ETON COLLEGE.*

ETON COLLEGE, FROM ROMNEY LOCH.

HENRY VI. of England, thinking in what way he might best serve the interests of religion and learning, determined to build a college which should do for the University of Cambridge what William of Wykeham had done for Oxford. The idea of a college at a university supplied by a grammar school was first conceived by William of Wykeham; this famous friend and patron of learning had built Winchester. Henry VI. had no doubt heard of Wykeham's foundations. His youth had been passed mainly among the patrons of learning. Henry's uncle, the Duke of Gloucester, an ambitious and turbulent politician of that time, is to-day commemorated as a benefactor in the bidding-prayer of the University of Oxford. Henry VI. was a studious and pious person, and had evinced in youth no disposition to that frivolity and profligacy for which the early years of his father are so well known to us. Fuller has said of him that "he was fitter for a cowl than a crown; of so easie a nature that he might well have exchanged a pound of patience for an ounce of valour." Having himself received a good education, he was desirous that his subjects should have opportunities to learn. He was the more inclined to take an interest in the welfare of the young from the fact of his having been born on the festival of St. Nicholas, the patron saint of children. As Wykeham had caused his grammar school to be erected under his own eye in his cathedral city of Winchester, so the king chose, as the site of the new school, Eton, a village close to Windsor, hoping to see from the terraces of his own castle the building of the colleges, and possibly to behold it some day girt with walls and adorned with towers. King Henry no doubt little dreamed of the future fame of the college, or of the coming centuries through which science should adore the "holy shade" of the founder. He did live, however, to see the buildings in part erected, to make Eton a shrine known all over England, and to find the work of education going on under his windows. He continued to take the deepest interest in every thing that concerned the college. Whenever he met any of the scholars in Windsor Castle, on a visit to any member of his retinue, he used to exhort them to follow the paths of virtue. Giving them a small present of money, he would say, "Be good boys, meek and docile, and servants of the Lord." He did not, however, encourage their presence at court, fearful of the influence upon them of the vicious example of the courtiers.

In the year 1440 the king first announced his intention of building a college within the parochial limit of Eton. On the 11th of October of that year he issued the Charter of Foundation, a pious document, in which, after a preamble breathing the spirit of a zealous churchman, Henry proceeds to found and establish a college "to endure to all time, to the praise, glory, and honour of our crucified Lord, to the exalta-

* *A History of Eton College.* By H. C. MAXWELL LYTE, M.A. Macmillan and Co.

