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PROPOSALS 21

For the *Reformation* of 23

Schools & Universities, 20

In order to the *Better*

Education of Youth.

Humbly Offer'd to the

SERIOUS CONSIDERATION

OF THE

HIGH COURT

OF

PARLIAMENT

Printed in the Year 1704:

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1811

TABLE

PROPOSALS

FOR

The Reformation of Schools and Universities, in order to the better Education of Youth ; humbly offer'd to the serious Consideration of the High Court of Parliament.

THere has been a great Decay of Learning in this Kingdom for many years : For instance, where we have now one who can write one single Sheet, an hundred years ago we had twenty who could have written Volumes in good Sense and good Latine. And though the causes of the Low-Ebb, Learning has sunk to among us, are very obvious, yet I must confess, 'tis no easie matter to put a stop to the growing Evil. 'Tis hard to make a Scheme of Education which will generally please, and harder still to put it in Execution ; 'tis difficult to alter an old Constitution, though full of Errors; and more difficult in our Circumstances, to establish a new one, though ever so just and reasonable. We have been too long pursuing the wrong Road to be set easily right. We neither take just measures, nor allow sufficient time for the Education of our Youth. However, since the Incouragement and Improvement of Learning is certainly so much for the true Interest of the Nation, I shall adventure to tell my Opinion frankly, and shall be heartily glad, if it can be found of any use or service ; at least, I hope it shall excite others of greater Ability, to make farther Inquiries into these Matters, such as may convince the Parliament of the necessity of Reforming our Schools and Universities, for the Good and Benefit of Learning.

One main Cause of the low Estate of Learning is, That 'tis too easily and cheaply purchas'd ; One can make his Son what now with us passes for a Scholar, at a much cheaper Rate, than he can breed him Shoemaker or Weaver. For a short time at the Schools, and 2 or 4 years at the Universities, upon little or no Expence, in our way, is enough to make a Master of Arts, who immediatly gets into the most considerable Employments,

ments, which require the longest Study and best Qualifications, before he have Years, Sense, Prudence or Learning: Upon which account, the Mechanicks and poorer sort of People, are encourag'd to send their Sons to Schools and Universities, finding a very little Money, and as little time sufficient to make what we call a Scholar. But in my Opinion, were these put to the Plough and other Trades, it would be better for themselves (who would be kept within their proper Spheres) and more for the Interest of the Nation, which is overstock'd with Scholars, and in extrem' want of People for Mechanical Employments: This is one great Cause of the low Condition of Learning. People who are daily pinch'd for the Back and the Belly, cannot bestow much time upon the Improvement of their Minds, their Spirits are depress'd under their Poverty; they have not Money to afford them Books, or to bring them into the Conversation of the World: And how without these, a Man can become a good Scholar, passes my comprehension.

But it may be said, by debarring the poorer sort from Learning some good Spirits may be excluded; which as it is the only Objection, so it is as easily remov'd.

We have as much use for good Spirits to be Employ'd in Mechanical Trades and Merchandizing, as for Learning; and by admitting one, upon the pretence of good Spirit, we certainly must take in an hundred of low and dull Capacities. And let their Genius be as good as you please, unless you give them Money too, they'll never be able to make any tolerable Advance in Learning, And by the following Scheme for rectifying our Bursaries, a Competency is provided for them, as far as the Funds will go.

Another great Cause of the decay of Learning is, the bad methods which are follow'd in our Schools and Universities, and the Insufficiency of the Masters who are provided for the Government of them. There are in the Kingdom near to 1000 Parishes, and in most of them Latine is pretended to be taught, though not one of 50 of the School-masters is capable to teach it; And no wonder, for not one of 50 of them was tolerably taught it, and not one of an hundred, however capable, has Books to enable him to acquire it by his after Industry. At the Universities, we bestow a few Months upon the Study of the Greek; whereas that Noble Language and the Learn'd and useful Books which are written in it, may perhaps deserve our care and pains for as many years. We allow too much time upon old Antiquated Metaphysical Jargon: And as for Natural Philosophy, which in this and the last Age has been so happily brought from an idle prating about words of no signification, to a solid Science; It requires
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such a deep insight into the most profound parts of the Mathematicks, that I'm afraid few of those who profess it are capable to teach it. We get too hastily through our Divinity, History, Law and Medicine we have none.

