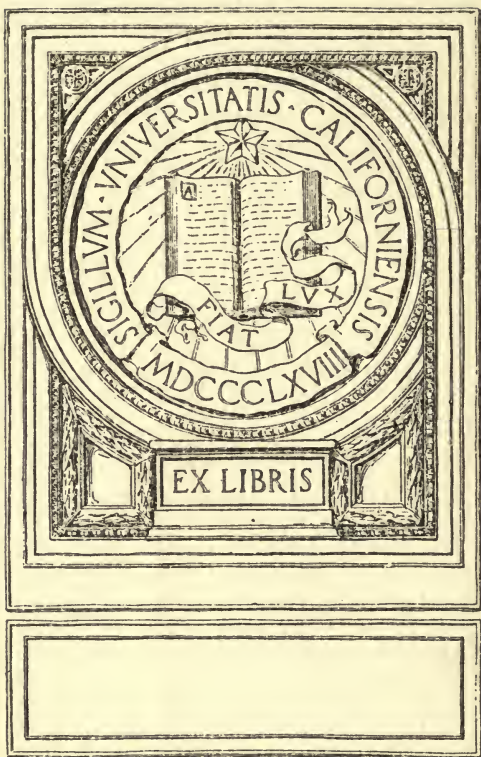


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THE HEART OF A
SCHOOLBOY



THE HEART OF A SCHOOLBOY

BY

JACK HOOD, *psoud.*

WITH A PREFACE BY

REV. E. A. BURROUGHS

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AUTHOR OF "WORLD BUILDERS ALL," ETC.



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TO THE
ATTORNEYS

TO MY BROTHER OWEN
AND TO
MY OLD SCHOOL FRIEND DOUGLAS ARNOLD NEWBERY
I DEDICATE MY FIRSTFRUITS

Aug.-Sept. 1919.

J. H.

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PREFACE

THREE years ago, in the course of the National Mission of Repentance and Hope, it was my good fortune to be sent as "Archbishops' Messenger" to a number of Public Schools of different sizes and types for visits of varying duration. Some of them are commemorated in the Dedication of a little book which arose out of those occasions—*World Builders All*. It was during one such visit that I met the author of *The Heart of a Schoolboy*; and to that I owe my present privilege of introducing him to the public under a *nom de plume*.

He was then, I suppose, fourteen, since he tells me that he is seventeen now; so you will realise that I did not get a great deal out of himself which would be relevant here, and

almost my whole knowledge of him is derived from his book, read first in MS. and now again in proof. Let me confess frankly that, when I received the MS., I did not expect much. After reading it, the least I could do as an *amende honorable* was to introduce it to Mr. C. J. Longman, whose firm, as you see, has endorsed my feeling that others would be interested in it too. But in justice to the author (and perhaps also to myself) let me add that I am only its sponsor, and in no sense its editor. I ventured to query in the MS. a sentence here and there in which the English was not quite on all fours, and at two points suggested slight modifications; but that is all. For the rest you have the author exactly as he is. There are, to be frank, a few points at which one might have used a blue pencil, had one been asked to; but they are surprisingly few. The feature of the book which strikes one at once is the easy maturity of opinion and breadth of outlook, combined with quite

enough *naïveté* to guarantee it as the work of a real boy. Best of all, I don't think, from what I read, that "Jack Hood" is either self-conscious or conceited.

The whole treatment of his subject is, of course, dictated by the attack on the Public School system contained in *The Loom of Youth*. At times it is coloured by the earlier "reply" of Martin Browne, whom, as it happens, I got to know at Eton under similar circumstances to those which took me to "Jack Hood's" school. But it stands upon its own legs, and is a new and valid contribution to the subject. Many will probably value it more for the little incidental touches which let one back for the moment into the genuine inner life of a school, than for the criticisms which it sets out to make.

In the first chapter the reader may perhaps get an impression that our author is rather fumbling, and may wonder if he is going to do more than intelligently echo his elders. But conscientious judicial stiffness will, I think,

be disarmed by the first sentence of Chapter II., and before long author and reader are happily rambling along together—the reader perhaps still feeling a little amused. Style and matter, however, alike improve as our friend “gets down to it,” and the reader’s half-smile gives way to respectful attention. For here, at any rate, is some one who, though a schoolboy, is thinking and feeling for himself, with a quick eye for the points of a situation and more than a schoolboy’s power of literary expression.

On the Games side, his criticism of drill as a substitute for Rugger and his plea for tennis as supplementary to cricket are cases in point. On the work side, one respects a schoolboy who says, “Teach a boy of Erasmus and Sir Isaac Newton before you teach him of Henry VIII.’s wives and of local events like the Great Fire.” So, too, one appreciates his thrust at the master who sums up a Greek Testament lesson in the words, “Now you see why St. Paul used the aorist here,” for one seems to remember that sort of climax oneself. But I

think that to most of us elders the criticism of the unattractive and unnatural printing of Bibles, as a bar to their usefulness, will be new and suggestive. About the Classics, I should like a heart-to-heart talk with our author—though his suggestion about boys who are going to drop them at sixteen is worth considering—but I could forgive him all his heterodoxy for pillorying the superficial pedagogue who is content to explain a classical curriculum as “excellent training for the mind.” It is to that gentleman that we owe the threatened collapse of classical education.

The general reader, however, will probably find most interest in the chapters on the romantic side of school life, the moral problem at school, and the teaching and practice of religion. It is pleasant to be reassured by one who is still at school that the romantic and idealistic side is indeed so strong, though often so inarticulate, at what we grown-ups are apt to call “the awkward age.” The moral is that, instead of taking a boy’s inexpressiveness

as a reason for not trying to express ourselves to him, we should rather go the further to meet him. "Give, hoping for nothing again,"—and *don't* play down to what might seem to be his only line of interests because about the others he is still too confused and self-conscious to talk. "I have known Games Captains," says our author naïvely, "who were also poets and musicians in a modest way"; the point is that they were forming those other interests at a time when they only talked about, and were not even good as yet at, cricket or football.

The treatment of the moral question, so sharply raised by Alec Waugh, is restrained and human and, I think, on the right lines; though perhaps "Jack Hood" hardly enters into the responsibilities of a Head Master who has to think of several hundred boys rather than of the one. Anyhow, it is high time that some one pointed out that what is complained of is the fault neither of the Public School system, nor of magisterial negligence, nor of

special depravity in boys of this class, but mainly of our common British public opinion on sexual questions. The public tolerates in society and everywhere else, and encourages through the theatre, the cinema, and the press, a tone which it is then shocked to find reflected in the Public Schools, where, moreover, as often as not, the trouble is due to parents neglecting their obvious duty to their sons at the most critical time of their lives.

On our author's views about religion and religious teaching at Public Schools it is not for me to comment; but I commend them especially to any "strange preachers" who are invited to preach to boys. Two passages I would underline in conclusion, and leave to speak for themselves. One is this: "Atheists and followers of psychic cults are doing their best to prevent us [*i. e.* finding a reasonable Christian faith], while our own religious teachers merely tell us to believe, and do not explain why Christianity is true. If a boy of fifteen had two days, say, with some very

learned Theosophists, do you not suppose he could be convinced? All the more shame then that he is not more often convinced by Christians in years." The other is of quite a different nature: "Most of us, when talking to old ladies, avoid topics such as House matches, motor-bicycles, or chemistry, because we know they are of a later age. Unfortunately we treat God like this. . . . God is not a Friend who only thinks of our 'religious side.'" In bidding this little book and its author God-speed, I can wish nothing better for them than that they should bring that last point home to all their readers. It is of the essence of the Incarnation, and a part of Christianity which, more than almost any other, the whole world needs to get hold of to-day.

E. A. BURROUGHS.

Hertford College, Oxford.

October 27, 1919.

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THE HEART OF A SCHOOLBOY

CHAPTER I

THE PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM

“Is it not strange that a little child should be heir to the whole world?”—THOMAS TRAHERNE.

BEFORE I begin the task which I have set myself, I must say a few words in introduction and apology. There has been a great deal said about the immorality and general inefficiency of what is called the Public School system and “tradition.” This culminated in that popular book by Mr. Alec Waugh called *The Loom of Youth*.

I do not pretend that Public Schools are ideal, but I do assert the grand old system can be, and is being, reformed, without obliteration.

I do not shut my eyes to criticism, but let us have fair play. Mr. Waugh's book is not merely a school story about his own school; it is meant to show up the system as a whole to the shocked eyes of the public, and the public take it as representative of all Public Schools. If a certain religious sect, or one class of tradesmen were to be criticised and campaigned against in the Press, the battle would surely not be one-sided; yet the Public Schools are going through a very heavy time of criticism, and though between them they must publish a couple of hundred journals, little or nothing was said in defence for quite a year. More books were written against us. Still little or no defence.

Then at last—from Eton—came a plucky attempt to show the public the other side. I refer to Mr. Martin Browne's *A Dream of Youth*. That is all. I therefore think that another attempt will not be entirely fruitless,

so I, who love my school, write this little book.

Now you may naturally ask, who am I to do this? I do not intend to tell you the name of my school. For one thing, this may be unworthy of her, because, of course, it is bound to be in some ways a picture of her; and further, it may be detrimental to her.

