

CHAPTER XII.—FORMS OF SCHOOL GOVERNMENT.

§ 1. FORMS OF SCHOOL GOVERNMENT.—§ 2. TEACHERS NOMINATED BY MASTERS, WITH APPROVAL OF COUNCIL.—§ 3. TEACHERS APPOINTED BY COUNCIL, WITH CONSENT OF MASTERS.—§ 4. TEACHERS APPOINTED BY THE MASTERS ALONE.—§ 5. GOVERNMENT ABSOLUTE.—§ 6. GOVERNMENT CONSTITUTIONAL.—§ 7. GOVERNMENT REPUBLICAN.—§ 8. DIFFERENT SYSTEMS COMPARED.

§ 1. WHICH is the most perfect form of government for a school containing departments taught by more than one teacher? Should the form of school government be absolute, limited, or republican? In other words, should the school superintendent be absolute, like the English rector, or should he have limited powers only; or again, should all the headmasters of departments be made equal—each supreme under the patrons in his own class-room, and only responsible to them? Each of these forms of government prevailed of old, and still prevails, in the schools; each has been tried perhaps more than once in the leading schools, and set aside in favour of some other form, perhaps the one last superseded.

§ 2. The old patrons of the school generally appear to have favoured monarchy—government by one master—and it was a natural consequence that they should allow the master to nominate his assistants, or to have some voice in their appointment: thus, in 1600, the master of the grammar school of Glasgow undertakes to furnish a doctor, who shall be presented to the council for approval.¹ In 1627 the schoolmaster of Peebles having presented John Dunlop to be doctor under him, and his qualifications having been tested, the council receive him into office.² In 1633 the master of the grammar school

¹ Burgh Records of Glasgow.

² Burgh Records of Peebles.

of Perth was authorised to elect his own doctors, but it was stipulated that he must present them to the council, to 'heir their iust exceptionis, seeing they most pay their stipendis.'¹ In 1703 the master of the grammar school of Paisley appointed his doctor with the sanction of the council.² From the year 1749 the assistants in the grammar school of Wigtown were appointed by the masters, with the approval of the council.³ In 1781 the master of the grammar school of Kirkcudbright was authorised to appoint two ushers, subject to the approval of the council;⁴ in 1792 the same council enact that the English usher shall be admitted only with their consent.⁵ In 1786 the council of Banff recommend the rector to get 'proper ushers,' and they, being satisfied with his choice, authorise him to employ them.⁶ Appointments similar to the foregoing are still made: the teachers in the Bathgate academy appoint their own assistants, subject to the approval of the trustees.⁷ In the high school of Stirling the assistants are appointed by the masters, with the sanction of the council;⁸ and in the Tain academy the teachers have been appointed since 1861 by the rector, subject to the approval of the directors.⁹ The inference is that, in all this class of appointments, the managers hold the masters answerable for the conduct of their assistants; but the record in one instance only (at Perth in 1633) fastens responsibility upon the rector. If the masters were held wholly responsible by the council for the results of the school as a whole, they had probably the power of dismissing as well as nominating their assistants; but it is impossible to say whether they could exercise that power without obtaining the sanction of the council.

¹ Burgh Records of Perth.

² Burgh Records of Paisley. In Paisley the doctors, as a rule, were appointed by the council, but sometimes the schoolmasters were allowed to choose, subject to the approval of the council.

³ Burgh Records of Wigtown, *et passim*.

⁴ Burgh Records of Kirkcudbright.

⁶ *Ibid.*

⁶ Burgh Records of Banff. ⁷ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., 362.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 596.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 600.

§ 3. On the other hand, the school managers frequently appointed the under teachers after taking counsel of the master, and obtaining his approval or consent: in 1612 the council of Stirling admit a doctor in the grammar school who had been presented in name of the master;¹ in 1645 the council appoint a doctor with consent of the master.² In the following year, the council of Jedburgh, with consent of the master, nominate a doctor.³ In 1763 the council of Kinghorn reserve to themselves the power of electing a doctor, he being recommended by the master.⁴ In 1802 the council of Forfar enact that they shall appoint an assistant, on the recommendation of the master.⁵ In 1821 it was agreed that the assistant of the master of the united burgh and parochial school of Crail should be elected on the recommendation of the rector.⁶ At present the teachers in Dumbarton burgh academy are appointed by the council on the recommendation of the rector.⁷ The powers of the head-master, with regard to teachers appointed by the council with his sanction, do not appear, but probably they were more limited than in the case of those selected by himself with the approval of the council; and if his powers were more limited, his responsibility for the result of the school as a whole was also probably limited in the same proportion.

