

**A FEW NOTES ON THE PUBLIC
SCHOOLS AND UNIVERSITIES OF
HOLLAND AND GERMANY,
TAKEN DURING A TOUR IN THE
SUMMER OF 1839**

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A Few Notes on the Public Schools and Universities of Holland and Germany, Taken During a Tour in the Summer of 1839 by Henry Winston Barron

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HENRY WINSTON BARRON

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PUBLIC SCHOOLS,

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HOLLAND.

At the Hague, the ſchools for the poor are all built and ſupported by the corporation or municipality. There are five large handsome establishments of this kind, containing about 2,500 children. In the evening, theſe ſchools are opened for adults; there is no charge for either instruction or ſchool requiſites. The males and females are taught in the ſame ſchool. The ſchool buſineſs is preceded by a general prayer, in which perſons of all religious opinions can join. Both Catholics and Proteſtants are taught together, and no books are admitted ſave thoſe approved of by the clergy of both perſuaſions. A Hiſtory of the Bible, by Van der Palm, a Proteſtant, is read, and another ſimilar hiſtory, by Schmidt, a Catholic, is alſo read in the ſchool with the conſent of both parties. The Proteſtant catechiſt gives lectures to thoſe of his religion on every Wednesday, and the Catholics during that time retire for the ſame purpoſe to their pariſh church. The Bible itſelf is not read in the ſchool, it being

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considered by both parties as not suited to the capacities of children. All matters concerning religion proceed with the greatest harmony; and any master attempting to interfere with the children would be immediately dismissed. The expense of each of these schools is about 240*l.* per annum, making for the five schools 1,200*l.* a year. It is not compulsory on the parents to send their children to school; but it is very rare that they are not sent to school, and in general there are more applicants than vacancies. The rule is to keep a registry of applicants, and always to admit those whose names appear first in that registry, according as room is found in the school. The children remain until twelve years of age in the school, and after that age they must, if they continue their studies, frequent the night school. Premiums are distributed four times a year, after examinations, to the most deserving of the children. Fires are allowed in winter. The children are taught reading, writing, composition, arithmetic, the elements of geometry, drawing, geography, the history of Holland, the elements of music and chaunting. The cleanliness, the order, and regularity of these schools were truly admirable; and I was credibly informed that the habits of the people have been greatly improved since the establishment of these schools at the time of the Republic, about forty years ago. Corporal punishment is very seldom resorted to; but a system of emulation and rewards is constantly exercised.

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there is another description of school, called the "part payment" school. Here each child pays about 8*d.* of our money per month, not to the master, but the municipality, and the latter support and control the whole establishment. Strange as it may appear, I found the poorer children, and generally the whole management of their schools, more orderly, neater, and more regular than this establishment. The instruction varies but very little in the two institutions. Both are conducted on the old principle of masters to each separate class, and no attempt is made to introduce the Bell or Lancaster principle. The masters are a much better class of men, and better informed than either the English or Irish schoolmasters in general. Their salary varies from 80*l.* English to 5*l.* The latter sum applies only to some of the most advanced and cleverest of the boys, who are selected as assistants in the larger classes. I think this principle, if carried out still further, would lessen the expenditure, by obviating the necessity for employing so many masters. It would also be a desirable improvement in our Lancastrian schools to allot a small sum, to be expended either in books or other premiums, to the monitors of each class. I have found in some of my own schools in Ireland, a great repugnance shown by the parents to their children being chosen as monitors of their classes. It would tend to excite emulation amongst the boys themselves to attain the situation of monitor, if handsome rewards were given to each person who

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was called to fill that office; and great care should always be shown by the master and the patron of each school to have none but the most intelligent and best conducted of the boys appointed to that situation. Generally speaking, the Dutch people of all classes are opposed to the system of mutual instruction; but I cannot help thinking that this arises from an imperfect knowledge of its principles and effects under an intelligent and active master. I am far from supposing that this is the best system, provided in the first place ample funds could in every instance be procured to pay a sufficient number of intelligent masters; and, secondly, that a sufficient number of really well-informed men could be procured for the office. But both of these difficulties meet you in almost every locality, and are generally speaking insurmountable.