A Dream of Youth, while giving valuable suggestions on the educational and religious sides, does not say much concerning what I believe to be the key to the system—the prefectorial basis.

I believe that if a fair view of our side is to be written, it must be written by one who has been, or is, at a Public School. Now if the writer is to be an Old Boy, he will be biassed either by the happy or unhappy memories of his schooldays. So the only solution seems to be the one which Mr. Martin Browne found—that it must be written from the heart of a

Public Schoolboy still at school and enveloped in the system, which condition I fulfil. I have no claim higher than any other to write, except that I am a prefect, and that I have thought a great deal about the question since *The Loom of Youth* appeared. My claim is simply this: that against all the attacks only one little reply has yet been written, and no other seems forthcoming. Is it that Public Schools are too far gone to be saved, or even to know the day of their visitation? Is it that they treat the attacks with scorn? I think the reason is simply that every one expects some one else to do it. If any Public Schoolboy reads this and thinks I have not done him credit, by all means let him write something better, for *The Loom of Youth* is difficult to beat.

The general impression made upon one who reads books like *The Loom of Youth* and *Loose Ends* is briefly this—

“The Head is a pig-headed conservative; the Masters either disinterested nobodies or fools, who suppress individuality. The prefects are indolent, unjust, self-satisfied, and addicted to much swearing and immorality (more often merely non-morality). They are either bad examples or no examples at all, with a few rare exceptions, who are therefore unpopular. The bloods as a whole love only games, are freethinkers (or non-thinkers) by religion. The fags and the rank and file make tin gods of the Games Captains, despise the other prefects (rightly, too, if this is all true), especially clever ones; and their only moral talk is games. All work is an abomination; art, literature, music, are ‘sloppy tosh, all right for girls.’ Lastly, all possess a curious code of honour which tolerates fraudulent, lying excuses, but not sneaking.”

I for one think this is a scandalous libel unless it is true. Neither Mr. Alec Waugh

nor any of his supporters have actually put all that down in so many words, but between them it is all clearly implied. Unless it is a true picture it is not fair that the public should have it. Then it rests on the question, Is it, or is it not true? I am perfectly convinced it is false, and that is why I write. By some I may be accused of copying ideas from *A Dream of Youth*. I plead guiltless of this, and though in some cases my views are honoured by the fact that they coincide, most are quite new to printer's ink.

To make my aim quite clear, it is not to deny the sins and imperfections of Public Schoolboys, but it is to show, partly, how exaggerated and distorted they have been; and, in the second place, to show that the sins of boyhood can originate elsewhere.

Now why is it that if a boy develops a good taste, say for music, it is at once put down to heredity, and people say of him,

“He takes after his mother”; yet, suppose he develops a bad taste, say for falsehood or impurity, quite a different tale is told? It is put down to a school friend, or the school itself, or the “Public School system” in general.

Are all parents perfect? Do not immoral men and women even have sons whom they send to Public Schools? If so, then surely some Public Schoolboys must be the sons of immoral parents, or irreligious parents, or lying parents. That is mere logic. It must not be taken for granted that every Public Schoolboy comes from a good home, or that he has an immaculate line of ancestors. I am not trying to put all the sins of Public Schoolboys on to their parents, but I feel (and know of some cases) that some boys do inherit bad qualities (besides physical imperfections) from their parents, as well as good ones, and that there must be nothing

overlooked when one is considering the morale of schools.

Now as concerning irreligion, for instance, the fault very often lies at home, as we shall see when we discuss this point later on. If people with irreligious homes have sons, whom they send to school, it is reasonable to say that some boys must come from irreligious homes. Another cause lies in the opposite extreme. Up to the age of twelve, very often a boy is given more religion than he can swallow. He is made to go to long services and listen to tedious and prosy preachers; or perhaps Sunday, instead of being a happy day, is made boring, and even hateful to the memory by hundreds of pharisaical bye-laws. When the boy gets away, the reaction sets in, and he regards Sundays as some men regard "Saturday nights."

The sins of boyhood, then, are not all due to bad influence at school, but partly due

to heredity or home influence. Far greater, however, is the charge we must lay at the door of Britannia herself, as representing the state of mind and social conditions of our great country. Let me take an example. What a splendid invention is the cinema! What an opportunity for education! What an opportunity for raising the standard of mind of some classes, who refuse to see why they are not worthy of the Public School! And the opportunity is thrown away. The cinema caters for the low, and drags the high down to its level. The children of the poorer classes, members of the future generation, who will possibly wield more power than old Public Schoolboys, spend hours in cinemas. They have no toys or books, and are only too grateful for some amusement which is, incidentally, cheap. It is only natural that they should take their ideas from what they see at the "pictures." Scores of juvenile

crimes were put down to cinema influence, and some of the most flagrant films stopped. But nearly all of the films of to-day are "shilling shockers," meant to excite the imagination (and which also incite the passions), and are always full of crime, especially adultery. Personally, cinemas bore me, but to those whom they do not bore (and those are hundreds of thousands), or who go because they can go nowhere else, the great harm done is obvious. Of course the same may be applied to "threepenny bloods" or "penny dreadfuls."

I repeat that I do not think that schools are blameless for the low morale of some boys, but in the first place I think the blame is very largely due to the home, and even more largely to the nation, and this must be borne in mind when considering the subject fairly. I believe that if schools are as bad as the picture I gave you above, still there may be

hope for the system, though I should vote for abolition. But the schools are not as bad as that, in spite of handicaps like the ones I have just mentioned, and are not out of date, though they need, and can stand, change and reform.

CHAPTER II

FAGS

“Praised be adversity! It tarnishes the vile, but gives polish to the noble. I was a mere mass of iron when adversity forged me into a sword, and the vicissitudes of fortune gave to my edge a free career.”

KIRWASH.

I FEEL rather puzzled as to the best way of arranging my chapters, but it seems evident that this is the place for some remarks on “prep. school” boys, the material out of which the Public Schools have to make men, and some remarks on new boys, and a few on the fagging system.

First, then, the prep. schoolboy. He is not guilty of immorality, because he is not physically or mentally old enough to under-

stand. As a rule, however, he has an equivalent, which is common to young animals as well—an element of vulgarity. Though he may be very “straight,” yet at times he will be very amused at anything disgusting. He is not, however, conscious of anything wrong, because he is not generally ashamed of it, and does it at home.

This trait is merely Nature again, and it does not necessarily lead to anything.

The prep. schoolboy is as a rule rather selfish, because he is swollen-headed. If he is a year older than a friend, and therefore learns a certain fact a year earlier, he will turn round and accuse that same friend of arrant stupidity! Some prep. schools have “pre-fects” or the equivalent. It may be a good idea, but it leads to swollen-headedness. A boy of thirteen is not old enough to rule, and when he goes to a Public School he finds it hard to obey. One thing may be noticed,

which rather shows a strange sense of the proportion of sin—he never swears.

What of the new boy? Of course real bullying, that is to say cruelty such as one reads of in *Tom Brown's Schooldays*, is a thing of the past. A Flashman is rare. Yet a new boy goes through a mill of feeling a fool and a nobody. That is a charge brought against the Public Schools, not by people like Alec Waugh, who have been to them, but by armchair critics and "reformers," and by ladies as a whole. The Socialist denounces both the unofficial suppression of the new boys and the official system of fagging as of a past age, because it is the "big boys bossing the younger ones"! All should be equal. Imagine two to five hundred boys, of ages ranging from thirteen to nineteen, of varying intelligence and strength, and of varying influence and experience, all being equal! No respect for age, talent or strength should be

shown, except that there should be a few monitors ("prefect" is too autocratic a word) to see that rules are kept. That is what some Socialists ask for. I have myself had an argument on the subject with some. As it stands, the system is a social ladder, its "classes" regulated by various considerations such as age, form, teams, and length of time at the school. At school there are many prizes to win—form prizes, team caps, prefectships, etc.—and those who have passed through the mill and have won things, and have gained influence and experience, pass up the rungs. After all, the Public School system is not primarily mere knowledge-stuffing or games-playing. It is a great combination of aims, which can be described only by one word—LIFE. In any life the beginners must go through a mill of education; either birth, money or talent (according to the age and the country) comes to the fore; leaders are

produced. So it is in this wonderful life which is called the Public School "system."

New boys are generally subject to a lot of ragging. In different schools, different things happen. So it is in after-life. A new cadet at Osborne, a new member of the gun-room, a new clerk in an office or a fresher at the 'Varsity—all are "broken in." I suppose it is the same at girls' schools, though the methods employed may be different. Take the case of a boy of thirteen from a private school. He is now a member of a Public School. His head is too big for his cap, and his feet for his boots, because he was in the cricket-eleven, or a "prefect," or top of that school. He has got to fit in with the school, and to realise that such honours gained in a "dame's or prep. school" are of little worth in the great life before him—in short, that he is only a "kid." He has got to be "broken in." It is no use saying to him, "You

know, dear, you must bear in mind that all your greatness at your prep. school won't count here. You are only a little boy of thirteen and you must remember that. Try to behave yourself."

There is one tradition here, which I will give you for what it is worth, trusting you will not misjudge it. Every now and again, when there are a good many people who are not school prefects, but who are next door to it, and are obviously near the office, and who have influence through being high up in form or in the team, and are in the senior studies, a few will form a "Press Gang." They suppress such people as I have described above, either by a good dressing-down, or forcibly with a gym.-shoe. It is not bullying; people on the verge of prefectship have a reputation to keep. I can say that as a new boy I may have been bullied, but I never looked upon the above as bullies.