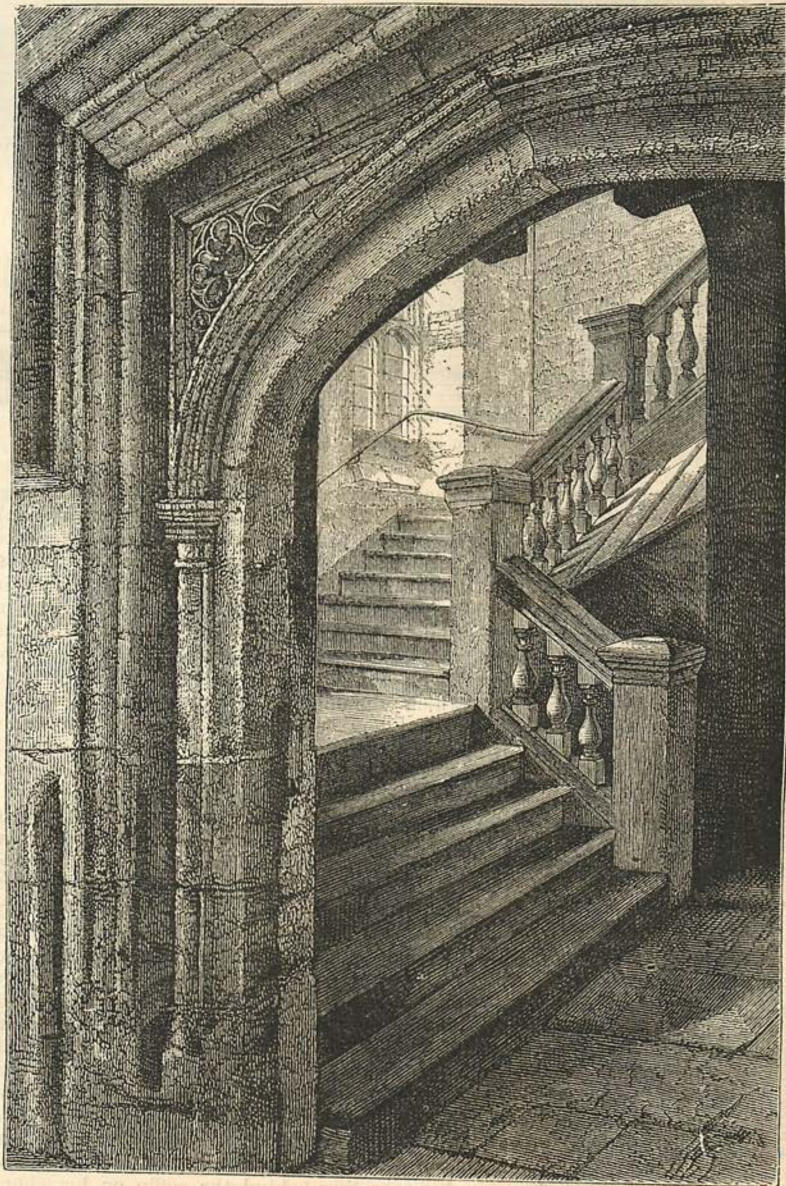
HENRY VI.—[FROM THE ORIGINAL PICTURE AT ETON.]

tion of the most glorious Virgin Mary, His Mother, and the support of the Holy Church, His Bride." "The King's College of Our Lady of Eton beside Windsor" was declared a body corporate. A constitution was sketched out by the founder, and some of the original members were nominated. The members were to consist of a provost, ten fellows, four clerks, six choristers, a school-master, twenty-five poor and indigent scholars, and the same number of poor and infirm men. This scheme appears to unite the characteristics of a college of priests, a school for boys, and an almshouse for poor men. The almshouse was suppressed during King Henry's lifetime, and the college of priests, after more than four centuries of existence, has just been doomed to destruction. A revised code was soon after issued by Henry VI. for the government of his two foundations, "the King's College of Our Lady and St. Nicholas in Cambridge" and "the King's College of Our Lady of Eton beside Windsor." The revised code put the number of students to be supported at Eton at seventy. These collegers, as they were called, upon going to Cambridge were to have scholarships at King's College.

It was from the confiscation of the alien priories that Henry procured the wealth with which to endow the new college. William the Conqueror and the Norman nobles who followed him into England bestowed some of their newly got property upon the monasteries of their native land; and this practice was continued by their descendants. It thus came about that in course of time the Norman and other religious houses obtained considerable property in England, for the management of which priories were established on the spot. Some of these priories were treated as dependencies, and were expected to transmit their whole revenue to the mother houses, while others merely yielded a small tribute. After the cession of Normandy to France, the dependent priories became a source of income to the French king, and in time of war between the two countries were often seized by the Plantagenets, but, on the renewal of peace, were as often restored. These alien priories were finally suppressed in the time of Henry V., and the property transferred to the crown. It was this property which Henry VI. donated to the use of Eton. Certain ecclesiastical privileges were also secured from Rome; but from these the college, though deriving some fame, got very little money. The cost of entertaining the strangers whom the indulgences brought thither exceeded the amount of their offerings. Among the grants made by the king for the entertainment of the strangers was a gift of three tuns of red wine of Gascony, to be delivered annually in London. This wine-bearing region was in Henry's dominions, but when the English were driven from Gascony, the college was paid in money instead of wine. The king also established a fair on Ash-Wednesday, traces of which remained to quite recent times. Old Etonians remember the custom of the boys at the Ash-Wednesday fairs cutting off the pigs' tails. Out of regard for the pigs, the authorities finally decreed for Ash-Wednesday a combination of all the lessons of a whole school day with the church service of a holiday. Among the gifts of King Henry to the college was a finger-joint and part of the spine of John the Confessor, prior of Budlington, which had been given him by the monks of that convent, and the "Tablet of Bourbon," said to contain portions of the blood of our Lord, "of His cross, of the glorious Virgin

Mary, His mother, and of His Most Blessed Confessor Nicholas, and of Katherine the Virgin, and of other martyrs, confessors, and virgins."

