

1752
Free Schools

A / 99

S C H E M E

For REGULATING

FREE-SCHOOLS

I N

I R E L A N D,

And making them more generally
Useful.

By Mr. BOND. Late High
Sheriff of the County of Wicklow



D U B L I N:
Printed in the YEAR, 1752.

Houses of the Oireachtas

A

S C H E M E

F O R

Regulateing F R E E - S C H O O L S
in I R E L A N D, and makeing
them more generally Useful.

TH E R E are several Grammar Schools in this Kingdom with rich and large Endowments in Lands; in *Ulster* alone, not to speak of other Provinces, there are at least three; the School-Lands of *Armagh* are apparently worth between three and four hundred Pounds a Year, to be set to solvent Tenants; those of *Dungannon* are no less, but with this Advantage, that by means of the Coal-Mines in them, they may come (when the Canal takes Effect) to be worth more than double that Sum. It is said, I know not how truly, that the School-lands of *Enniskillen* are intrinsically worth more than five hundred Pounds a Year. How many Schools in *England*, Collegiate, or others, are so well supported? Here is, in these three Instances only, a Revenue of as good as twelve hundred Pounds a Year for publick Services, in the way of Schooling, and the Publick is left to judge what Services are done for it.

Undoubtedly the Intent of such large Endowments was to encourage Men of Parts and Abilities to undertake the Education of the Youth of this Kingdom, not then thoroughly civilized.

For at that Time Learning was in fewer Hands than it was afterwards, and is now, and an able Grammar Master was not to be got, or not to be prevail'd on to

undertake the Business of keeping School in a Country Place without extraordinary Encouragement, and such Encouragement these Endowments (tho' not quarter of the Value then that they are now) were thought to be. And it is probable that the Founders, were they now living, wou'd think as we do, that less than one half of the Value of these Lands is more than enough for any Grammar-Master, who makes a Conscience of his Business, and does it honestly, and if he does not, he deserves nothing, and is no better than a publick Nuisance.

At present the Rents of School-Lands are come to such a height as to be more than a reasonable Reward or Maintenance, for any one Master, and in effect have ruin'd those Schools they were given to Support, the Reason of which is Obvious. A School-Master who is possessed of an handsome Estate for Life, will make himself easy as to Scholars, and neither take Pains to have any, or to do Justice to those few which perhaps he cannot avoid having. In consequence of which it may be observed thorough the Kingdom, that Schools richly endowed, are every where dwindling to nothing, while others with no Endowment at all, or a very moderate one, such as those upon the Foundation of *Erasmus Smyth*, and several others in the Hands of Masters, who for their own Sakes must be Diligent, are in a flourishing Condition, and truly Useful.

As there wants proper Encouragement in most Parts of this Kingdom for other Arts and Qualifications, to the full as useful to the Publick as Grammar Learning or Skill in dead Languages, I would humbly propose a Method for supplying those Wants in the easiest Manner, and that is, in one Word, to erect other Schools upon the Foundation of those Grammar-Schools, and make them all stand as one general Free-School, upon the same footing, and to divide the whole Income amongst several Masters, in Proportion to their Uses and Services.

To this Purpose I propose that the Income of every Free-Schools, (be the Endowment ever so large,) should be limited to 300 *l.* a Year, and where it exceeds that, the Overplus, be it more or less, should be apply'd to the Uses of the Charter-Society, for Schooling and Educating poor Children, and then the afore said Fund of 300 *l.* may be disposed of in the following Manner.

In

In the first Place, the Master of the Grammar-School 100*l.* should be allowed a yearly Pension or Sallary of 100 *l.* if that be not too much; but no more, because the Usual Perquisites and Advantages of Free-Schools, such as Fees of Entrance, Quarterages, Contributions, Offerings, and occasional Gratuities (besides the Benefit of Boarders) would be more to a Master that minds his Business than three times that Sallary, as might easily be made appear by a particular Computation.

Then, for the Master's Ease and Encouragement, 40*l.* he shou'd be allow'd a first or head Usher at 40 *l.* a Year upon the Foundation.

And when by his Care and Diligence he has gathered 20*l.* a School too large for the Management of two Hands, as suppose of 60 Boys, he shou'd be allow'd a second Usher upon the Foundation at 20 *l.* a Year.

And a farther Allowance shou'd be made him of 10 *l.* 10*l.* a Year for the necessary Repairs of the School-house, and all Houses and Buildings belonging to it.

And it wou'd not be amiss in order to raise the 10*l.* Master's Character, and the Reputation of his School, to allow him the Sum of 10 *l.* a Year to be distributed amongst his Boys in Præmiums, once in every Quarter, in equal Parts.

Again, when it is consider'd how universal the 20*l.* *French* Language is become, and that one cannot Trade, or Correspond, or Converse abroad without it, it wou'd be proper to put a Teacher of that Tongue on this Foundation, at a Sallary of 20 *l.* a Year.

It may be thought that a Dancing-Master is not of 10*l.* Consequence enough to deserve a Place upon this Foundation, but considering that Gentlemen, who commonly have Sons in great Schools, are desirous they shou'd get as soon as possible a Notion of Gentleness, and good Manners, and are often more Sollicitous about their Breeding, than their Learning, I should for that Reason make no Scruple to allow one of that Profession a standing Sallary of 10 *l.* a Year, and the rather if he happens to have so much Skill in Musick as to give young Gentlemen some Taste of it.