The spirit of the tradition is well described by a little incident that happened once to one such body. The prisoner was an arrogant American good-for-nothing, who created a scene, shouting, "You aren't prefects; what right have you got to do this?"

"No, we are not prefects," was the reply, "but we are the senior people of this school, and we don't see why a little skunk like you should go about as if you owned the whole place."

"Four to one. You call that fair? British boys are cads."

"It is not a case of four to one at all; the tone and traditions of this place are to be upheld, not to be altered by you. Wait until you've done something worth swanking about."

If new boys had their own sweet way and no discipline, the tone of a school would soon descend. I remember hearing a lady say to a

noisy little boy in the same hotel, "One day you will go to a Public School, where they will turn a silly little boy into a fine man."

Now for the official system of fagging. This, more than anything else, helps to find for a boy his proper place. There is nothing servile or unworthy of a gentleman in this. Slavery is dishonourable, but service is honourable. Ask a fag whether he feels servile. Many feel rather honoured doing an errand for a prefect they like or admire. Most, of course, object to washing up prefectorial crockery when coated with sardines and treacle, but not because they object to the system. Unless boys can be trusted, and are given more responsibility and privileges as they grow older, they will go out into the world irresponsible, and fagging, while teaching juniors to obey, teaches seniors to rule. A bad prefect has admirable opportunities for bullying, you may say. On the other hand,

a good prefect has admirable opportunities for helping. After all, the whole system very largely depends on the prefects, so I am going to give them a chapter to themselves later on.

I have never met any one who, on looking back on fagging days, possibly chequered by unhappy incidents, has not said, "It jolly well did me good." To quote the Eastern sage again, "I was a mere mass of iron when adversity forged me into a sword, and the vicissitudes of fortune gave to my edge a free career."

CHAPTER III

' THE TIN GOD OF ATHLETICISM '

"It is God that girdeth me with strength of war, and maketh my ways perfect. He maketh my feet like harts' feet, and setteth me up on high. He teacheth my hands to fight, and mine arms shall break even a bow of steel."—PSALMS.

THE greatest accusation brought against the Public Schools is one of "Philistinism," and the worship of "the Tin God of Athleticism." This is not groundless, but exaggerated. The average boy in a prep. school likes games above anything else. That is Nature again. Lambs, pups, kittens, all young, love games as do children. They play instinctively, moreover they are taught to play before they learn to read and write. The average fag, a boy about thirteen or fourteen say, puts pleasure first; he loves games more than work. That is the

age when he is growing most, and only naturally seeks to find outlet for his energies in things physical. At that age, more than at any other, he should be allowed plenty of freedom for games and for developing his strength. Let him be prouder of winning a race than of beating a rival in form if he so wishes. Athletics will probably keep him straighter than too much book-worming and indoor work.¹ Let him admire the members of the team if worthy of it. Strength is one of the greatest gifts that Nature gives to Youth.

Loose Ends tries to prove that every boy strives to be *normal* and to talk of nothing but games—to read only the sporting columns of the daily papers; and that he ranks a poetry reader as a “madder.” *The Loom of Youth* makes a boy care for nothing but House Matches. The book ends a tragedy. As

¹ As Joe Beckett, the boxing champion, informed the leading Free Churchman who condemned boxing.

Gordon Carruthers looks on his old school, from the window of the train, he seems to feel the same of school life as the unknown preacher did of life as a whole: "Vanity of vanities, all is vanity."

Loose Ends, further, tries to prove that although a boy may go to school with some love of the artistic, it is knocked out of him. The bloods despise it, and so on. This is not true of Eton—as Mr. Martin Browne shows—nor of many other places, including this one. The average fag, perhaps, rather despises literature, and puts those who like it in a category with the feminine sex. Music (especially in the choir, it seems here) bores him. But this is utterly untrue of the middle and upper form boys, as a whole. How is it that one of the greatest Public Schools, the pioneer of football, publishes a literary magazine, besides its school chronicle, run by some of the Sixth Form, who are, incidentally,

ipso facto, prefects? That paper, I am told, has a good circulation. Again, how is it that many, if not most, Public Schools have a Literary Society, which is not totally despised by those bloods who have athletic reputations to keep up, nor by prefects who hope to keep order (though I do not deny that many wise young fags' heads may wag sadly at them)?

Do not most school magazines have a fair share of aspiring poets and writers? Can it be that in every case they are from the pen of despised "madders" and bookworms? Do not most schools possess debating, musical, or dramatic societies, or photographic clubs? In the face of all this, can it be said that we only live for games, that we worship "the Tin God of Athleticism"?

No loom can prevent youth liking higher things, even the artistic and the musical. Yet it is "proved" (*sic*) that our god, this tin god, bans religion, literature, art and music.

Games may come first with most of us, but athletics do not crowd everything out. I have known Games Captains who were also poets and musicians in a modest way, others to whom religion was the greatest living force, and others who were fond of good books. I do not think these are exceptional, or that this school is different from all others.

Maddox, the athlete in *David Blaize*, loved books. Gordon Carruthers loved *The Oxford Book of English Verse*. The hero of *Loose Ends* loves books, only he is ashamed of it, because it seems to him unnatural at school.

The substitution for games of corps work does not seem to me to be a very happy thing. I will not say much about it, as I do not wish to be thought unpatriotic or a pacifist. What is Army discipline meant to teach? (I am not including gym. and Swedish drill.) Primarily self-control, obedience, and the feeling that one is but a unit in the whole. A well-known

Head Master once said that boys get more benefit from games. It does not need Army discipline to teach self-control and obedience. As for the feeling that one is but a unit in the whole, is not the charge brought against Public Schools that of producing a type? Army drill tends to suppress the energies of youth. We are not yet men. Rugby football brings out self-control, obedience, courage, and a hundred other manly qualities without in any way suppressing one's spirits.

There is also the charge of double authority. Feuds have arisen in high places here between N.C.O.'s who were not prefects and school prefects who were privates or junior N.C.O.'s in the Corps. A kind of "tit-for-tat" broke out. That is a very bad thing. One O.C. actually tried to prohibit prefects who were not N.C.O.'s employing fags on days when in uniform. If, on the other hand, N.C.O.'s had to be chosen only from prefects, the

efficiency of the Corps might have been impaired.

I think I have placed a pretty fair view of athleticism before the reader—the necessity of it for younger boys, and the combination of that with higher things for senior ones. I am not at all biassed on this subject, because, though not a “bookworm,” I have no school colours. I have played for the First Fifteen, and am in my House football and running teams; that is all.

If some boys live for nothing but for athletics, then it is simply because “work” is not made interesting. Is it not natural that a boy should like and learn what he is interested in? For instance, I should enjoy an hour of football more than an hour of mathematics; but, on the other hand, I should enjoy an hour of history, or perhaps classics, more than an hour of cricket.

Should games be compulsory? Some boys

who dislike football learn to hate and even dread it. But if compulsion is the general rule for football it leads to many advantages. First of all, every one gets good exercise, even the slacker, in football. Secondly, it ensures that part of the half is spent in a healthy way. In the third place, it gives the school itself more chance of getting the best men for her team.

I must not say all I think against cricket, or I shall alienate and prejudice some of my readers. I will say this much, that if at about the age of fifteen-and-a-half a boy is quite hopeless at the game, he is doing more harm than good. Cricket takes up five hours to one of football; and five hours is a long time for people who dislike the game, besides the fact that it handicaps the more promising players.

Until recently most Public Schools have banned tennis, although tennis is probably the only game really useful in after-life. Of

course tennis as an alternative to cricket would probably mean the death of cricket, because small boys would not give cricket a trial. But for those who have reached an age when cricket is obviously not any amusement, I plead for tennis.

Now that he has heard the other side of the tale about our "tin God of Athleticism" the reader can judge for himself whether or not it has been exaggerated; and then let us have criticism—but in criticism fair play. In closing I should like to remind you of a poem by a present-day poet, called "Vitai Lampada," of which the last verse is—

'This is the word that year by year,
While in her place the School is set,
Every one of her sons must hear,
And none that hears it dare forget;
This they all with a joyful mind
Bear through life like a torch of flame,
And falling fling to the host behind—
'Play up! play up! and play the game!''

HENRY NEWBOLT.

CHAPTER IV

THE ROMANTIC SIDE

“Youth wants colour, life, passion, the poetry of revolt.”

ALEC WAUGH.

I CANNOT proceed further without trying to say a few words on the romantic side of school life. There must be some good reason for the fact that we all, with few exceptions, get such happiness out of it. Though as small children boys may dislike school, it is wonderful how the Old Boy of a Public School loves his school, and is invariably loyal to her. A boy's career at school is not merely educational routine, the return for so many pounds, shillings and pence a year paid by his parents. His school gives him far more than is paid for. He does not actually pay for all his happiness, or for friendships. We do not really

know ourselves why we love our school, because the love is unconscious; we never talk about it till we have left. It is only rarely that we stop and try to think out why we get so much joy from it. Do you know the feeling one gets when one walks through an orchard in the full bloom of spring, or under the first leaves of the year, or by the first flowers of approaching summer? It is an inexpressible feeling of perfect freshness mingled with infinite joy. There is none of the sweltering heat of summer, or the sad fading of leaves and whistling of winds which autumn brings, or the drear sight of death-like winter. Likewise is the youth, too, of the animal kingdom and of human nature.