The fortunes of Eton fell pretty low during the wars of the Roses, and Edward IV. was at one time inclined to be hostile to the college. Jane Shore, the mistress of Edward IV., is said to have been a friend to Eton in its time of need. Two portraits of her exist at Eton. The sole historical evidence in support of the tradition that Jane Shore pleaded the cause of Eton with King Edward is to be found in the account of her by Sir Thomas More: "When the king toke displeasure, she would mitigate and appease his mind; when men were out of favour, she would bring them in his grace; for many that had highly offended she obtained pardon; of great forfeitures she gate neu remission; and finally in many weighty sutes she stode many men in gret stede......At this daye she beggeth of many at this day living that at this day had begged if she had not



STAIRCASE TO THE CHAPEL AND UPPER SCHOOL.

LONG CHAMBER, IN 1844.

bene." More describes Jane Shore as short of stature and pale in face.

The relation of Eton to English kings has always been a close one, and this relation has often, though not always, been to the advantage of the college. The cupidity of Henry VIII. lost the college a piece of land which would now be of immense value. This was a hundred and sixty acres lying in what was then the country, but which now includes that portion of London between Charing Cross and Hay Hill, sixty-four acres of it lying south of Piccadilly. Henry VIII. was a sharp real estate speculator; he persuaded or ordered the college to exchange this land for some belonging to the crown, a bargain justifying the saying,

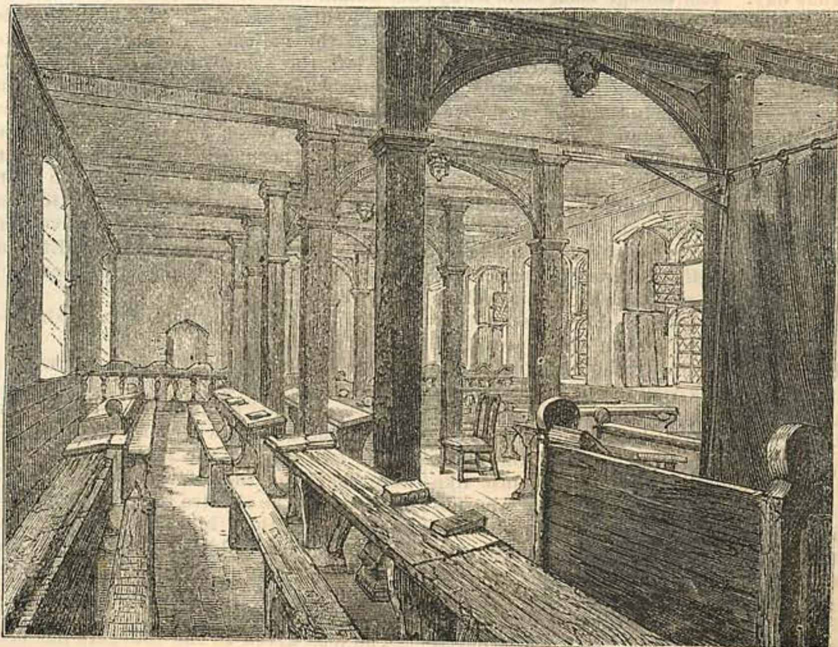
> "Henricus Octavus
> Took away more than he gave us."