§ 4. Again, there are cases in which the councils left the appointments of the assistants to the head-master, without exercising any interference with his choice: as the minister of Kirkcaldy, who was principal of the burgh school shortly after the Reformation, was allowed to elect his own doctor, 'for quhome he sall anser.'⁸ In 1611 the master of the high school of Edinburgh undertakes to procure four doctors in the school, for whom he shall be responsible.⁹ In 1695 the master of the grammar school of Paisley was authorised to choose his

¹ Burgh Records of Stirling. ² Ibid. ³ Burgh Records of Jedburgh.

⁴ Burgh Records of Kinghorn. ⁵ Burgh Records of Forfar.

⁶ Municipal Corporations Report, i., 158.

⁷ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., 418.

⁸ Burgh Records of Kirkcaldy. ⁹ Burgh Records of Edinburgh.

own doctor.¹ Because of complaints made against the doctors of the grammar school of Stirling, the council authorise the master to nominate his assistants, he being answerable.² At the Elgin academy, the assistant teachers were chosen by the three principal teachers, so as to prevent the choice of an assistant from friendship or relation in preference to acquirements, and in order to divide the responsibility, thereby lessening it to the employer.³ The magistrates of Campbeltown state, in 1835, that they think it better to leave the privilege and responsibility of appointing the assistant with the rector.⁴ The custom of wholly entrusting the master with the election of his assistants has almost died out in Scotland; we find it only at the Forres academy,⁵ and at the Fraserburgh academy, where the teachers choose their own assistants.⁶ In relation to this class of teachers—those appointed entirely by the master—the head-master would seem to be absolute, having the power of dismissing as well as appointing them. The council deal with the master alone, the other teachers having no *locus standi* whatever in the eyes of the employers or the public.

§ 5. We have not found that the powers of the masters, or the duties of the assistants, were defined in the instances of appointments referred to. Our next duty is to cite cases in which the relative powers of the teachers are defined with more or less precision. The school managers appear to have invested the head-masters with extensive powers in the following examples: The doctor of the grammar school of Haddington, in 1592, promises to obey the master as becomes a doctor;⁷ in 1613 a doctor in the grammar school of Stirling binds himself to observe the directions given to him by the master;⁸ in

¹ Burgh Records of Paisley.

² Burgh Records of Stirling.

³ Session Papers, 541, pp. 51, 83.

⁴ Municipal Corporations Report, i., 150.

⁵ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., 465. ⁶ *Ibid.*, 469.

⁷ Burgh Records of Haddington.

⁸ Burgh Records of Stirling. The tenure of the doctor's office was also in the master's power; thus a doctor engages, in 1613, to serve the town for six months, 'and longer, during the pleasure of the council,

1615 a principal doctor is employed to teach such classes as the master shall allot;¹ in 1620 a teacher of English and music in the grammar school promises to be always subject and obedient to the master;² in 1631 a doctor in the grammar school undertakes to be 'obedient to the master in all his directions.'³ The writing and arithmetic master in the grammar school of Aberdeen promises, in 1628, to be faithful to the master and his doctors in all points, and particularly to be governed by the master;⁴ in 1633 the second doctor of the grammar school is declared to be liable to the master's admonition as the other doctor, obeying him in doctrine and discipline, and in all other things concerning the weal of the school.⁵ The council of St Andrews ordain, in 1714, the doctor of the grammar school to be subject to the master in all things.⁶ The council of Dunbar, considering, in 1726, the great decline of the burgh schools, the principal cause being their constitution, whereby there are two collegiate masters who have the same powers, resolve that the constitution be altered into such other plan as shall be afterwards decided; in the following year they appointed a principal master.⁷ In 1763 the council of Kinghorn resolve that, in case the doctor shall become remiss or negligent, the master may dismiss him at pleasure.⁸ The council of Banff, being of opinion, in 1780, that it may tend to the better improvement of youth to put the grammar school and the school for writing, arithmetic, and mathematics, under charge of one master, appoint a head-master and an assistant master.⁹ In 1781 the council of Kirkcudbright, satisfied of the inutility of having three masters separate from, and independent of, each other, resolve to have a master who shall have charge of the three and direction and will of the master.' In 1617 Mr John Row is appointed doctor for a year, 'and further, enduring the will of the master;' in 1618 his successor is appointed on the same terms: Ibid.