The feeling of growth, physical and mental, of increasing energy, knowledge and strength, the hundreds of things we see and hear and do for the first time, make this part of our lives one of the happiest. The knowledge

that we are getting wiser every day, and the feeling of the immense, busy world all around us is so wonderful, and bracing, and interesting; we are all so hopeful, so full of promise; our paths have not yet, as a general rule, been crossed by sorrow, shame or failure. We are full of hope and ambition, some to be bishops and chancellors, others officers, or engineers, or inventors; some again to be county cricketers, explorers, farmers, and countless other things. In chapel sometimes I have looked round and tried to picture some of those present in after-life. Who will be greatest among them? What sort of people will their wives and children be? and so on. Life for the young is a Great Adventure; and experience, as Tennyson puts it, is "an arch," through which we see still more and more as we go on. Boys seldom go into outward raptures over a pretty view. The most said may be "Jolly fine," partly

because it seems so natural to them; they are as much a part of Spring as the blossom and leaves. In every one of them is an innate love for the beautiful, however much it is *camouflaged* or hidden. One of our Old Boys, whenever he comes down, goes out into the cricket-fields and looks at the view. "Do you know," he said to me once, "I think that view is perfectly wonderful." I was so used to it that I had not thought much about it. It is rather like a framed picture. A ridge of downs, ending in cliffs, forms the frame to an exquisite inset, of a marsh, with the green football-fields jutting out into it, and on the left the hills, with green copses and green and yellow fields. "When I am away in the trenches I conjure up that view, it is so glorious," he said. It sounds rather commonplace, but it illustrates what I mean. He is a priest now. Once I asked him to "prove God." He took that view, as it were,

as his text. "Doesn't that strengthen your faith?" he said. "Who but some Being infinitely greater than we could have planned all that? Don't you think that the Creator of that must be some great Personality, that all could not merely have evolved, purposelessly?" He went on to show that the Personality must be a God of love, and that led to the story of the Gospel.

A boy of fourteen or fifteen, far from being the soulless animal that some people suppose him to be, has a very highly developed sense of the romantic. All his troubles, which are really trifling, so that he soon forgets them, are magnified to him and appear great. Soulless? At that age perhaps more than at any other does he strive to win the friendship of those he loves or admires. He may not talk about them, but it is all very real and large to him. Stereotyped? It is not true of this place. It is surprising what may be hid under an exterior perhaps rough or timid

or "ordinary." A great many of us try to write poetry, crude perhaps, but the spirit is there. A boy who does so, again, will not talk about it. On one or two occasions, however, such poems as these have been shown to me in confidence, since I have been a prefect, sometimes with a view to insertion in the school magazine, sometimes not. They have always been from the pens of boys very keen on athletics. I have here one I was given once, which was written by a boy just on fifteen—a good gymnast, whom one might not have suspected of poetic tendencies, a fact which rather brings out the point of this chapter. He was describing a walk in the woods with a friend when he says—

"I said, 'midst many other things,
That we were happy as two kings.
And he to this at once agreed,
And said we should be ever freed
To live away up in the hills,
Away from all, and from all ills,
Until our lives be spent."

There is nothing wonderful, or out of the way, or precocious in those lines, but they do show the simple, sincere poetry of youth.

The Public School system, as represented here, at all events, does not stifle this spirit, but, if anything, fosters it. Life in a large school is a very big affair. In a prep. school boys have to be kept fairly tied up, but in big schools there is enough scope for each to live his own life, full of events, happiness, disappointments. One poet—I forget which—describes it in the happy phrase, “The joy, the tears, of boyhood’s years.”

One day we shall all grow old ; I shall grow old, and I wonder what memories will be conjured up when I think of my life here. There will be memories of fagging days, and various escapades ; of football, first hated, then loved ; of chapel services and the organ on which I learned ; of debates and recitals ; of study feuds and fun, and study teas ; of my

days as a prefect, the amusing and the sad things that happened ; and memories of many friends and countless other people who all seemed so different, and peculiar in their own way.

Perhaps by then the Public School traditions will have been swept away. Public opinion seems to be growing against us. This means a growing reason for my writing this, my best effort to state what I sincerely feel to be the truth.

Taste is largely a matter of environment. If Britannia gives her young sons hundreds of thousands of trashy novels, which lack both creative genius and good expression, she must expect her sons to get used to them. I do not plead for Dickens and George Eliot necessarily. Why ram fruits of a past age down a boy's throat? After all Victorian literature is not very easy reading. There are, however, a host of books written by modern

writers more becoming a boy than either Thackeray or a "threepenny blood."

The same applies to music. Some people imagine that we at school cannot appreciate "classical" music. If one only hears ragtimes, naturally one's taste is not cultivated. I know that most boys seem to love good music when they are given the chance of hearing it.

The same again applies to good pictures.

To sum up, Mr. Alec Waugh says, "Youth wants colour, life, passion." What is more, he can hardly fail to obtain it, if Nature is allowed to develop. Experience will in time show him what is *true* colour, *clean* life, and *pure* passion. The following is from a poem to a fallen school friend written for the School Magazine—

"The beauty of your heart, untainted, young,
Ingenuous—you knew not yet the grime
And mud of life—and innocent for a time,
With open gaze and undefiled tongue."

CHAPTER V

MORALS—(I) HONOUR, BAD LANGUAGE

“Once to every man and nation comes the moment to
decide,
In the strife of Truth and Falsehood, for the good or
evil side ;
Then it is the brave man chooses, while the coward
stands aside,
Doubting in his abject spirit till his Lord is crucified.”

LOWELL.

LET us turn from this last picture, somewhat idealistic, to a consideration of the morals of the Public Schools. If you were to think of even your best friend, and were to magnify his faults and pettinesses, without raising his good points to the same proportion, you would be very liable to come to a conclusion quite unworthy of him and unfair to him. So it is that if one takes hold of the

Public School "code of honour," and makes a great deal of the cribbing and the lying and the swearing that goes on, then the verdict would be very detrimental to that code of honour. This has been the case lately.

A boy must be trusted if he is to grow up trustworthy. For example, take him as a little child. Unless he is allowed to walk alone and then go out alone, how can he be expected ever to be able to look after himself? There are risks. He may fall and break his ankles, he may be kidnapped, or he may be run over. Use that as an analogy. Trust a boy's honour. There are risks here. He may make a slip and break his word, he may be completely carried away by self-interest, or he may fall under some bad habits. Those risks must be taken. One can only learn by experience, and experience is often bitter. If a boy falls one must not let him be like a dog with a bad name.

The "code of honour" centres round one

great principle, that of never betraying another, be he friend or enemy. This may be overdone; all principles are liable to become prejudices. There are times when it might be profitable if a friend did give another away. Those cases must be sacrificed for the general principle. Unless one's honour is founded on some fundamental principle there is no trusting it. The fact that a schoolboy's honour, for good or evil, depends on the system of never giving another away, makes it worthy of the name, and trustworthy. I do not know whether a boy is supposed to be more trustworthy than a girl of the same age. If so, I think it can be accounted for by the fact that the boy lives up to his principles of never telling on another, whereas a girl has no such staple principle in her "code." It is not the nature of every boy to live up to this principle. It is part of the Public School traditions. Take the case of a street-boy captured in a raid on a college cricket-ground. When once he

is captured, and can no longer carry on some underhand warfare, such as guerilla stone-throwing, he breaks out into, "I never done nothing; it was him over there. I'll tell mother. I'll have a policeman after you. It wasn't me." Ten to one his pockets are full of stones, but in either case it illustrates my point. He has no such standard of honour. If once this principle were broken down, my Head Master once said, the whole social fabric (*i. e.* of school life) would go.

Coupled with this, you may argue, is the principle of never telling on himself, in other words, of not owning up. This is unfair. There are various reasons for this. He may be a coward, or it might be involving the betrayal of another. We saw just now that in some cases the principle seems overdone. Another reason is the boy's love of exactitude when dealing with truth. Suppose a master were to ask who *threw* a certain bit of paper on the floor. No answer. The culprit, we will say,

placed it there. That is quibbling, deceit, lying? Yes, it is, and yet it is not, because he was not, most likely, *consciously* acting a falsehood when he refused to own up when asked who *threw* it. Great ingenuity is often shown in this direction. Of course it is a mistaken and distorted point of view, but the point is that in a good many cases when our "code of honour" is attacked it is misunderstood.

Public Schools are said to be hotbeds of bad language, that is, either foul, or mere swearing. They probably are, most of them. It is, however, absurd to blame the system for it. I think the fact of a school being, or not being, a hotbed of bad language may depend largely on the prefects, but in any case from where does it come? Certainly not from the home, as a rule. It is true that boys do pick up bad language at school.