This piece of property, with the hospital of St. James which stood upon it, had been granted to Eton by the founder. Henry VIII. pulled down the old hospital and erected instead St. James's Palace. Eton's intimacy with English kings was not due altogether to its contiguity to Windsor; but being upon the road from London to the castle, the royal travelers passed by the school in going and coming. When kings and queens died in London, they were borne through Eton to their tombs in the castle. Gorgeous processions bore those dead monarchs to the grave; and it is interesting to picture the Eton scholars coming out to meet the procession as it passed by the college. The coffin of Henry VIII., when borne through Eton, had upon it, as was customary, an effigy of the dead king, having the true imperial crown on its head, and a night-cap of black satin set full of precious stones. The whole array of the effigy was of the finest description. There was "a fair armoury sword by its side," the sceptre in the right hand, the ball in the left, a pair of scarlet hose, crimson velvet shoes, gloves on the hands, and several diamond rings on the fingers. The provost, fellows, and masters came out to meet the procession in their best ornaments and crosses; and "by them," says the chronicler, "all the young children, scholars of the college, in their white surplices, bare-headed, holding in the one hand tapers and in the other books, saying the seven psalms; and as the corps came by, kneeled and censed it, bidding their *De profundis* and other prayers." Some years before, the body of the queen, Jane Seymour, had been borne through Eton, having lain in state for nearly three weeks at Hampton Court. The king did not appear, but the Princess Mary rode behind as chief mourner, between the Lords Montague and Clifford. What an odd cavalcade this must have been! Think of the death of the present Queen, of her funeral procession to Windsor, of the Prince of Wales's excusing himself from attendance, and of the Princess Louise riding behind the coffin on horseback between the Marquis of Lorne and Lord Salisbury!

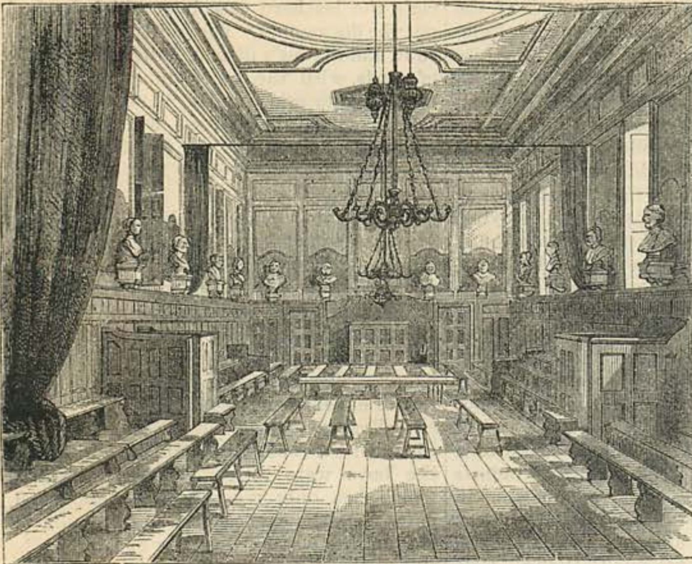
During the reigns of Henry VIII., Edward VI., and Queen Mary the college underwent some vicissitudes of faith as well as of fortune. The changes under Henry VIII. had been merely political, but those under Ed-

ward VI. extended to the services of the church. Sir Thomas Smith, a strong reformer, was elected provost, and pulled down and had carted away the images at the high altar of the college church. In 1551 the embroidered frontals of the other altars were sold, the provost and fellows buying them for their own household purposes. This practice was common at this time, if we may judge from the following passage in Heylin: "Many private persons' parlors were hung with altar cloths, their tables and beds covered with copes instead of carpets and coverlets, and many made carousing cups of the sacred chalices, as once Belshazzar celebrated his drunken feast in the sanctified vessels of the Temple. It was a sorry house, and not worth the naming, which had not somewhat of this furniture in it, though it were only a fair large cushion made of a cope or altar cloth, to adorn their windows or make their chairs to have somewhat in them of a chair of state." The altars were again set up under Mary. Henry Cole, the new provost, was a zealous Catholic. Cole was a man of considerable note in his party. In 1556 he was selected to deliver a sermon at Oxford immediately before the execution of Cranmer. He was afterward sent to Ireland on a mission to suppress heresy, for which he was given ample powers. But at Chester his credentials were taken out of his bag by his hostess, the wife of the mayor of that town, and a stanch Protestant. Cole, in complete ignorance of the trick, on arriving at Dublin tendered to the Irish officials the leathern case into which he had put the documents. The Lord Deputy opened it, and to Cole's dismay found only a pack of cards, with the *knave* uppermost. The Lord Deputy said, quietly, "Let us have another commission, and we will meanwhile shuffle the cards." Cole hurried back to England, but Queen Mary had died in the mean time.