¹ Burgh Records of Stirling.² Ibid.³ Ibid.⁴ Burgh Records of Aberdeen.⁵ Ibid.⁶ Burgh Records of St Andrews.⁷ Burgh Records of Dunbar.⁸ Burgh Records of Kinghorn.⁹ Burgh Records of Banff.

schools, with two helpers under him.¹ In 1786 the council of Banff appointed a rector, he having qualified assistants; the council recommend that, as it is only meant he should have the superintendence and direction, he should lay down such rules with respect to teaching, management, and government of the schools, as he and his assistants shall think prudent.² Leaving the records and coming down to our own day, we find that, at Fochabers free school, the teachers must carry out the rules laid down by the master.³ In the Forres academy the teachers are entirely under the control of the head-master.⁴ In the Greenock academy the assistants are under the respective masters, the whole being responsible to the rector, and he to the directors.⁵ In the Hamilton academy the teachers are subordinate to the rector, who formerly appointed them.⁶ In the Lanark burgh school the assistants hold their appointment subject to the head-master.⁷ The teachers in the high school of Leith are appointed and dismissible by the rector.⁸ In these different instances the patrons delegate their wishes and authority to one person—the master—who, in virtue of his commission, is for the time ruler of the institution.

§ 6. In another group of schools the patrons have not divested themselves to the same extent of their management as apparently they did in the last class. They simply appoint a president under themselves with limited powers to administer the school laws and to carry out their plans and orders; but they continue themselves as the executive, and may or may not give effect to the recommendation of their rector. In 1598 the fourth regent in the high school of Edinburgh was appointed principal—vested with the oversight of the other regents in matters of attendance, teaching, and discipline, but received no powers to compel the other regents to obey his instructions;⁹ the act of 1598 was ratified in 1710, with the

¹ Burgh Records of Kirkcudbright.

² Burgh Records of Banff.

³ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., 453.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 465. ⁵ *Ibid.*, 482.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 491.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 514.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 516.

⁹ Burgh Records of Edinburgh. The powers of the master are not

addition that, if any of the masters neglect his duty, perform it superficially, or observe not a prudent course of discipline and good order, the rector shall admonish him privately for the first time; for the second, before all the colleagues; and, if he regard not that, report him to the council.¹ The powers of the masters of the grammar school of Aberdeen do not appear to have been much more extensive; it was the duty of the master, in 1631, to 'teach the high class, having the inspection and oversight of the rest;'² in 1676 the council ordained one of the under masters to teach the class formerly taught by the principal, in addition to his own class, and to have authority over the other masters and scholars, they obeying him thereanent;³ but in these two instances the head-master appears to have had only constitutional powers. In the following extract the powers of the rector were in name only: the master of the grammar school of Perth, in 1679, shall 'have no superiority over the doctors, but only priority;'⁴ he shall be *primus in paribus*. The duties of the rector of the Elgin academy, in 1791, consisted in visiting the different classes, and reporting their state to the directors.⁵ There are still head-masters in most of our important schools, but they possess, as of old, limited powers only: The rector of the grammar school of New Aberdeen superintends the other teachers, but they are practically independent.⁶ For the most part the masters in the Ayr academy are independent of the rector.⁷ The teachers in the Dollar institution act under the head-master, but they may appeal against his authority.⁸ The teachers in the Dumbarton burgh

really so large as they look in the act of council passed in 1630, when they forbid the master to 'input any doctor but such as shall be presented by the council,' but authorise him to depose any of them on misdemeanour, notifying, however, the same to the council, and the reasons why he deprives them: Ibid.

¹ Burgh Records of Edinburgh.

² Report on Burgh Schools, i., 24.

³ Burgh Records of Aberdeen.

⁴ Burgh Records of Perth.

⁵ Session Papers, No. 541, p. 24.

⁶ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., p. 337.

⁷ Ibid., 353.