A great many people have an extraordinary idea as to what swearing is. It originally

meant giving an oath by some god or other, I believe. So-called swearing now consists very largely in prefixing some word, meaningless by long misuse (generally an unrecognisable derivative), to give force to a statement. Is swearing a sin? Personally I regard it not so much as crime, but as a meaningless, *weak* habit, ungentlemanly (therefore un-Christian)—nothing more nor less. Many people classify words ranging in strength from “bother” to “d—n,” some as harmless ejaculations, others as swear words, which is farcical. Words of either class are fairly equal in meaning; as often they mean nothing at all, not even loss of temper, but are not unlike so many particles which Greek authors seem to enjoy strewing about their sentences. Now which of these two statements is really swearing, “Oh, blast it!” or “Oh, good Lor’!”? The former is considered swearing, the latter is even used in society. This shows how ridiculous it is, trying to classify words into

harmful and harmless, because the second of these two examples is, if you carefully examine it, swearing in its true sense, as are also "Good heavens!" and "Good gracious!" both considered harmless.

For the sake of argument we will call words classified as "swear words" and "undesirable" bad language. Whence is this? You cannot blame the Public Schools for it, because their whole principle is freedom. You therefore cannot legislate on a boy's language. You must simply trust him. I think a lot of it comes from novels and magazines, and that the habit was accentuated by our millions of fighting men in the late war. If he is told it is wrong, a boy will probably think it rather grand, like smoking and drinking, "which grown-up men do." If he looks upon it as a *weak* habit merely, and as a sign of lack of self-control and inability to express oneself, he will be more likely to despise it. It is always such a

mistake to be shocked. Boys rather enjoy shocking people; for myself I love shocking people who are very prim and proper. It is no use saying it is "wicked," because he knows it is not wicked. Simply show him it is weak, and distinctly bad form, and he is more likely to chuck it up. The following lines, never before published, give a beautiful ideal for a boy to hold in regard to his morality:—

MY HOUSE

"I have to guard this house of mine—
Not mine, but His—and see
No wily foe doth enter in
And spoil, thro' treachery.

"I have to watch, when, soon or late,
My Lord calls me away,
I may with joy resign to Him
This little house of clay."

ANNE HOOD.

CHAPTER VI.

MORALS—(II) IMPURITY

“When you have a mind to sin, seek for a place where God cannot see you.”—*Eastern Saying.*

WHEN considering the worst form of sin to which a boy can descend, I should like the reader to have in his mind the beautiful picture I tried to give you in Chapter IV. of Youth as it should be. Think of the spring, with its freshness and joy, then of a boy, happy, poetic, strong, full of promise. Think then of the phase of impurity, through which, in some form or another, either of thought, word or deed, most of us pass, as something to be written in brackets, a parenthesis. I do not deny the accusation of impurity in Public Schools, though, judging

by this school, and many others I know, the evidence, I should say, has been greatly magnified. I want to suggest a few of its causes, and how to deal with it, as it strikes me. Again I say the blame is at Britannia's door. Is the present moral tone of England such as would be conducive to a high moral tone in schools? If the reader thinks it is, he might spare himself continuing this chapter. The cinemas, the revues, the novels, the divorce court reports in almost every newspaper—yes, there are many more things I could add, Britannia—consider them, and then answer my first question: Is the moral tone of modern England conducive to a high moral tone in schools? Is a boy to be blamed for going to cinemas provided for him, or reading law court reports with enticing headings? Add to this the general atmosphere of women who wear freak fashions. Is a boy then, after all that, to be blamed for

thinking that the value of purity and impurity are not as the value of gold and dross, but that it matters little which is chosen ?

As many, I think, fall through ignorance as through what they see or hear. So many parents forget or refuse to tell a boy what he ought to know about himself. They may possibly fear that he might think about it too much. A fatal mistake. He has to know all sooner or later. It is surely better that he should be told at the hands of his mother than by a schoolmaster ; a mother or a father has the same flesh and blood. So many, myself included, have been left to find out these sacred, wonderful workings of Nature for themselves. It means that a boy gets hold of half the truth, and tries to build up the other half by puzzling it out, by observation, or, still worse, arguing with another. Thus does he spend more thought than perhaps his parents imagined they had

saved him. I always think at Confirmation is a good time for a boy to be told what he does not know, but only if he is confirmed at about thirteen. Unfortunately the tendency at schools is to confirm at fifteen or sixteen, and to warn a boy against temptations that have already attacked him, and to offer him Spiritual Food to strengthen him in the struggle in which he is *already* being beaten! It is like offering first aid too late.

I refer you to *A Dream of Youth* for a beautifully written chapter on this difficult subject, because there it is set forth in a better way than I can ever hope to do it.

Another cause is the complete reverse of the last one. Many boys are told it all and this added: "Impurity will do you great harm, it will sap your strength of mind and body. One day you hope to have a family; this will ruin all hopes of it. Besides, it

is very wrong, and altogether dangerous." I want to quote *A Dream of Youth* twice. One passage, to do with this idea of trying to frighten boys, is this: "We are told it is dangerous. Well, that alone would drive any self-respecting boy to it. If we funked anything dangerous, we should never look ourselves in the face again. If they would tell us that God has entrusted us with a power to keep for the future, that would make all the difference. *If a boy is trusted he always rises to the trust.*" (The italics are mine.) It goes on to say that if a boy is given the idea that he is fighting a great foe for a great triumph it will work miracles, and that, instead of commonsense warnings, he should have personal sympathy and lofty inspiration. It is just the same with smoking. Boys are always told it will make them ill, and so on. Boys are fully aware that the dangers are very exaggerated, to frighten them. Few

feel sick in real life after their first cigarette. Another way must be found.

Gathering from what I have heard of schools forty years ago, they now show a marked improvement in this direction. Impurity is, as a rule, I think, kept secret, whereas it used to be an open scandal. Of course it makes it harder for those in authority, whether masters or prefects, to fight against it. Still boys are given wrong reasons for keeping pure. On this is my second quotation from *A Dream of Youth*. A boy thinks that "impurity is condemned by authority, and is therefore probably rather fun ; that the people who are obviously pure are generally dreadful prigs . . . that the time when the price . . . will be paid is a long way off," and therefore it is worth while trying it. They little see that instead of being rather brave on a risky adventure they are "doubting in their abject spirit till their Lord is crucified."

I once heard a Good-Friday sermon which I shall never forget, because the idea expressed in it was new to me. Instead of thinking how the Jews of old crucified our Lord, we should take the words, "Verily we are indeed guilty concerning our brother," and see that, as it was for us in A.D. 1919 as much as for those in A.D. 29 that our Lord died, we are to blame every time we sin, as much as they, for the murder. If we were to remember that, when we were tempted, and the suffering of the Passion, we might stop and think.

The fact that immorality exists in Public Schools may be the fault of a good many people, of parents and masters in some cases, as we have seen. In any case the system itself can hardly be blamed. Are our brothers of the "working classes" any better? Is the average shop-assistant or errand-boy any better? Could any system invented by a

Soviet prevent it? For example, at this place it is fairly rare, and seems suddenly to begin to be infectious, without any apparent reason, after a lapse of terms or years. If there are half a dozen cases in the House the chances are that each is from a different cause, not the fault of the school.

I repeat, try and think of it as a phrase to be written in brackets. Do you know that picture of Jesus as a Boy in the carpenter's shop, looking up at a bright light and holding three nails in His hand? Forget for the moment it is Jesus, but think of Him as any boy before he has fallen. Look again, and think of Him as any boy after he has fallen, and then has seen it all in the right light—just as beautiful as before. It is very unfair to let a stain stick to a boy for the remainder of his days. It is no use to be shocked, and to shun him, and never to trust him again. If a boy had some great sorrow,

such as losing a relative, you would not be continually reminding him of it. Then why do it if he has given way to temptation? Is that the way to encourage him? If he once fell when he started off with a good name, how much more is he liable to do so when he starts off with a bad name?

Take the case of a good sprinter on whom you had pinned your faith. You had imagined he was straight, professionally. On one occasion he slips. Should you then never trust him again? Surely it is possible for him to be as good a runner afterwards?

Then how to deal with this. The stick? By all means if it is the punishment for enticing others, or if it is to warn others what is going on. But the stick will never gain the end required on the one concerned. The only punishment is to convince and make him feel thoroughly ashamed of himself, and to give him a chance. Of course on frequent

occurrences he will have to be treated differently; for the sake of the school he must go, for the same reason for which a murderer is hanged—not so much as a punishment, but as an act of justice to the rest of the world.

Think of a choir of beautiful trebles, and remember that if boys fall they

“ . . . may rise on stepping-stones
Of their dead selves to higher things.”

This idea of a parenthesis cannot cover every case, unfortunately. A certain portion of those who fall victims to impurity, either in thought, word or deed, do not merely pass through a phase, but leave school without throwing it off, and, into the bargain, leave their bad influence behind for the generations that follow. The world of life in which they then plunge themselves is so full of it that the chances are they will go from bad to worse, and will make no attempt to “rise on the

stepping-stones of their dead selves to higher things."

This fact cries for a reformation somewhere ; it denounces somebody. Who is that somebody? Not, I think, the Public School "system and tradition" so much as the home and the nation, as we saw in the first chapter. Reformation where? In the relation of State to citizen, of parent to child.

This fact also accentuates the peril of not doing one's utmost, whether in the capacity of chaplain, master, prefect or friend, to stop impurity in schools ; or worse, of not stopping it *in the right way*. To try to stop it in the wrong way is like trying to stop a rushing stream, instead of directing its course to one side ; it will gain in strength and will spread over a wider surface.

