the *montem*, that a boy dressed in a clerical habit, with a wig, should read prayers. The custom of hunting a ram, by the Eton scholars, on Saturday in the election week, supposed to have been an ancient tenure, was abolished by the late provost, Dr. Cooke.

Eton College consists of two quadrangles. In the first is the school, the chapel, and lodgings for the masters and scholars. The other is occupied by the library, the provost's lodgings, and the apartments of the fellows. The chapel, as far as relates to its external appearance is a very handsome Gothic structure: the inside has none of that ornamental architecture, so much admired in King's College Chapel at Cambridge, to which this has sometimes been compared, but is quite plain, and has been much disfigured by some injudicious alterations, which were made in the beginning of the last century, when several of the old monuments were removed, and others concealed behind the wainscot then placed at the east end, by which also was hid a Gothic altarpiece, of stone, enriched with

\* This mock dignity lasted till Innocents day ; during the intermediate time the boy performed various episcopal functions, and if it happened that he died before it was expired, he was buried with the same ceremonials which were used at the funeral of a Bishop.

niches. The whole length of the chapel is 175 feet, including the ante-chapel, which is 62 feet in length. Among the eminent persons who lie buried in this chapel, are Richard Lord Grey of Wilton, Henchman to King Henry VIII.; John Longland, Bishop of Lincoln, confessor to that monarch; Sir Henry Saville, the learned warden of Merton, and provost of this college, who founded the Savillian professorships of astronomy and geometry at Oxford; Sir Henry Wotton, an eminent ambassador and statesman, who was also provost of Eton; Francis Rowse, a distinguished writer among the puritans, and one of the lords of Cromwell's upper-house, who died provost of Eton in 1658; Dr. Allestree, provost of Eton, (an eminent royalist,) who built the new or upper school, with the cloisters beneath, at the expense of 1,500*l.* and died in 1680; and Nathaniel Ingelo, who died in 1683. The monuments of some of the above-mentioned persons are not now to be seen. Sir Henry Wotton's tomb has the following singular inscription :—

" Hie jaeet hujus sententiae primus auctor—  
Disputandi pruritus fit ecclesiarum scabies."  
" Nomen alias quaere."

Dr Ingelo was author of a romance, called Bentevolio and Urania, which is alluded to in the following singular passage of his epitaph.— "*Cujus stylus, dum dramate pietatum ad Christi morem suaviter insinuat, an ingeniosus an patheticus sit magis, vicissim acriter et diu contenditur; qua lite nondum sopita, feliciter quiescit autor eruditus beatam praestolans resurrectionem, donec deiectionis dies supremus illuxerit.*" In the ante-chapel is a statue of the founder, by Bacon, erected in 1786, the sum of 600*l.* having been bequeathed for that purpose, by the Rev. Edward Betham, fellow of the college, who died in 1783; and a monument of the young Earl of Waldegrave, who was drowned when at Eton school in 1794. In the school-yard is another statue of the founder in bronze, erected at the expense of Provost Godolphin. In the cemetery belonging to the college is the tomb of the learned John Hales.

The library of Eton College contains a very large and valuable collection of books, having been from time to time enriched by munificent bequests, particularly by the

library of Dr. Waddington, Bishop of Chester, consisting chiefly of divinity; that of Mr. Mann, master of the Charter-house; that of Richard Topham, Esq., formerly keeper of his Majesty's records in the Tower, chiefly remarkable for its fine editions of the Classics; and that of the late Anthony Storer, Esq., containing a great number of early printed and rare books, in various departments of literature, a fine set of Aldus's, and many scarce editions of the Classics, particularly a very rare copy of Macrobius, and a large collection of engraved portraits and other valuable prints, exclusive of what had been bound up at great expense, with various historical and topographical works, which formed part of his library. Mr. Topham's collection comprises also some very valuable engravings, drawings by the old masters, medals, &c. Mr. Hetherington bequeathed the sum of 500*l.* to the College, to be expended in books.

In the provost's lodgings are portraits of Queen Elizabeth, Sir Thomas Smith, a learned statesman, who was provost of the College, Sir Robert Walpole, Provost Stewart, clerk of the closet to King Charles I., Sir Henry Saville, Sir Henry Wotton, Francis Rowse, and several other provosts of the College: here is also a picture, said to be a portrait of Jane Shore.

In 1452, the College had a charter for a market on Wednesdays, at Eton, with considerable privileges,\* but it has been long disused. Two fairs were granted by the charter of 1444: one for the three days following Ash-Wednesday; the other for six days following the 13th of August. There is now only one fair held on Ash-Wednesday.

The manor of Eton was acquired by the College in the reign of Edward IV., of the Lovel family, who inherited it through female heirs from the families of Fitz-Other, Hodge, Huntercombe, and Scudamore. The manor of Eton-Stockdales *cum* Cole-Norton, in this parish, was for several centuries in the Windsor family. During the last century it has been successively in the families of Ballard, Wassell, and Buckle, and is now the property of John Penn, Esq., of Stoke Park. The parish church of Eton, called in ancient records Eton-Gildables, having been

\* See Cart. 27-39 Hen. VI.

suffered to fall to decay, the inhabitants are permitted to attend divine service in the College Chapel. The provost of Eton is always rector, and has archidiaconal jurisdiction within the parish. There is a Chapel-of-Ease in the town, served by one of the conducts of the College: it was built for the use of the inhabitants, by William Hetherington, the munificent benefactor to the blind and poor of other descriptions, who had been one of the Fellows of Eton.