The cheapness of Learning brings it into the hands of the poorer and meaner People: Their Poverty, the wrong methods which are taken in teaching, and the insufficiency of the Teachers, unavoidably subject them to the greatest ignorance. And both together, the Ignorance and the Poverty of our Scholars, infallibly bring Learning it self under disgrace and contempt. Poverty deprives them, as of a great many other advantages, so particularly of that due Assurance, that Address and that Freedom of Spirit, which are so natural to Quality and Gentry. Nay sometimes under difficult Circumstances, to prevent starving, it forces them upon Courses unworthy of their Professions, to the no small scandal of others who should be led by their Examples. And in one word, the Natural Tendance of our present methods, is to unfit a Scholar for a Gentleman, and to render a Gentleman ashamed of being Scholar. And till we Reconcile the Gentleman with the Scholar, 'tis impossible Learning should ever flourish. But were this once done, were Learning taken out of the hands of the Vulgar, and brought to be as Honourable and Fashionable among the Gentry, as 'tis now contemptible, I think it would be indeed in a fair way of prospering. For were the younger Sons of the Nobility and Gentry (who now are idle at Home, or sent Abroad to be knock'd on the head) kept the due time at Schools and Universities, they being encourag'd with all things proper for studying, and having their time in their own hands for reading, and not being forc't, out of pure necessity, to enter too soon on Business, would in all probability make considerable advances in Learning. And when possess'd of Employments, Gentlemen would be as tender of their Character, as they are of their Honour; besides, that being generally able to live without them, they would not ly under such temptations as poorer People do. This, as it would considerably add to the Honour of Learning, and Interest of the Nation in general, so it would be no dishonourable way to dispose of the younger Sons of the Nobility and Gentry. For beside what Encouragement they might expect from the Study of the Laws and of Medicine, there are in the Kingdom at least an hundred Places in the Church and Universities which yield 2000 Merks yearly, and few of the other Church Benefices are under 1000. Now in my humble Opinion, the younger Sons of even the best Families, especially when not sufficiently provided for, might be as wisely and honourably dispos'd of this way, as by being kept idle at home, or
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sent off to be Soldiers abroad. 'Tis plain to dispose of them so, would put them in a way of being more serviceable to God, their Country, and their Kindred, than commonly they are. And were matters order'd after this manner, 'tis probable the Church Government would not be so ambulatory as it has hitherto been in this Kingdom, since the Nobility and Gentry, of whom the Parliaments are made up, would not readily make Acts, which should oblige them to take back their Brothers and Sons to their Houses. And nothing could contribute more to the quiet and peace of the Nation, than that the Government of the Church were at last effectually secur'd against so frequent changes.

Now, that so good a design may take effect, it's necessary to raise the Price of Learning, so as to discourage the poorer sort from attempting it, and those only, whose Circumstances enable them to make successful Advances in Learning, may have access to it. To make Learning dearer, the number of the Schools at least must be diminish'd, and the Masters Salaries and Fees augmented. And the time and methods of Teaching in Schools and Universities should be regulated according to the following, or some such like Scheme.

I think there should be only one Grammar School in a County or Shire, two at most in the largest, and where two lesser ly together, one may serve for both. These Schools ought to be well indued, and some of the best Men of the Nation for Prudence and Learning, provided to be Masters and Ushers. A Master and four Doctors or Ushers, at least will be necessary for every School. And beside those Publick Schools, at all the Country Churches, I would have the Precentor of the Parish (who needs not to be a Master of Arts) to teach the Children to read and write English, and the common Rules of Arithmetick, which is all the Learning that is needful or useful to the Mechanicks and poorer People. But it may be enquir'd, where shall Funds be had for maintaining these Schools? I Answer, That is not my Business, let the Wisdom of the Nation consider it: But perhaps it would be no difficult Task to find out Funds, if some People would apply themselves a little that way. There are, for Example, in the Shire of *Fife*, about Eighty Paroches, and every Paroch has a Salary one with another, above 100 Pound *Scots* a Year for a School-master: Now, take the one half of this Salary, and give to the Teacher of the *English* Language; This, with the Advantage of his Scholars, and his Emoluments as Precentor and Session Clerk, may make him live pritty well; for he has no great Character to maintain. Apply the other half for the Publick Grammar Schools, this will maintain two, being 6000 Merks a Year, to wit, The Master of each School should have

1000 Merks, and four Doctors, each of them 500 Merks Sallery a Year ; which, with the benefit of their Scholars (for becaufe I would have Learning Dear, I would have the Scholars pay much more liberally than they commonly do) would be a very comfortable and handsome Provision for both Masters and Ushers.