CHAPTER VII

PREFECTS

“Not for a moment can man idle sit,
But from him good or evil forces flit.”

JALUDDIN RUMI.

PREFECTS in nearly every case are looked up to and respected by those younger, from the point of view of their very office and authority alone. It is not all, unfortunately, who are also looked up to and respected because of their lives and characters. I do not infer that a prefect should be saintlike, but let him always remember that

“Never for a moment can he idle sit,
But from him good or evil forces flit.”

Unless he lives to himself he is bound to be in the public eye, and to be analysed,

and his example followed by some. He little knows how perhaps some boy, least suspected, may make him the object of a little hero worship, from some cause or other, good or bad.

It is well-nigh impossible, from the nature of the case, for a prefect to live to himself. All the offices of the school, the running of the teams and the various societies and so on, with a few exceptions, centre round and in that little knot of school or house prefects, and this, combined with such duties as taking prep., taking dormitory, and keeping school discipline generally, make those prefects public men.

If this is the case, is it not a great responsibility, and, what is more, a great opportunity? The majority of those who rise to school prefectships or house prefectships have no small influence in the school in which they have risen to the top. The

fact that they are promptly obeyed, and that their word is law, tends to obliterate the self-consciousness of their responsibility and opportunity. Their strength of will and influence, which make the ordinary duties of a prefect comparatively easy, tend to make the duty of remembering their *incidental* responsibility comparatively hard.

What do I mean by incidental responsibility? Technically speaking they are only responsible for good order; in reality for a great deal more. Towards the end of my first term as a prefect there was something of a row concerning an impromptu debate that was held, in which about five of the school prefects were involved. The motion was, "That in the opinion of this House it is better to be a king in hell than a slave in heaven." The chaplain argued that such was illegal, a disgrace to the society, and very bad for the younger boys among the

visitors. I don't think I agreed with that point of view, but at the same time he made a remark to those five prefects to the effect that, as a body, we were not only too exclusive, but were not good examples for the school. I doubt whether any of us admitted then the truth of the statement, but the taunt stung me; and ever since then, though I make no pretence as to my success, I have at any rate had a very high ideal before me. The result of that accusation, though I did not think at the time there was really much truth in it, has been that ever since I have often stopped and thought how much our every action is noticed: our characters, or some view of them, are known to all. Boys who take their lead from us, though they would never own it, copy actions which we do unthinkingly, take in statements that we make without thought. No, they do not

own it. They think the prefects necessary nuisances, most of them, others regard them as officials ; but, to a large extent unconsciously, the tone of a school is the tone of its prefects. I once heard a very bad account of a large Public School situated in the South of England. I asked what the prefects were like. "As bad as the rest," was the reply. It is natural, it is obvious, that if the united influence of the oldest and most influential members of the school is bad, the tone of the school must be bad, and vice versa. In this there lies the great incidental responsibility of each individual prefect, and of the whole bench. Let him remember the tens or hundreds of boys who are at an age when they are more easily impressed and unconsciously influenced than he himself is, bordering on manhood. Let him think that among them are the future leaders of the school, and that their characters are

now being formed; and then let him think how great is the value of the example of the prefects as a whole, and of his own in particular.

What do I mean by incidental opportunity? This differs from the last in being active, as opposed to passive. The fact that a prefect is respected, from the nature of his office, relieves him of the necessity of complete reserve and aloofness incumbent upon the dignity of other seniors. One word of encouragement from a prefect goes a long way with a small boy, in exactly the same way that a word of encouragement from the captain of football or the house captain very often works wonders with one who is keen on his colours—he feels he must live up to the trust, and not disappoint his elders. In administering justice all should be treated equally—yes, and yet in a way all should be treated differently, because all

vary in thought and intent. That is to say, a prefect ought to know sufficient about each member of his house, however insignificant, to be able to do the right thing by each when giving punishment. This knowledge comes by observation and common sense. If two prefects are more or less equal in a fag's estimation, and then one day he has to fag for both of them, he will learn to respect more the one who was civil to him, and will be more willing to do things for him, than for the one who was not. That is a very small thing by itself, and so are all these points, but put together they make a world of difference.

There is no doubt too that prefects learn a great deal from those under them. Just before I was a prefect I used to think all fags "beastly kids," nuisances, in fact. Now I have learned that one never knows what lies behind an untidy exterior and inky collar,

as we saw in Chapter IV.; and one may learn a great deal from them.

If prefects realised all this, I think it would make them put themselves on their honour to do themselves justice. Why, if he is worthy of the love of his parents and relatives, should a prefect not be loved, as well as respected, by those under him? Why, if it is in his power to do so, should he not help them by his words and actions?

If the reader has followed the train of thought I have endeavoured to trace through the first seven chapters, he will realise why I say that the key to the question as to whether a school is moral or immoral is the morale of its prefects.

CHAPTER VIII

THE SYSTEM AND KNOWLEDGE

“Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an accurate man.”—FRANCIS BACON.

To my mind the truest of all the charges brought against the Public School system are those relative to its teaching. One must admit the fact that if science and tennis have taken their place beside classics and cricket, and all schools to-day have modern sides, the system must be credited with some spirit of reform. The chief problem is the classics. There was a time when the only thing taught at schools, beside smatterings of divinity, Euclid and history, was classics. If one reads old school stories, all the work seems to consist of “construes” of Greek and Latin.

Nowadays boys at the most only learn classics until they are about sixteen, and then they specialise. There is a rivalry between those who uphold the old classical régime and the supporters of history and science. I do not advocate the abolition of classics, but the present way in which they are taught. It is no use classical people thinking they must fight for keeping the old monopoly of classics; they must adapt themselves to modern requirements, or go by the board. What is the point of studying the classics at all? The reason given by some hard-headed classical masters to the young who dare to ask such a question, is that "it is excellent training for the mind." In the first place, to use the writings and thoughts of the great classics as mental exercises is an insult to the writers and thinkers concerned, and, in the second place, it is such a very weak reason to give for the

hours spent on learning grammar, because "excellent training for the mind" can be more easily obtained in other directions. The fact is, that hundreds of Third and Fourth Form boys are forced to learn "dead languages," which they hate, for no apparent reason. They do not really learn the languages, but churn up their minds with rules, exceptions and genders.

Surely there must be something wrong in this. If so, what? Here we have got mines of classical thought and philosophy, but it is applied in such a way that boys not only hate it, but fail to understand why they spend as much time at it as at all the other subjects put together.

Most of these boys will have to drop classics, more or less entirely, when they are sixteen, because then they have to learn engineering, or agriculture, or something else technical. All that the majority of them

remember of classics is "mensa" and "amo, amas, amat," or some gender rhyme, plus the memory of many bitter hours. Should that be so? Need it be so? Certainly not. If classical masters know that a boy is going to stop Latin and Greek at sixteen, they should teach in such a way as to lead up to the climax, at sixteen. There is only one way of doing it—by a ruthless change. (This does not, of course, apply to boys who are going on with classics; but only to those who will finish at sixteen.) Cut away the idea that it is necessary to know the ins and outs, the catches and exceptions provided in Kennedy's *Latin Primer*, or to be able to construe a sentence with six pitfalls into Latin from a "North and Hillard" without a mistake. All that only makes the boy hate Latin, instead of loving it. What we want from the classics are their romance, their poetry, their art and history, their philosophy and ideas,

if we are to have anything. What we need, then, is to be able to translate *from* Latin or Greek *to* English easily and quickly, to be able to take up a Vergil or a Homer and to read it for pleasure. How many human boys of sixteen, who have just finished their course of concords, rules, exceptions, gender rhymes, etc., in classics can translate any simple old Latin inscription?

If only classical teachers would first think what is the aim of learning classics—to get hold of classical ideas, and to cultivate lofty tastes, something that a boy will hold on to after he leaves school—and would adapt their teaching to that end, and none other! Mathematics and logic can only be mathematical and logical, but do not, classical scholars, turn the study of classics into a mathematical affair. It is the ideas we want—the *spirit*, not the *letter* of the classics.

If boys knew that was the aim of teaching

classics, and were allowed to pass on quickly, with the aid, if necessary, of good translations, to the great authors, they would get interested—or at least many more of them would. In writing all this I voice my own feelings, and those of many smaller boys. Once they were interested, they would appreciate and pick up some of the treasures (nowadays reserved for Classical Sixth Forms) to be found—ideas, poetry, etc. Then, if necessary, grammar could be taught a little, but probably boys would have picked enough up by all this reading. The same applies to the teaching of modern languages. Burn most of the grammar books, and get boys to read French newspapers, novels and magazines. Then they would really learn something useful to them, should they travel, and the grammar would come naturally, as also the ability to write in French. Personally my French has simply stagnated because all I am given is

grammar (the usual lists of feminines, plurals, and irregular verbs), and then composition *into* French, instead of French newspapers and such like.

There is only one way to teach, and one way to learn, that will ever succeed, and that is, through interest. If a boy who is keen on games finds interest in classics, he will cultivate both, but not if he gets to hate all work.

Have we not a right to be shown the interest of the subjects we study?