⁸ Ibid., 405.

academy are subject to the rector, with the approval of the town council.¹ The head-master of Edinburgh high school can only report on the other masters,² just like his predecessors in 1710, and probably in 1598. In the high school of Stirling the teachers are not, except in a very limited sense, subject to the rector.³

The propriety of the old method adopted by the authorities to promote or compel harmony, and to discover the respective shortcomings of this class of teachers—those who had not equal rank, or were not absolutely subordinated to the head-master—appears somewhat questionable: thus in 1630 the council of Edinburgh resolved that, at the end of the annual visitation of the high school, the visitors 'sall remove first the maister, and trye if anything can be found against him; then the doctors, and tryell sall be taken what the maister or any other has to say against them, or any one of them; and this forme to be observit yeirlie in all tyme coming.'⁴ In 1709 the visitors of the high school, considering the great decay of the school, called the masters and doctors before them; having removed the doctors and interrogated the master whether or not the decay of the school proceeded from the negligence or insufficiency of the doctors, he answered, that so far as he knew, the doctors did duly attend in the discharge of their duty, and that the decay proceeded from the great number of private schools in the town; thereafter the doctors were called in, and the master removed, and they, being also interrogated whence the decay of the school proceeded, said that it was from the number of private schools; whereupon the master was called in, and all were exhorted to a faithful and conscientious discharge of their respective duties.⁵ The only other grammar school in which this invidious practice prevailed, appears to have been that of Aberdeen; in 1765, on the occasion of a visitation of the grammar school, the three doctors of the school being called in, the master declares he has

¹ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., 419. ² *Ibid.*, 448. ³ *Ibid.*, 596.

⁴ Burgh Records of Edinburgh.

⁵ *Ibid.*

no complaint against any of them; on the other hand, they had nothing to lay before the visitors, and the whole masters declare they live in harmony with one another.¹ The same practice continued till the end of last century at Aberdeen, where the masters were requested to state anything they knew against one another in presence even of the boys. In reference to this custom Dr Adam, of the high school of Edinburgh, writes to the rector of the grammar school of Aberdeen: 'What is said might do very well for private advice; but there seems no necessity for publishing it to the boys; and I cannot see the propriety of solemnly interrogating you in their presence, how far these regulations have been strictly observed or not during the preceding year. Whatever tends to diminish the authority of a teacher in the eyes of his scholars, as this proposal seems to do, is surely hurtful.'²

§ 7. The last order of school government is republican in its character; there is no rector even in name; all the masters are equal, having co-ordinate powers and authority: for example, in 1602 two persons were appointed joint masters of the grammar school of Aberdeen with equal rank and powers.³ In 1725 the council of Paisley tried the plan of having two joint masters for the grammar school, instead of a doctor and a master as usual;⁴ the joint mastership lasted twenty-five years, but the system was not again revived. In 1782 the council of Glasgow abolished the office of rector in the grammar school, and ordained that the business of the rector, viz., presiding in the common hall, directing the discipline of the school, and regulating the method of study, should in future be conducted by the four masters all in common, with equal rank, authority, and salaries, the master of the oldest class for the time being to have the casting vote.⁵ In 1785

¹ Burgh Records of Aberdeen. ² Report on Burgh Schools, i., 25.

³ Burgh Records of Aberdeen. ⁴ Burgh Records of Paisley.

⁵ Burgh Records of Glasgow. The rector had a general superintendence—like the rectors of Edinburgh and Aberdeen—over masters till 1782. The office of rector was re-established in 1816 in name only, but finally abolished in 1830.

the council of Dumbarton appoint two persons as joint teachers in the grammar school, declaring that the salary and emoluments shall be divided equally between them;¹ in 1789 the council, being satisfied that it is proper to alter the system on which the last appointment of the teachers proceeded, resolve in future to have one person to act as rector, and another as usher;² but on 7th June following, a committee of the council having been appointed to deliberate whether there should be two joint teachers or a rector and usher, report, on 16th July, that they are unanimously of opinion that it is much better to have two well-qualified teachers in the public school, having equal salaries and emoluments; the closest co-partnery should exist between them in public and private teaching, the proceeds equally divided, and all misunderstandings to be determined by the magistrates.³ Accordingly, on 22d July, the town council having elected two joint masters, require them 'to teach together as much as possible at all times, and to have the same salary.'⁴ In some important schools, including one or two of our largest, there are at present no head-masters: thus in the Dundee high school the masters are of equal authority, and independent of each other;⁵ in the high school of Glasgow each department is independent of the other;⁶ in the Elgin academy there is no head-master;⁷ nor in the Kirkcudbright academy, though there is a 'rector';⁸ nor in the Forfar academy.⁹

§ 8. The prosperity, life, and harmonious working of the school depend greatly on its form of government. We find the school at one time full and prosperous, at another time decaying and almost extinct; at one time the glory of the little community, at another time its reproach. From the extracts cited, it appears that the authorities frequently removed the schoolmaster from office,¹⁰ or sometimes altered the form of government, in order to retrieve the character of the school;

¹ Burgh Records of Dumbarton. ² Ibid. ³ Ibid. ⁴ Ibid.