Of Eton as a place of education in those years we do not know so much as of the relations of the college to the outside world. Soon after its establishment, wealthy parents began to send their sons to share the advantages of the school. These boys lived in the town, and were hence styled "oppidans." The seventy poor boys educated free of expense on the foundation were called collegers. The collegers slept in Long Chamber—a room along which the beds of the boys were ranged. Long Chamber, which has only recently been abolished, dates from the earliest times of the college. Malim, who was head-master of Eton in the sixteenth century, has left us a *consuetudinarium*, or description of customs, which he prepared in the year 1560. The collegers were awakened at five by a prepositor, who shouted "*Surgite.*" While dressing, the boys chanted prayers, probably consisting of Latin psalms. Each boy had to make his own bed, and to sweep the dust from under it into the middle of Long Chamber. There followed through the day a succession of lessons, prayers, and meals, with an hour or two for play. At eight the boys



THE LOWER SCHOOL.



THE UPPER SCHOOL.

tom, that it gave a spirit to the children; and the hopes that they might one time or other attain to the real mitre made them mind their books."

Eton continued to grow in public esteem during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. Among its famous provosts was Sir Henry Wotton, the intimate friend of Izaak Walton. Black Potts, on the Thames, just below the playing fields, still a resort of the fish, was the place at which the two friends spent many summer hours. The poet Waller obtained from Charles I. the appointment of provost, but was successfully opposed by Clarendon on the ground that he was a layman. In the latter part of the last century Eton had as head-master, and afterward as provost, Dr. Barnard, under whom the school rose to a point of prosperity unknown before. Dr. Foster succeeded Dr. Barnard, and during his administration occurred the most formidable attempt at a rebellion in the history of the college. A large number of boys left the school, most of them to be brought back by their parents and punished. William Grenville, afterward Prime Minister, was taken away from the school after having been sent back for a few hours to be flogged. Lord Harrington's son swore that he would not submit, and went to London; but his father refused to receive him, insisting that he should return to Eton at once, when the following conversation took place through the door:

"Sir," said the son, "consider. I shall be d——d if I do."

"And I," answered the father, "will be d——d if you don't."

"Yes, my lord," said the dutiful boy, "but you will be d——d whether I do or not."

The two sons of the Marquis of Granby were asked by their father if they would like to go to the theatre that evening. Delighted with their luck, they said, "Yes." The bluff general added, "You shall go there to-night for your own pleasure, and to-morrow you shall return to Dr. Foster and be flogged, for mine."

The food given to the collegers has been always extremely meagre and poor, though

went to bed, chanting prayers. Friday was at that time a fast-day throughout England, and the boys, besides fasting, were on that day punished for all the offenses of the week. Latin was almost the only study, and this was thoroughly taught. The boys appeared in the main to have lived a doleful life. They had a few holidays, however. Shrove-Tuesday was a day of play for them, the practice being to torment some live bird on that day. The college cook stole away a crow from its nest, and fastening to it a pancake, hung it up on the school door, while the boys delighted in the cries of the deserted fledgelings. It will be remembered that it was the custom in England on Shrove-Tuesday, after confession, to eat pancakes; the season was a jolly one. Cock-fighting and the practice of throwing sticks at cocks were general on this holiday, and have been traced from an early date down to the end of the last century. A sarcastic foreigner said that the English, after eating pancakes, "immediately go mad, and kill their cocks." The choosing of a boy-bishop was another curious old English custom which prevailed at Eton. He was called the Bishop of Nothingness (*Episcopus Nihilensis*). The boy-bishops were chosen yearly from among the scholars. They performed the divine service, except the most sacred parts of the mass, preached a sermon, were dressed just like real bishops, and their authority was absolute during their time of office. The custom was prohibited by proclamation by Henry VIII., but survived in some parts of England till the time of Elizabeth. An old writer apologizes for the profanity of the proceeding by pleading "that there might this, at least, be said in favor of this old cus-