Take History, for example. Read *The Living Past*. This is truly a revolution in historical books. It is not, of course, the old-fashioned type of book, divided into reigns and centuries, or the better kind, started by Green, divided into movements. It is history regarded from the point of view of progress. It begins about prehistoric people, and cave-dwellers, and remnants of various civilisations.

Then come more definite divisions—the Eastern Empires; then the great Roman and Greek eras. After them come the mediæval ages, the Renaissance and Reformation, the birth of exploration and of science, and so on. That is true history. It is on so much wider a scale than the conventional history books, and gives one the idea of the whole. I think it would interest many more, because it includes the progress of science, and invention, and learning, and the progress of social conditions. All history and science are essentially real life, in a greater way than classics, and as opposed to mathematics. Real life is interesting. Except for those who are going to specialise in history, national and European, I advocate a change similar to the one to do with classics. For instance, teach a boy of Erasmus and Sir Isaac Newton before you teach him of Henry VIII.'s wives, and of local events like the Great Fire.

Teach the specialist and non-specialist what will give him as a citizen a good idea of the outline of progress, and an idea as to the extent to which social conditions have so far been bettered, and as to what is still left for improvement. To-day the average man remembers at school learning "William I—1066," and that, on the whole, it was fairly interesting.

One master here used to make his form jot down the chief events of each day as depicted in *The Times*. That is a true way of making the meaning of history clear.

The same principle may be applied to English. Do not teach analysis, parsing and grammar to such an extent as to prejudice a boy against all English in the future. Dislikes are hard to move. If only those who taught tried to instil some interest in a boy's work, half the failures would be stopped. Essay-writing is about the most

important of all curriculum subjects, because it makes some think who are unaccustomed to do so, and helps to expand the ideas of others who already think. School education should open up the whole of one's mind so as to be ready to receive and develop ideas in after-life, rather than be a period of a few years in which to cram in all the scraps of knowledge one will need to scrape through life.

If we take Divinity, we find here, again, it should be a much broader subject. Take for one term's work the whole Bible together, and trace some ideas right through it, so as to form some connected idea of the whole and the progress of thought and ideas. What matters to the average person the names of the Kings of Israel?

Divinity, of all subjects, should not be treated too much like an ordinary school subject. For older boys a certain amount of Bible criticism may be good, but there is one

thing that always used to annoy me about Greek Testament. One period would be spent on three verses, at the end of which the master would say, "Now you see why St. Paul used the aorist there, and not the perfect or any other tense." It seemed like trying to count the pebbles on the beach. This, again, does not apply to the specialist.

I always think a master can teach as much out of school as in, if he interests his form. They will, if he is friendly, ask him many questions should they get talking in the study.

Why is it that art is not taught in the school curriculum? I believe nearly every girl learns the piano, but men have always made the greatest musicians, especially creative ones, and more especially organists. At school such things as Latin grammar and trigonometry are compulsory to most, yet music is treated as an extra, to be done out of school, so too drawing and painting. The

argument brought up is that you should not force art on any one. I reply to this, that the same can be said of classics or science or cricket, and that were artistic subjects form subjects, many more would get interested and thence capable, whereas arrangements could be made for those obviously inartistic. In time these latter gentlemen would be the exceptions and not the rule.

It is easy to write schemes, you may say, especially when one is inexperienced. If you have read this chapter, you will see that I have voiced no airy, Utopian schemes, but simply advocated that the present system of teaching classics, languages, history, and art should be modified, and a broader outlook given to boys on all subjects, and more interest instilled. I do not think the present system is superannuated or effete, but merely like a watch that will not go because it needs winding.

CHAPTER IX

RELIGION—(I) FAITH

“The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God.”

Psalms.

As regards religion in Public Schools, there is more often a general non-religious feeling than an actual irreligious one, and the fault lies in the way religion is applied. Children are brought up with certain conventional beliefs, such as heaven being a kind of land, material, where all are dressed in white and where the good sing hymns all day long in the shade. Hell is a fire where “devils” dwell, and where the wicked will be tortured. This, of course, being merely Eastern allegory, has to be discarded sooner or later.

To my mind the crucial age is when a boy

begins to discover for himself that he has been told only fairy tales up to now, and all that the hymns tell him about heaven and hell is merely the strange way the Jews had of describing things. The Bible, he is told by some, is not meant to be taken literally. The Creation was not a seven-day miracle, but consisted of an evolution lasting for centuries.

Then, as he begins to think a little more about these matters, he gets puzzled. Some people still tell him to believe the Bible as it stands, regardless of the fact that it contains allegories, some worn-out philosophy, analogy, myths, legends, and traditions, besides its true philosophy, history and prophecy. A clergyman preaching in our chapel a little while back said, "Boys, there is a lot of what is called Higher Criticism in the world to-day, which tries to explain away the Bible. I have always found it most helpful to believe

all the Book, as it stands, word for word, as being inspired of God; and I hope you will do the same."

That kind of sermon is foolish and dangerous. The result is this: Many boys are doubting. Many people, they think, including no less personages than university Professors of Science and great writers, do not believe either in the Bible or in Christianity. The boy begins to wonder: Is it all a great hoax to keep me straight? Can I not keep straight without that? Is not religion old-fashioned? Do not scientists know how the world was made? Is not man descended from the ape? On the top of that he hears a sermon which makes him think that he has to believe in the Bible simply because he is told to. If he dares ask any one to prove the Bible, he is silenced with the answer that it is wicked to harbour doubts. Then he is given some trite anecdotes of wicked or uncivilised men

who by chance finding of a Bible became good. Yet, though he is at the age when he thinks much, and learns more than at any other time, he is treated as a child that must not ask "why?" He feels he has a right to know why it is true, what he is told about the Bible—that Book which is printed always in small type, on thin paper, in narrow columns, divided up into little bits, the most uninviting of any printed book in the world. (If only it were printed in such a way that any ordinary man could take it up and read it off as any other book, what a wonderful difference it would make!) He is not told why; he is simply bidden to stop his ears to any criticism. He then gets hold of verses in the Bible that obviously are not inspired as they stand, such as a passage in Kings which contradicts one in Chronicles, and he says, "I am told to take this word for word; this is the result!" After

a little more puzzling he decides that he will be an agnostic. He thinks he will try it. He will feel more independent, being no longer bound to a Book which apparently must be taken without question. It is so like the Roman Church, which prohibits its sons from asking that any doctrine should be proved. They must take it on trust at the hands of her uneducated priests that it is true. If a man doubts, he is excommunicated. Should that be so? Why cannot a boy be taught the Gospel story first, with reference to the contemporary historians who corroborate the New Testament? Deal with boys as you would with atheists or agnostics. Start from the very beginning. Do not treat them all as though, being boys, they naturally believe in the Bible and in Christianity, because many do not, especially those who have read a lot of science, or, still worse, those who are acquainted with any psychic

cults. Tell them the honest truth about the Truth. Tell them what is historical fact, and what is not. Then go on to trace how the Church has become what she is to-day. Especially at Confirmation time let a boy have explained to him ecclesiastical fundamentals such as baptism and the ministry. Of the Old Testament, treat the various parts as they should be treated. Of such books as Genesis, let a boy understand, that he may believe as much of it as he wills; that if he believes the New Testament, grace will come to him to help him in his doubts concerning the Old Testament.

Let him be given the "two folds of the toga," and let him choose, "To believe or not to believe." If you tell a boy he cannot live straight without the Bible, and he knows he can, will that convince him? Tell him that there is the true heaven to be gained through Christianity, even perfect happiness and

friendship; that without it, is the true hell, even remorse and loneliness.

In *Loose Ends* the hero comes up against a very difficult problem. Why is it, he asked himself, that, if God is Omnipotent and Omniscient, and means and knows that in the end evil will be destroyed, He should, in the first place, go through the trouble of thinking out the details of the life and death of a Saviour, and, in the second place, allow us to fall, when the whole time He could destroy evil in a moment? A master tried to answer the question in this way: Do not think of God as Omnipotent, but think of Him as still fighting evil, in that His creatures will sin, and that we should for our own sakes, and in gratitude to Him, help Him to fight evil by ourselves fighting it.

Such problems do perplex us all when we get to the age when childhood's ideas are discarded, and we are endeavouring to find

others to put in their place. Atheists and followers of psychic cults are doing their best to prevent us, while our own religious teachers merely tell us to believe, and do not explain why Christianity is true. If a boy of fifteen had two days, say, with some very learned theosophists, do you not suppose he could be convinced? All the more shame then that he is not more often convinced by Christians in years.

This leads us to another consideration. There is a great deal of such cults as Theosophy, Christian Science, and Spiritualism rampant in the world. A boy is generally warned against them. He is told never to read any of their works. Now any boy of sense can see that if people with great names, like Lodge and Conan Doyle, believe in these things, there must be something in them. Moreover, their books are generally very interesting, and have certain elements of truth in

them. He feels that if his Christian teachers will still go on the tack that he must believe, because he ought to be able to see which is the truth, he will only naturally be led away by those who explain themselves clearly.

Another thing, the loss of a near relative tends to make a boy more interested in such things as the Resurrection and life after death. The average Christian preacher, he notices, rarely preaches any simple, straightforward sermon on the greatest thing a human wants to know. Either he preaches on an Old Testament saint, or else on the Resurrection in a veiled way. The boy notices that the Christian preacher sticks to the old allegorical heaven and hell, which are not good enough even for the brains of fifteen and sixteen. On the other hand, he notices that Spiritualists profess to know all kinds of details about the life to come, and even to be able to communicate with the dead ; they are at least reasonable.

