

**THE EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS OF
RICHARD MULCASTER
(1532-1611): ABRIDGED AND
ARRANGED, WITH A CRITICAL
ESTIMATE**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649568635

The Educational Writings of Richard Mulcaster (1532-1611): Abridged and Arranged, with a Critical Estimate by Richard Mulcaster & James Oliphant

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RICHARD MULCASTER & JAMES OLIPHANT

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EDUCATIONAL WRITINGS
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RICHARD MULCASTER
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ABRIDGED AND ARRANGED, WITH A CRITICAL ESTIMATE

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GLASGOW
JAMES MACLEHOSE AND SONS
Publishers to the University

1903

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BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH.

RICHARD MULCASTER came of a border family that could trace its descent back to the eleventh century. On his wife's tomb he describes himself as "by ancient parentage and lineal descent, an esquire born," and there is evidence that some of his ancestors held positions of importance, both administrative and academic. In the fourteenth century we hear of a Richard de Molcastre, who, as the second son, inherited from his father, Sir William, the estates of Brakenhill and Solport, and the family retained its consideration up to our own time. But in the reign of Elizabeth the ancestral lands were no longer in the possession of the branch to which our author belonged. He was probably born in the border district, and the date of his birth must have been about 1532. He was sent to Eton, then under Nicholas Udall, who as a headmaster was known alike for his learning and his severity, and who as the writer of the first regular English comedy, may have given Mulcaster his taste for the drama. In 1548 he went to Cambridge as a King's Scholar, but in 1555 we hear of his election as a Student of Christchurch, Oxford. In the following year he was "licensed to proceed in Arts." He had a reputation for a knowledge of

Hebrew as well as of Latin and Greek, and seems shortly afterwards to have chosen the profession of a schoolmaster, making his way to London about 1558 or 1559.

In 1560 the Guild of Merchant Taylors decided to establish the well-known day Grammar School for boys which still bears their name, and in the following year Mulcaster was appointed the first headmaster, having charge of two hundred and fifty scholars, with the assistance of three undermasters. The school hours were from 7 to 11 a.m. and from 1 to 5 p.m., with one half holiday in the week, besides the ordinary church festival days, and for this the headmaster received the salary of £10 (equivalent to £80 or £100 now), besides a dwelling in the school and a small sum from entrance fees. He was granted twenty days' leave of absence in the year, but was not allowed to hold any other office, though his appointment was only held from year to year.

The reputation Mulcaster had already gained as a teacher before his appointment is shown in the fact that the post was offered to him without his application, and that he accepted it only after some hesitation, when he was promised an additional £10 of salary, on the private and personal guarantee of one of the Governors. He held the position for twenty-five years, and his successful conduct of the school is fully attested by the verdict of eminent scholars who acted as examiners, by the expressions of satisfaction in the minutes of the Council, and by the testimony of the pupils themselves, many of whom attained distinction in after-life.

Of Mulcaster's scholars at Merchant Taylors' School the most famous was Edmund Spenser, but in the absence