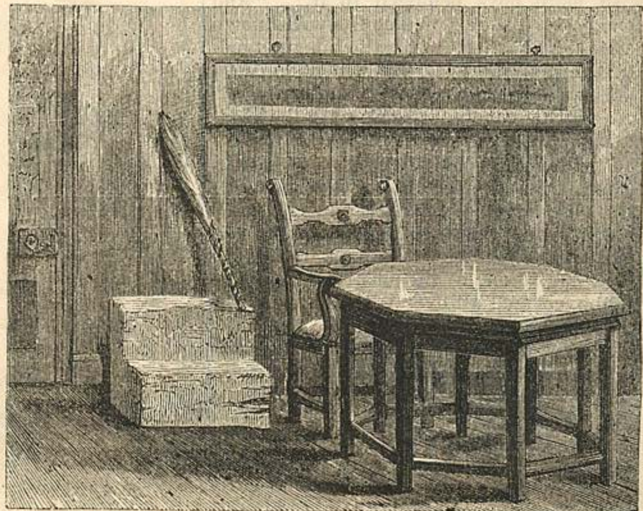
recent reforms have very much bettered the condition of the boys educated on the foundation. A legacy of Lord Godolphin of £5550, left them to amend their fare, did little for them, as only part of the interest was expended in providing Sunday puddings, while the remainder was allowed to accumulate for future generations. Breakfasts had to be obtained at private rooms hired in the town; the boys were driven to surreptitious foraging. One Eton tradition which Tennyson learned in his day he has put in verse. It relates an extraordinary adventure, which resulted in giving the boys sucking pig for supper. The passage is in "Walking to the Mail."

"There lived a flayflint near: we stole his fruit,
His hens, his eggs; but there was law for *us;*
We paid in person. He had a sow, Sir. She,
With meditative grunts of much content,
Lay great with pig, wallowing in sun and mud.
By night we dragg'd her to the college tower
From her warm bed, and up the corkscrew stair
With hand and rope we haled the groaning sow,
And on the leads we kept her till she pigg'd.
Large range of prospect had the mother sow,
And but for daily loss of one she loved,
As one by one we took them—but for this—
As never sow was higher in this world—
Might have been happy: but what lot is pure?
We took them all, till she was left alone
Upon her tower, the Niobe of swine,
And so return'd unfarrow'd to her sty."

Tennyson, while at Eton, was a pupil of Keate, the most famous Eton head-master of the present century—a character who impressed himself very strongly upon the college. Etonians still live who remember him, and innumerable stories remain of him. For twenty-five years he ruled Eton with great vigor. The following description of him by his pupil Mr. Kinglake, written to a non-Etonian friend, is so brilliant that we can not forbear quoting it:

"I think you must have some idea of him already; for wherever, from utmost Canada to Bundelcund—wherever there was a white-washed wall of an officer's room, or of any other apartment in which English gentlemen are forced to kick their heels, there, likely enough (in the days of his reign), the head of Keate would be seen scratched or drawn with those various degrees of skill which one observes in the representations of saints. Any body without the least notion of drawing could still draw a speaking—nay, scolding—likeness of Keate. If you had no pencil, you could draw him well enough with a poker, or the leg of a chair, or the smoke of a candle. He was little more (if more at all) than five feet in height, and was not very great in girth, but in this space was concentrated the pluck of ten battalions. He had a really noble voice, and this he could modulate with great skill; but he had also the power of quacking like an angry duck, and he almost always adopted this mode of communication in order to inspire respect. He was a capital scholar, but his ingenuous learning had not softened his manners, and he permitted them to be fierce, tremendously fierce. He had the most complete command over his temper—I mean over his good temper—which he scarcely ever allowed to appear. You could not put him out of humor—that is, out of the *ill* humor which he thought to be fitting for a head-master. His red, shaggy eyebrows were so prominent that he habitually used them as arms and hands for the purpose of pointing out any object toward which he wished to direct attention. The rest of his features were equally striking in their way, and were all and all his own."