My design'd Brevity will not allow me to be very particular in naming all the Books that should be taught in Schools. I shall only say in general, they ought to Teach some plain and short Grammar in *English* Prose ; Thus they will bestow less time on Grammar, and have more to employ in Reading Authors ; some of which they should Read, not by Shreds, as is commonly done, but from Beginning to Ending, such as *Justin's* History, *Florus's* Epitome, *Cornelius's Nepos's* Lives, *Salust*, *Curtius*, *Terence*, *Ovid's Metamorphosis*, as being the compleatest System of the Heathenish Mythology, &c. Some Odes, Satyrs, and Epistles of *Horace* may be Taught, and some particular places of *Virgil*, and other Poets at the Masters Discretion. And perhaps it may be very convenient, if not necessary, That Boys, while at School, be taught Rudiments of Geography and Chronology, so far as they are capable, that they may Read their Authors to the best Advantage. The last Year they are at School (for I would have them at least 14 Years of Age before they leave it) they ought to learn the Greek Grammar, and some easie Greek Authors, such as *Aesop's* Fables, *Lucian's* Select Dialogues, *Herodian*, &c. and so we bring them to the University.

At the University the Youth must be oblig'd to stay six Years, passing regularly through all the Classes, before they can be made Masters of Arts. For Examinations and Trials, how rigorously soever design'd, may be abus'd and sham'd : But a long time and due Exercises perform'd, is the best and most probable way to make good Scholars. In *Oxford* and *Cambridge*, which are Famous Universities for Learning all the World over, none can be made Master of Arts, until he stay Seven Years ; none Doctor of Medicine or Law, till he stay Fourteen ; and none Doctor of Divinity till he has been Eighteen Years about the University : Yet after all, according to this Calculation, our Young Men may commence Masters of Arts in the Twenty or Twenty First Year of their Age, which I suppose every Body will think soon enough.

In my Opinion two Universities are enough for this Nation, for there are no more in *England*. But since we are to ingraft on an old Stock, we can only conveniently Reform, not Abolish any of our Universities. As I said, the Students ought to stay Six Years at the University, and three of these years should be employ'd in Reading Greek and Latine jointly :

Such

Such of the Latine and Greek Historians and Orators as they have not Read at School, with the Art of Rhetorick, will be Employment enough for two Years. The Poets with the Art of Poetry may furnish more than enough for the Third.

Though one cannot find any great difficulty in choosing the fittest Authors that are to be Taught, yet for preventing all possible Mistakes, and preserving Uniformity in all the Colledges within the Kingdom, it were highly convenient, that some persons of good Reputation for Learning, and who understand the Constitutions and Customs of Foreign Universities, should be appointed to meet, and particularly determine what Books, and in what Order they are to be Read.

Perhaps it might be proper to Read together Greek and Latine Authors, who write on the same or the like Subject: For Example, *Dionysius Halicarnassensis*, and the three first Books of *Livy*, the 3^d. Book of *Polybius*, and the 21st. of *Livie*, *Appianus Alexandrinus*, and *Cæsar de Bello Civili*; the Oration of *Demosthenes* and *Cicero*, the Pastorals of *Theocrius* and *Virgil*, *Hesiod* and *Virgil's Georgicks*, *Homcr's Ilias* and *Virgil's Aeneis*, *Pindar* and *Horace*, &c.

A great many of the best of Modern Books of all sorts, and on all Subjects, being written in the Stile of the Modern Schools; it would seem necessary, that short Compendis of *Logicks*, *Ethicks*, and *Metaphysicks* should be Printed and Taught in the fourth Year. The Professor may likewise recommend as a private Task, *Aristotles Ethicks* and *Politicks*; some Select Dialogues of *Plato*, *Xenophon's Apomemoneumata*, some of *Plutarcb's* Moral Treatises, *Hierocles in Aurea Carmina*, *Tullies Philolphick Works*, some Books of *Seneca*, &c. and one Day of the Week may be appointed for enquiring into the Diligence of the Students, and resolving their Doubts.

And seeing all the Ancient Orators and Poets, and even Historians; nay, and Fathers of the Church too, have been addicted to the Hypothesis, and Principles of some one or other of the Philosophical Sects, and often reason from their Notions, and use their Terms and Phrases; It would seem proper (besides the recommending of *Diogenes*, *Laertius*, *Eunapius*, &c. to be diligently read and consider'd by the Students) that some learn'd Person or Persons, should compile a clear and distinct, but compendious History of all the Ancient Philosophies, distinguishing their Hypothesis judiciously, digesting their Principles methodically, explaining their Terms of Art and Phrases, and putting their Notions in as clear Light as possible: This would mightily facilitate the Understanding of the Ancient Learning.

During these four Years, the Students should be also taught Arithmetick, Geography and Chronology, to greater Perfection, the first 6, with the eleventh and twelfth Books of *Euclid*, the Elements of *Algebra*, the plain and Spherical Trigonometry.

