

THE DAME SCHOOL AS I KNEW IT

We had to call A "aa" and E "ay." The School fees were from a penny a week to two-pence, according to the pupil's age and education. The dame herself could read but slightly and nothing beyond reading was taught. The fees were not always paid in coin, but in kind. Three miners' candles, two "baker root"¹ turnips, or two eggs might be tendered for a penny, or a quarter-pound of cream for two-pence. I have often seen these used for payments. There were three classes—the "A.B.C." class, the "GO, go" class, and the "Testament" class. There was only one book, passed from hand to hand, and bigger children often taught the smaller ones their letters, the class standing around in a half circle with their hands behind their backs until their turn at the book. The School-mistress was also the handy woman of the village, eking out her living by knitting or patching and mending clothes for her neighbours and so at times would be too busy to teach. The "Custis" I remember well, and how in extreme cases it was laid hard on both hands. If her "Custis" should be mislaid or purposely hidden away our dame had another instrument of torture ready—the flat wooden "busk" out of an old pair of stays, or a switch, made of a bunch of "griglans" (dried heather.) Among my curios I have an old oak custis.

J.T.