It was said of Keate that the words "I'll flog you" were never off his lips. One story of him relates his comment on the sixth beatitude: "'Blessed are the pure in heart.' Mind that. It's your duty to be pure in heart. If you are not pure in heart, I'll flog you." He is said by mistake to have flogged a batch of candidates for confirmation, whose names were by accident sent up to the head-master on a piece of paper identical in size and shape with the "bill" used by the masters for the purpose of reporting delinquents. On a single night he flogged eighty boys. Keate's victims said that his name was derived from χέω (I shed) ἄτη (woe). Those



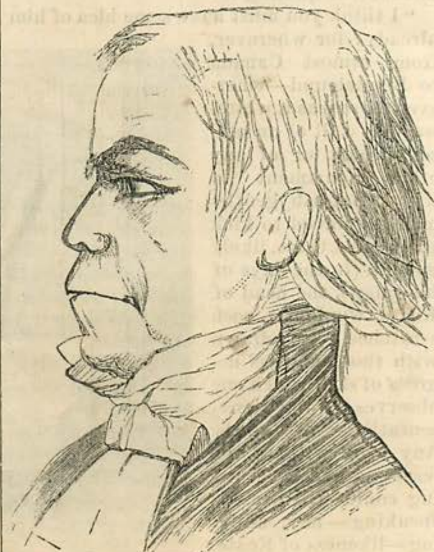
BLOCK AND BIRCH.

DR. GOODALL AND DR. KEATE.

who knew this master best say that under the gruffness which he thought best to assume, he really hid a kind heart. Here is a pleasanter story of him. The "Eton Society," a social and debating club, was strongly patronized by Dr. Keate. In Keate's time this society was called the *Literati*, and the head-master used to make a point of calling one of them up in the *Ibam forte* satire of Horace. The boy, well aware of what was expected of him, would translate *docti sumus*, "I belong to the *Literati*," to which Keate would as regularly reply: "Oh, you do, do you? I am very glad to hear it. I wish more boys belonged to it." "And then," says Dr. Jelf, "came the well-known 'Silence! be quiet!' with which he pretended to check the applause which his facetiousness had provoked." "Foolish boys!" was another constant phrase with the head-master. It being the custom of his day for the authorities not to recognize boating, Keate knew nothing about the race between Eton and Westminster in 1831 until it was over. On the afternoon of the victory, amidst loud cheers, a St. Bernard dog belonging to one of the masters was led up to him, covered all over with the pale blue rosettes the boys had worn. He asked the prepositor by his side what the demonstration meant. When told, "Please, Sir, we've just beaten Westminster," he smiled, and said, "Foolish boys!"

Dr. Keate is known only once to have interfered with the Eton crew. He heard by chance that they intended to row to Surly before Easter, and he determined to himself to waylay them and catch them in their disobedience. The boys got wind of his intention, and hoaxed him well. They dressed up a crew of watermen to look like the Eton eight. This crew, with masks on their faces, started up the river. Keate caught sight of them from the bank before they had reached Upper Hope, and shouted: "Foolish boys, I know you all. Lord ——, I know you; A——, I know you. You had better come ashore. Come here, or you will all be expelled." The boat, however, pursued its course steadily, some of the masters giving chase on horseback. The *ruse* was not discovered till the crew disembarked and took off their masks with a loud "hurra." Keate was furious, and vowed that there should be no Easter holidays unless the boys who had been hooting him all along from behind the hedges gave themselves up. Some twenty boys were accordingly immolated. "Most of the masters enjoy the joke," wrote a visitor; "Keate sits in sullen retirement, and eats his own soul."

