

## CHAPTER X

### MILTON PAROCHIAL SCHOOL

THE education of children in England was in the first instance begun and continued by the Church, and the earliest record we have is Alcuin's capitulary issued in 787 and a second in 789. In this specific directions are given : " Let every monastery and every abbey have its school where boys may be taught the Psalms, the system of musical notation, singing, arithmetic and grammar."

During the Middle Ages it is highly probable that almost every parish church had its school, for it was necessary that the priest should have boys in church to sing the responses, which were of course in Latin. Care was therefore taken that the Latin tongue should be taught, and side by side with this went arithmetic and grammar. There can be no doubt that such a school existed in Milton in those days.

The first record that we have of a schoolmaster at Milton is under date March 22nd, 1720, when the church registers tell us that John Wells, Schoolmaster, was buried. We have no earlier record for the simple reason that the occupation and rank of different people were seldom entered in the registers.

In the Will of Elizabeth Gaffield, 1746, who

charged certain lands with the payment of 52/- yearly for educational purposes, we have a reference to the school. The rector and churchwardens were "to sett six poor children to school belonging to the aforesaid parish . . . to learne to read and to give two pence a week with each and to pay the Master once a quarter as they shall receive it" (see Chapter XIV).

Our next records are of Joseph Froan, schoolmaster, buried May 12th, 1775, and of his widow, Ann Froan, schoolmistress, buried July 13th, 1793. Of the latter, a note written in the register by William Walmsley, the curate, informs us: "She was a skilful woman in her profess'n, a good Xt'n and a useful mem'r of society."

From the Minute Books of the Parish Vestry we learn that on November 7th, 1823, it was resolved "William Caswell's wife to have the Charity School," and on November 18th, 1825, "Mary Lambert to have the girl's free school." Probably this Charity School and the Free School were one and the same institution, but, if so, it was quite distinct from the Parochial School, for in 1823 John Cooper was schoolmaster. In 1830 the eight poor children were taught by a schoolmistress.

I have been informed by some old inhabitants that about 1850 a day school was kept by "governesses" in the first three houses of Workhouse Yard, which may have been a survival of the Charity School.

Mr. William Clarke informed me that the school of which John Cooper was master was

held at The Hollies, a large house not far from the present school, and here the vestry meetings were occasionally held :

1824. Apl. 1. " At a public Vestry held this day at the School Room."

1826. March 30. " At a Public Vestry held this day at the School House."

Mr. Cooper was a former Quartermaster-sergeant of the Northamptonshire Militia and became Vestry Clerk, Overseer, Assessor of Taxes and Churchwarden of Milton. His multifarious duties must have harassed the poor man, for in an address read at the Public Vestry on March 3rd, 1828, he states he has been Overseer for the last eight years and says that the work calls him so much from his school duties that he cannot do it again under the restrictions imposed.

Seeing his signature frequently occurring in the Minute Books I was startled to find the old soldier describe himself as " John Cooper V.C." years before that coveted decoration was first awarded. Then it dawned on my understanding that it was a short way of writing " John Cooper, Vestry Clerk."

Mr. Cooper died on February 2nd, 1831, and on his mural tablet is described as " for many years schoolmaster and churchwarden in this parish."

On September 18th, 1848, Mr. William Montgomery conveyed to the Rev. T. A. Kershaw 315 square yards or thereabouts

“ as a site for a schoolroom for poor persons of and in the said parish of Milton . . . such school to be for the education of the poor in the principles of the Established Church and according to its principles and to be under the exclusive management and control of the Rector of Milton aforesaid for the time being.”

Our information about the school is scanty until we come to 1862, when the Code of Regulations ordered that every school receiving a grant should keep a log book. From that year onwards we have a full and particular list of masters and their assistants.

The children were supposed to pay their school pence weekly, at the rate of twopence each. The boys and girls had to take it in turn to sweep the school and, in the winter, see that the fires were lighted and kept going. The following entries are illuminating :

1866. Oct. 1st. “ School fee is 2d. per week. One boy pays 3d. and is excused school sweeping. Mary H—— does not take her turn at school sweeping.”

1870. Jan. 18. “ No fires to-day and yesterday, the boy whose duty it is to see to the fires did not attend to them.”

Later, the children in Standards I to III paid twopence per week, in Standards IV to VII threepence, but in October, 1891, the Managers adopted “ free education.”

The school was at first very small and uncomfortable. The floor was of brick and at the west end of the main room was a small classroom with a room above. The window of this

little upper room still remains high up in the wall, and here the master lived. In 1873 the classroom with the room above were removed, a new classroom built for infants at the other end of the main room and a boarded floor was put down. Further alterations, including the cloak-rooms and an addition to the infants' room, were made in 1895, at a cost of £400.

The dimensions of the school are : main room, length 42 ft. 6 ins., width 17 ft. 4 ins., accommodation 72. Classroom, length 26 ft., width 18 ft. 10 ins., accommodation 54.

From the Log Book also we learn of the existence of another school, held in a room belonging to the Baptist Chapel. The first reference is in 1863, but the school was discontinued in 1880.

The following list of masters, compiled from various sources, may prove of interest :

1720. " John Wells, Schoolmaster, buried." Church Register.

1775. " Joseph Froan, Schoolmaster, buried." Church Register.

1793. " Ann Froan, Schoolmistress, buried." Church Register.

1823. Mrs. William Caswell, Mistress of the Charity School. Parish Vestry Minutes.

1823. John Cooper, Schoolmaster. Parish Vestry Minutes.

1825. Mary Lambert, Mistress of the Girls' Free School. Parish Vestry Minutes.

1844. " William Mansfield, Schoolmaster." Church Reg.

1858. June 28th. George Winter, Certificated Master. Log Book.

From this date, the particulars are all taken from the school Log Books.

1866. Jan. 15th. William John Sutton.  
 1867. March 28th. D. Evans, Certificated Master.  
 1868. Jan. 6th. Henry Padfield.  
 1869. Apl. 5th. Joseph Bancroft.  
 1871. July 4th. J. Wakem.  
 1872. Jan. 22nd. Benjamin Bassford.  
 1872. Feb. 25th. J. Horton.  
 1872. Apl. 26th. Henry Charles.  
 1872. Sept. 30th. John Bennett, Certificated Master, 1st. Class.  
 1876. July 1st. William Rediough, Certif. Master, 1st. Class.  
 1885. Sept. 28th. G. H. Lander.  
 1886. Jan. 4th. Geo. Henry Langley, Cert : Master, 2nd. Class.  
 1887. Jan. 3rd. Alfred Brown, Certif : Master, 2nd. Class.  
 1896. Feb. 24th. Samuel H. Bowden, Certif : Master, 2nd. Class.  
 1900. Sept. 10th. J. Brenig Jones, Cert : Master, 1st. Class.  
 1902. March 11th. Robert M. Anthony, Certif : Master.