Again, a Military Master is, in his Way, as useful 10*l.* to the Publick, as any other. I mean one who understands

derstands Arms, and can teach young Gentlemen the Use of them, to prepare them in time to serve their King and Country on any Emergency; an early Knowledge of Arms, often gives a young Man a sort of Courage, which is not born with him, and as often Unskilfulness that way, checks and damps Courage that is Natural and Real. One cannot Figure to himself a more agreeable Sight, than that of a young Militia of School-Boys, all uniformly Arm'd, and Cloath'd, and expert in Exercising. I would therefore propose that some old Foot-Soldier, or Serjeant of Dragoons, or outlying Pensioner of the Hospital shou'd be appointed to teach Boys (and others on occasion,) the use of Arms, with Rideing, Fencing, and other Military Exercises at a Sallary of 10 l. a Year.

40l. Another Master upon this Foundation may be one
10l. who can teach Writing, Arithmetick, Book-keeping, Navigation, and all Branches of practical Mathematicks, at a Sallary of 40 l. a Year, with an Usher at 10 l. a Year.

10l. And considering what a Disadvantage even to Men of Sense and Learning a Vicious Delivery is, and how it discredits their Performances in Publick, it wou'd not be amiss to place upon this Foundation one who shou'd be able to teach Boys a true and graceful way of Reading and Pronouncing English, as also (if it might be) to teach them Psalm-Singing so far as a few common Tunes go, and he shou'd be intitled to a Sallary of 10 l. a Year. Some grave discreet Person bred in a Choir, or any one else with a distinct Voice and used to speak in Publick, might fill this Place properly.

20l. Lastly, as it wou'd be proper that all these Schools shou'd be Order'd in a Collegiate way, and that the School-lands, after the expiration of the present Leases, shou'd never again be Farm'd out to one Person, nor any Fine be taken for them under Hand, as is usual, to the great Prejudice of the Successor, but be Set in Parcels, to Ter-tenants, at the full improved Rent, it wou'd for that reason be Necessary to appoint a Steward or Oeconomist, who, upon Security given, shou'd be Impower'd to Set and Let Lands, and Receive the Rents, and Pay the above Sallaries respectively, and to such a one the least that can be allowed is 20 l. a Year. And

And thus a System of several useful Schools may be Farm'd out of the Endowment of any one rich Grammar School.

It is to be observed here, that the above Appointments in the way of Sallaries are not to exempt those who make use of the several Masters, from paying them reasonable and customary Dues for what they Learn.

When the Grammar-School is not full enough to require two Ushers along with the Master, the Sallary of 20 *l.* appointed for the Second Usher, may, in that Interstice, be divided in equal Proportions amongst all others upon the Foundation, except the Grammar Master and his first Usher.

Let me observe further, that bestowing the Rents of a rich Free School in this manner upon Masters of several Faculties, cannot in reason be thought a departing from the Intent of the Founder, but rather improving upon it, and sure I am if such Endowments were thus branched out, and the Maintenance of the Grammar-Master made to depend more upon his Care and Sobriety, than it does, our Free-Schools wou'd appear in a better Light than they do at present.

In what distress is every Part of this Kingdom, except some Tradeing Towns, for want of these several Sorts of Schools. This is the Reason that the Sons of Country Gentlemen, and others, are commonly put out to Business without any Qualification for it, but Age and Stature, for they can have no Opportunities of proper Schooling without being sent to *Dublin*, or to some other large Town at a great distance, which, besides the Expence, is attended with the danger of making greater progress in Vice and Foppery than useful Knowledge; if these several Schools, which we suppose here to grow as it were upon *One Stool* with the Grammar School, were planted out together in some of the most noted Country Towns in the Kingdom, they wou'd answer the Purpose of Academies in *France*, to which Young Gentlemen from all Parts resort for Education, and very much to the Advantage of the Youth of that Nation.

It is no Part of this Scheme to lay down particular Rules for these Schools, with respect to the Attendance, Residence, Dues, and Behaviour of the respective Masters, which is more properly the Business of

of their Governors and Visitors; what is intended here is only to shew the Usefulness of such Schools; and how they may be all grafted on one Stock, leaving the regulation of them to Wisdom and Power.

It is not pretended that this Scheme is so Unexceptionable that it ought to take Place; but it may very well serve for a Hint to others to propose one better digested, and more practicable. In the mean time, it is a thing earnestly to be wished for, that the Legislature, which alone can rectify inveterate Abuses, wou'd take the present shameful Condition of our Free-Schools into consideration, and that an Act of Parliament were framed in that View, not in the least to prejudice the Rights of Founders or Patrons, (which shou'd be preserved entire in every Article,) but to oblige them, or their Representatives and Trustees, to pursue the true Intent of such noble Endowments, and bring them back to their Original Institution, and to widen the bottom they stand upon, which Act shou'd not Operate 'till after the Death or removal of Masters now possessed of such Free-Schools. If this were once done, Men of Fortune wou'd be encouraged either to contribute largely to the Schools now on Foot, or to make new Endowments of the same Kind, but this they can't think of doing while the present Notorious Abuses and Misapplications continue Uncorrected.

In a Word, if a Law were made to *explain and amend* the Statute of 10 Ch. 1. Sec. 3. c 1. Entitled an Act for *Maintainance and Execution of Pious Uses*, (in which proper Methods might be lay'd down for reforming and regulating Free Schools) it wou'd be of Singular Service to the whole Nation, in the Education and Improvement of Youth, which is always a Matter of the utmost Consequence to Civil Society.

F I N I S.