Dr. Keate never became provost of Eton, though William IV. had promised the reversion of the provostship to him, and in a very strange way. Once on a visit to Eton, he said to him, pointing to Dr. Goodall, the then provost, "When he goes, I'll make you him." Keate was silent; but Dr. Goodall said, with his most gracious bow, "Sire, I could never think of going before your Majesty." Dr. Goodall, asked some years after-



DR. HAWTREY.

ward if he had ever used these words, replied, "Yes; and I meant to show the king how rude he was."

Under Dr. Hawtrey, who followed Keate, the school saw many changes. The famous institution of Montem was abolished. This festival existed at Eton through nearly three centuries, having only ceased some thirty years ago. The Montem, as remembered and regretted by many living Etonians, took place once in three years, and on Whitsun-Tuesday. On that day the boys formed a procession and marched to Salt Hill. At daybreak, hours before the starting of the procession, twelve boys, serving as salt-bearers, and dressed in antique costumes, started to traverse the roads of the county of Buckingham. These boys demanded money, or "salt," as it was called, from all they met. They used formerly to carry real salt, presenting a pinch of it to each person who gave money toward the expenses of the day. This was done till the middle of the eighteenth century. When, however, the plan of giving tickets was adopted, the money received was called salt. Thus the "Salt! salt!" of the young beggars, which in modern times meant "Give us salt" (money), was originally intended to mean, "We will give you salt for your money." The significance of salt is not altogether clear. We know that from the earliest ages salt has borne a mystic sense. In the Middle Ages salt was used in baptism, the sacrament by which candidates were admitted into the privileges of the church. It has been suggested that the giving of salt to strangers on Montem day was intended to symbolize the admission of those who had paid their footing to the Eton festivities. The money gathered on this day was given to the captain of the school to assist him in his university career. The average sum collected at the last few Montems was about £1000. The expenses of the day were so heavy that but little of this was left to the captain. The boys, all wearing gala dresses, marched in procession to Salt Hill, where the ceremony was completed by the ensign waving his flag from the top. It was for-

"SALT! SALT!"

OAK-TREE IN THE PLAYING FIELDS.

merly the custom to have two boys dressed up as parson and clerk, who, after the waving of the flag, jabbered a few Latin prayers; the parson then kicked the clerk down the hill. This profane proceeding so shocked Queen Charlotte that it was discontinued, at her request, in the year 1788. Montem was abolished in 1847.

A large part of the enthusiasm of old Etonians for their college is due to the poetic and historic associations of the place, and to its peculiar social influences. The indirect effect upon a vigorous and susceptible mind of the grand architecture of the college, of the beautiful scenery of the Thames, of the venerable and far-famed pile of Windsor, must be very great. What a store of noble and blissful memories such a place, if rightly used, might yield to men who looked back upon it as the home of their receding childhood! One of the sweetest passages in the works of Thackeray is that in which he describes little Rawdon Crawley listening in the dark chapel at Whitefriars School to the pealing of the organ and the singing of the choristers. For young eccentrics like Shelley and Albert Sidney Walker the poetic influences of Eton were forgotten in the sufferings they experienced from the vicious customs of the school. But clever boys whose gifts suited the place have always looked back upon it with peculiar gratitude and delight. We find Lord Wellesley, after a famous career in politics, returning to Eton to be buried, and wishing that his sepulchre should stand among the scenes of his earliest triumphs. Such men as Wellesley and Canning passed not only their happiest but their greatest years at Eton; for—irrespective of the subsequent verdict of history—there is no fame like that of a college hero, and we can well understand Canning's saying, amidst enthusiastic applause, at an Eton dinner in London, that "whatever might be the success in after-life, whatever gratification of ambition might be realized, whatever triumphs might be achieved, no one is ever again so great a man as when he was a sixth-form boy at Eton."

SEAL OF ETON COLLEGE.