The Two last Years are to be spent in learning mixt Mathematicks, or natural Philosophy, viz. the Laws of Motion, Mechanicks, Hydrostaticks; Optricks, Astronomy, &c. and experimental Philosophy.

All along, from their first going to School, till they leave the University, the Students ought carefully to be taught and instructed in the Principles of Religion; nothing being more certain than that where there is not a well directed Conscience, Men are rather the worse than the better, for being learn'd in any Science.

In every University, there must be at least three Professors of Greek and Latin, One of Logicks, Ethicks, and Metaphysicks, two of Mathematicks, and natural Philosophy, one of Divinity, one of Civil History, another of Ecclesiastical, and one of Hebrew, and other Oriental Languages. Where Scholars are numerous, the Number of Professors ought to be augmented in proportion; for I would have many Masters, and few Scholars. One Master, who pretends to teach 8 or 9 Score of Scholars, (as we commonly see done) may as well undertake to teach 8 or 9 thousand. One Master should not have above 30 Scholars: And according to our Scheme of making Learning dear, let each of them pay 5 *lib. Sterling* yearly to his Master, at which Rate 30 will afford 150 *lib. Sterling* which, with a small Salary, may maintain the Professor handomly enough.

Beside this private Teaching, I would have every Professor, to have once a week, one publick Lecture in the common School, that who pleases may come and hear him. Thus we may have one or more such Lectures every day, and on different Subjects, according to the Number and Professions of the Lecturers: Nothing can contribute more than this, to the Honour and Advancement of Learning.

There's nothing more deserves the Consideration of the Parliament, than that our Youth are oblig'd to travel abroad, to study Physick and Law, and carry so much Money out of the Kingdom; 10 or 12 thousand Pound Sterling, by modest Calculation, is every year spent abroad this way. Now, would the Parliament, but for once, give two Months Cess, which

which is but about what is spent in Foreign Universities in one year, the Interest of it might establish Professions of Law and Physick at Home, where our Youth might learn more in one Year, than they can do abroad in three. For they are generally sent abroad about the twentieth Year of their Age, which is the nicest part of it: Then their Passions are strong, and they have little sense to govern them, and they are just let loose from their Parents and Tutors; so that they acquire neither Virtue nor Learning, but Habits of all sorts of Debauchery, as we are taught by every days experience. I would have the Professions of Law and Physick established in the University of *Edinburgh*, where the Students of Law may have the Advantage of excellent Librarys for the Civil Law, and opportunity to hear the Pleadings, and learn the Form of the House, which our young Men, who study abroad, for all the Money they have spent, are altogether ignorant of. And the Physicians can have no Subjects nor Rooms for Anatomy, nor Laboratories for Chymie, nor Gardens for Botany, but at *Edinburgh*.

I would have none entred into the House of Advocats, but such as have Certificats from the Professors of Law, that they had studied four Years with them, after they had pass'd the University, and none made Doctor of Medicine, but such as have Certificats from the Professors of Physick, that they had studied 4 Years with them; and none allow'd to practise, but such as are graduated in our own Universities. And their paying liberally to their respective Masters every Year (and thereby saving so much from being squandred away Abroad) with some small Salary, might prove a very good Allowance to the Professors. This might also hold concerning the Students of Divinity, That they should not be admitted into the Church, without Testimonials from the Professors of Divinity, that they had been a competent time (perhaps four Years may be too little) at their Lectures.

I don't design by this to Discourage the publick or private *Donations* of Charity for Educating the Children of Honest Parents, who shall be found to have good Spirits. I would only have them Regulated: For Example, our Bursaries, as we call them, are commonly but 100 Merks or 100 Pounds, which cannot maintain any Person. I would therefore Advise to cast four or five of them together, which beside that it would abridge the Number of Pretenders to Learning, might furnish sufficient Funds for handsomly maintaining some few, and providing them with Necessaries for prosecuting their Studies; Neither ought this to be
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thought contrary to the Intentions of those who made the *Donation*, since perhaps at the time when they were first bestow'd, an 100 Merks might have gone further than Now 400 can do. The Genuine design therefore being still pursued, 'tis to be presum'd, that it was the Will of the *Donors* that such Alterations should be made, when they should be found Necessary.

One thing I forgot relating to Funds: Perhaps, were the Funds belonging to some Universities, carefully and narrowly enquir'd into, some of them might be found not so usefully apply'd as they might be, and others yet unbestow'd, which might help to Erect new Professions, where they are wanting.

F I N I S.