⁵ Report on Endowed Schools, ii., 425. ⁶ Ibid., 471. ⁷ Ibid., 449.

⁸ Ibid., 505. ⁹ Ibid., 460. ¹⁰ *Supra*, Chapter VIII., § 3.

but it does not appear that they had fixed on a particular form of government as the most perfect in all time coming—having perhaps learned from experience that the most suitable at one time was a failure under different circumstances. The despotic government appears to have prevailed chiefly in that class of schools in which all the branches, including classics, were originally taught by one master, who required, in course of time, a doctor, one or more, to assist him in the general work of the school. In the grammar schools proper—those in which *ars grammatica* alone was taught—the rector was generally master in a limited way; but if the grammar school was converted into an academy, other departments became of importance as well as classics, and the masters gradually became independent of one another, and acquired something like coordinate authority. It does not appear that in any important school in Scotland the head-master was for any length of time emphatically rector—having the direct management of the classes and entire control over the school, with the power of appointing and dismissing the masters; the authorities may have been of opinion—an opinion, perhaps, founded on experience—that it was not the safest system to entrust one man in every instance with absolute powers over a great school.

Managers of schools, educationists, and teachers are, we believe, still divided in opinion with regard to the form of government best calculated to promote the prosperity of the school. The arguments usually advanced in favour of masters having equal powers and rank are: When each teacher works for his own department, he is likely to be actuated with greater zeal than when he is part of a general system or machine; in schools where the head-masters of the different departments are equal, though one of them may be inefficient the rest may be good, and the school does not altogether suffer, as it would under an inefficient rector. The most prevalent form of school government in Scotland—one in keeping with the character of our civil government—is a kind of constitutionalism by which the rector exercises some

degree of supervision over the other masters and scholars, the extent of which is seldom defined. When every department of the school is successful, the position of the constitutional rector is pleasant enough, but if unsuccessful, what can he do to improve matters? He can only report to the patrons, who may, or may not, act on his advice; and in practice it is found that he has not sufficient power to manage and superintend the school, and that in point of fact he is powerless outside his own class. The form of school government that appears best calculated to secure harmony among the teachers and promote uniformity of teaching in the school is when the rector is absolute—entire manager of the school, with power to appoint and dismiss teachers—and the sole channel of communication between the school and the school board. The objections to this form of government are, that as everything depends on the rector, if he proves inefficient, or perverts his power, the school will be ruined, and that the system is calculated to suppress the individuality of a teacher—one of the great aims of education. Every good and competent teacher should be left to follow his own way independent of the head-master. The burgh school commissioners recommended, in 1868, that there should be a rector higher than the other masters, with entire control over the school, including the appointment and dismissal of the teachers.¹

It is generally admitted that in every school consisting of departments there should be a head-master, in order to give unity and representation to the institution. The difficult problem to solve is how to give him sufficient powers—powers larger than he usually has at present—without humbling or depressing his colleagues, each of whom may be as good, true, and efficient as himself. The rector, it would seem, ought to be the chief, if not the only, organ of communication between the school and the board, to which he should be responsible for the general discipline of the school—it being part of his duty to report to the managers, periodically, whether the school laws are faithfully obeyed—whether every person on

¹ Report on Burgh Schools, 91-108.

the staff properly discharges his duty by carrying out the legislation passed for the government of the school. A master with such duties must be invested with a general charge or superintendence over his colleagues—visiting their classes at any time he pleases, but without having the direct management of them. The rector should interfere as little as possible with the other masters—if competent masters—who ought to be absolutely allowed to teach after their own method, being answerable only to the board, directly, or, still better, indirectly, through the head-master in all matters specially relating to their own department. There will require to be an intimate relation between the head-master and the board, which should take no important step without consulting him, interfering as little as possible with his system of administration. The proper duties of the board consist in deliberating as to the varying educational requirements of the district, in legislating when necessary, in auditing the accounts, and in appointing teachers—the last duty being their most important function of all. Many good teachers are of opinion that if the school be under proper superintendence—under an efficient board—the relation of the masters to one another is not a matter of great importance, and that it is only necessary that there should be powerful authority somewhere.¹

¹ Report on Burgh Schools, i., 211.