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THE GREAT SCHOOLS OF ENGLAND.

II. WESTMINSTER SCHOOL.

(Continued from the Journal of Education for November.)

WESTMINSTER School is a Grammar School attached, as is the case in many Cathedral establishments, to the Collegiate Church of St. Peter, Westminster, and founded by Queen Elizabeth for the free education of forty scholars in Latin, Greek, and Hebrew. The Statutes providing for the establishment and regulation of the collegiate body were passed in the second year of that sovereign, and, though apparently never confirmed, have been uniformly treated as of binding authority, and, in most of their important particulars, observed. The original copy is in the possession of the Dean and Chapter. The scholars were to have an allowance of a small annual sum for commons in Hall, and to receive gowns. It was further provided that there should be for their instruction a Head and Under Master, with certain annual allowances. In addition to the forty scholars, the Masters were to be allowed to educate with them other boys, of whom some were to be admitted as pensioners; provided, however, that the total number of the school should not exceed 120. The stipends of the Masters, and the cost of maintenance, &c., of the scholars, constituted a charge on the general revenues of the collegiate body or chapter, the school being not endowed with any property or estates of its own.

The Queen is visitor; but the government of the whole school, so far as relates to the discipline, instruction, and ordinary school regulations, rests with the Head Master, subject, as respects the forty scholars on the Foundation, to the authority of the Dean and Chapter.

There appears to be no doubt that, in fact, from a very early period other boys than the forty Foundation Scholars were

taught at the school, under the name of *Pensionarii*, *Oppidani*, or *Perigrini*. The number of such boys, and consequently the number of the whole school, have varied from time to time very considerably; but it appears that, from a very early time, at least as early as the year 1600, the statutory limitation of 120 has been practically set aside. Thirty-five years ago the total number was about 300; in 1843 it was 77. Since 1849, however, there has been but little variation; the maximum being, in 1854, 141, the minimum, in 1860, 123. In the school-list of 1861, the number is 136.

Candidates for admission to the Foundation (the members of which are called Queen's Scholars) are, under the Statutes, cap. 5, to be examined by the Electors, with whom also rests the selection of those boys among the seniors who are to receive at the Universities the Exhibitions hereafter referred to. These Electors are the Dean of Westminster, the Dean of Christ Church, Oxford, and the Master of Trinity College, Cambridge, aided by two Examiners from their respective Colleges, called Posers, and the Head Master; and this is, in form, still the case, the boys being tested in some author before the Electors at their annual visit. The real test of qualification, however, is that which is afforded by a system of competition which is termed "The Challenge," and which is thus described by Dr. Liddell, formerly Head Master:—"It partakes somewhat of the nature of the old academical disputations. All the candidates for vacant places in a College are presented to the Master in the order of their forms: there were commonly between 20 and 30 from the fourth form upwards." The number of vacancies is usually about 10. "The two lowest boys come up before the Head Master, having prepared a certain portion of Greek epigram and Ovid's *Metamorphoses*, which has been set to them a certain number of hours before. In preparing these passages they have the assistance of certain senior boys, who are called their 'helps.' With these boys, too, it should be remarked, they have been working for weeks or months beforehand in preparation for the struggle. The lower of the two boys is the challenger. He calls on the boy whom he challenges to translate the passage set them; and, if he can correct any fault in translating, he takes his place. The upper boy now becomes the challenger, and proceeds in the same way. When the translation is finished, the challenger (whichever of the two boys happens to be left in that position) has the right of putting questions in grammar; and if the challengee cannot answer them, and the challenger answers them correctly, the