At Leyden, the management of the poor schools is also in the hands of the municipality; but each boy pays one cent per day, about seven shillings a year. There is no religious distinction admitted; and the pastors of each child teach them religion at their respective places of worship, at stated hours, and on days specially allotted for that purpose.

In Leyden university, the students are not bound to follow any particular course of studies or lectures; but each follows the courses and lectures adapted to his intended pursuit in life, whether it be law, divinity, or medicine. The law course comprises, besides the common law of the land, a course of political economy, diplomacy, and the law of na-

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tions. It takes five years to complete this course of studies and get a certificate that will enable the student to practise as a barrister. How much more rational is this system to that of eating one's terms at the Temple! There is no religious test required on entering this celebrated university. There are Protestants, Roman Catholics, and Jews here without any distinction. The honours and emoluments, as well as the professorships, are open to all who prove themselves worthy of them by their learning. Monsieur Van Maas, professor of civil law here, was quite astonished when I informed him that religious tests were still insisted on in our two great national universities. "How can that be," said this gentleman, "when the test acts are repealed, and the Catholic disabilities removed?" In this university there are forty Jews, about one hundred Roman Catholics, and five hundred Protestants, all living harmoniously together; and at least as religious and moral in their conduct as the students of either Oxford or Cambridge.

At Amsterdam, the greatest possible attention is paid to the education of the poor. The city maintains twelve large schools, containing five thousand children of both sexes, who are educated together, though of different religions. The population is 200,000. No peculiar tenets of any of the Christian sects are taught in these schools; but on Wednesdays a history of the Bible is taught, and on Saturdays, printed lectures on religion, compiled jointly by the clergy of different persuasions, are delivered to the children; and the clergy give, at stated hours in their

respective churches, instructions to each sect in their own respective doctrines. No religious discussion is allowed in the school. There is a board chosen by the municipality for the purpose of inspecting these schools, appointing masters, and controlling them. The whole management is in this board, and no clergyman of any religion is allowed to be a member of it. This latter regulation was made about thirty years since: until that period the clergy were members of the board, but it was found that religious differences and discussions arose from it, and they have since then been excluded totally from the management. The Jews are not obliged to attend the religious lectures, or the reading of the History of the Bible in the schools. Independent of these "Stadt" schools, there are many private and public subscription and endowed schools, as also schools for payment at various rates, from one shilling to five shillings a month; but the state has but little control over these establishments in Holland. Altogether it must be allowed that education is in a very satisfactory state here; and all classes have not only opportunities of acquiring elementary knowledge, but every inducement to do so at little or no expense; and the higher walks of literature and science are within the reach of persons in very humble circumstances. By every account the results have been perfectly satisfactory. The people are industrious, shrewd, intelligent, and thrifty. Religious rancour is unknown; and there is not in the world a more peaceable, loyal, or laborious

people than the Dutch. Though they are accused of committing excesses in strong liquors, I must say, that during the entire of my journey I never saw one drunken man, nor met with a single beggar, nor a man, woman, or child, that was not comfortably clad from head to foot.

At Utrecht the "Staat," or town schools, are three in number, for a population of 44,000 souls; and are supported partly by the municipality, and partly by a contribution of from one penny to three pence a week, varying according to the means and the class of the scholar. The payment is made to an officer of the municipality; and this body pays the masters fixed salaries, inspects the schools, and regulates the whole management and internal economy of them. In cases of actual destitution, children are admitted gratis. All school requisites are provided gratuitously by the municipality, as likewise the building, firing, repairs, &c. Persons of all religions attend these schools without any difficulty or collision, and no books are used that any sects object to. Besides these establishments, there are three Lutheran and one Roman Catholic schools, supported solely by voluntary subscriptions. Being naturally anxious to learn the cause of this, I waited on a very respectable Protestant clergyman, who told me that all the schools were well conducted, and that he had no fault to find with the management, or books, or instruction. In the Roman Catholic school there were 600 children; the Lutheran, about 1200; the public mixed, 900. This clergyman likewise informed me