I speak partly from personal experience, and partly from what I have gathered from those with whom I have ever talked on higher things. To sum up what I think (I am open to criticism) to be the cause of the lack of religious *enthusiasm* in Public Schools; it is the way in which a boy is preached to, and the comparison between Christian sermons and non-Christian books and articles. A boy likes to be definite. No one can be very definite about the life to come, but at least a boy need not be given pictures of it which he knows are only allegorical, and which are unattractive to a boy's nature, and which he does not trust.

Every boy should have explained to him what such things as Spiritualism are, and if untrue, why they are so. Give him a reasonable, hopeful picture of the life to come. No boy wants to sing hymns all day; he would rather fight with devils. Dismiss that kind of idea. Above all, discard the old defence

the Roman Church uses, the "Gospel of Ignorance." Tell a boy all about the Bible, about Christianity, Spiritualism and the rest of them, reason with him, and let him choose; and he ought to choose Christianity. This may seem to be so much nonsense, but it is what I feel to be the cause of the lack of religion here. Give a boy a reasonable and a manly picture of a reasonable and a manly faith, and he will no longer regard Christianity as old-fashioned, effeminate or unreasonable.

CHAPTER X

RELIGION (II)—PRACTICE

“God who created me
Nimble and light of limb,
In three elements free—
To run, to ride, to swim :
Not when the sense is dim,
But now, from the heart of joy,
I would remember Him :
Take the thanks of a boy.”

H. C. BEECHING.

WE have already discussed morality apart from religion. A moral man need not necessarily be a Christian. We have also considered how it is possible to teach faith in a school. But granted a school is moral, and that it believes, all has not yet been done. Faith has to be put into practice.

At school all go to chapel every day. This, combined with the fact that most Public Schools

possess beautiful chapels, and that as buildings, at all events, they are treasured by those who worship there, is a great advantage for the start, yet there has been a failure somewhere. Schools are not, for the most part, imbued with any active religious fervour, to say the least of it. The first thing to realise is the nature of religion. I think the Puritan view of religion as a duty is dangerous. Every boy, it is sometimes argued, surely can spare an hour every Sunday morning for his Maker—it is his duty. We ought rather to get away from the point of view of time. It is quality, not quantity, that is required. Now, in our school chapel on a Sunday are boys ranging in age from seven to thirteen on one side, and from thirteen to nineteen on the other. In matter of time we must not take the pace of the strongest. Is an hour and a quarter's service, which becomes tedious to some, and which makes others wish they were elsewhere,

much good? Surely the extra twenty minutes spoils the whole service, and does away with its value both to God and to us. If by making the service forty to fifty minutes long, instead of seventy-five, we are getting more and giving more, would it not be wise to shorten it?

Chapel services on Sunday seem very long; and if a shorter one will bring with it more attention, more interest, and therefore better praise and prayer, why do we not have it?

In no way should it be made into a children's service. This will be resented. The best way to shorten a service by twenty minutes is what is done in most churches where there is a Communion Service to follow, namely, by leaving out the last collects; and a sermon of fifteen instead of the usual twenty-five minutes would ensure more attention and reap better results.

In preaching let a school chapel have sermons on simple fundamental facts like the Atone-

ment and the Resurrection, before going on to more delicate subjects. Above all, they should be preached as to reasonable men. In the preceding chapter I suggested a great deal about preaching which need not be repeated here. The chief thing, we saw, to fight is anti-Christian literature, which finds its way into schools as much as anywhere else, and which nourishes doubts of those who are trying to think out religion for themselves. One sentence I will repeat: Give a boy a reasonable and a manly picture of a reasonable and a manly faith, and he will no longer regard Christianity as old-fashioned, effeminate or unreasonable.

There is a danger in the opposite extreme. Here there is a small "sect," whose members have been recruited from all classes in the school, who are dangerous, because their faith is making them fanatics. Their ideas are borrowed from a certain missionary band in

Japan, and tend to produce self-righteousness. At one time they even thought of trying to “instil more fire” into the chaplain! One boy, when he gave this up, received a letter from a lady who was a patroness of these views, in which she said: “Can it be true that you have listened to the hiss of the serpent? Do come back to the Lord. I am in agony of prayer for you.” The so-called “hiss of the serpent” was the friend to whom I have dedicated this book — one of the straightest, both spiritually and in the athletic world—and myself. That kind of thing is obviously absurd. The boy in question hopes one day to be ordained, and in no wise had “gone away from the Lord,” as they would put it. That kind of thing is very difficult to deal with. Professedly non-religious people laugh at them. They rather like feeling martyrs, but, for my part, I have reasoned, with some success, with a few of

them. The result is that I am called "the hiss of the serpent"! It is a better sign in a school than such things as were said of the other school quoted in Chapter VII., but it is not a manly form of Christianity, and almost does more harm than good.

Beauty is a great thing in leading boys to love religion. Beauty need not necessarily mean elaborate adornment or ritual; a chapel can be made with simple beauty or elaborate beauty. Our chapel has its simple beauty.

Prayers in the evening are held in Hall, and I doubt if a tenth really feel at prayer. The surroundings are unsympathetic; yet most learn to love their chapel.

Music should as a rule be congregational, though a much higher standard can be lived up to than by an ordinary parish congregation. Short anthems are always appreciated, especially as a change, and will touch some one or other that maybe has not been touched before. The effect of an anthem will be ruined if the

congregation is made to stand. As a vicar I heard once put it, "The anthem is a sermon in music, therefore the congregation will sit to listen to it." There is more chance of one getting some good out of an anthem if one can feel oblivious to everything else, which is difficult when standing. Sacred recitals and organ recitals also help.

Voluntary Preparation Services before celebrations of the Holy Communion are found helpful by some. I doubt if some communicants really believe what they profess by their act of coming: some come to keep up a good appearance. If a school chaplain can instil a love of the Sacrament in a boy's heart, it will assuredly do more good even than persuading him to read some portion of the Bible every day, because this latter, so good in theory, tends to become mere habit in practice, though, of course, I do not say anything against it; only get boys to love and feel the need of Communion.

Here, again, a great deal depends on the tone of the prefects. If they are fairly good Christians they give the lead, and you may be sure that being a Christian will not be called "not the thing to be"; whereas if they are irreligious or indifferent, it may be harder for those younger to be "religious."

The real key to the question is the personality of the chaplain himself. If he is liked, and is thought manly (boys do not like effeminate or "parsonic" chaplains), and combines a happy and a "sporting" life with a religious tone, the school can see then religion need not be dull, in fact it is the very opposite, it creates happiness.

If he is in any way rather looked down upon, there is little hope that the majority of the school will be religious. The chaplain will probably do more good out of school and out of chapel than in. If he can get boys to discuss and argue religious things, and to reason things out, and if he tells them about

other Christian bodies and other religious systems, he will get them interested, which, as we saw in regard to work in a previous chapter, is the only way to succeed.

Both the extreme Roman Catholic and the extreme Puritan lay stress on duty and the punishment of not doing that duty in regard to religion. What we want is interest in, knowledge about, and love of religion. That is what we need; whether we get it or not depends on the way chapel services are taken, and the Bible is taught.

Many of the hymns we sing are worse than useless. Many are bad poetry and misdirected sentiment, especially in regard to the Atonement, and more especially the future Life. Here we use a book which is more or less free from this indictment, *The Public School Hymn Book*.

One last word on the subject of practical religion. What should God be to a boy? It sounds a strange question, but it is an im-

portant one. Not, I think, a "god," in the sense, that is to say, that He is the Jehovah of the Jews, or the Allah of the Mohammedans. Not, I think, the God of the old Puritans, a narrow-minded Being, almost as terrible as Jehovah or Allah, who exacts duties, if not sacrifice. Nor, again, should He be a King, if it makes Him far off, hard to approach or awful. But simply a perfect human Friend; and *perfect* human means divine. A boy loves friendship; he feels the need of it and the help of it.

I came across a beautiful passage quoted from Beaconsfield the other day about school-boy friendship. At first I thought it rather exaggerated, in fact "soft." On second thoughts I think it is wonderfully true, if one can put aside for a moment the English boy's shyness for such subjects. I quote it at length: "At school friendship is a passion. It entrances the being; it tears the soul. All loves of after-life can never bring its rapture

or its wretchedness; no bliss so absorbing, no pangs of jealousy or despair so crushing and so keen! What tenderness and what devotion; what illimitable confidence, infinite revelations of inmost thought; what ecstatic present and romantic future; what bitter estrangements and what melting reconciliations; what scenes of wild recriminations, passionate correspondence; what insane sensitiveness, and what frantic sensibility; what earthquakes of the heart and whirlwinds of the soul are confined in that simple phrase, a schoolboy's friendship!"

That is the spirit one wants to instil into our conception of Jesus as a Friend. Most of us, when talking to old ladies, avoid topics such as House matches, motor-bicycles or chemistry, because we know they are of a later age. Unfortunately we treat God like this. (The exceptions are those who pray for victory at a match, and are angry with God if they do not get it, and so on.) God is not a Friend

who only thinks of our "religious side." On the contrary, we should find it a help and encouragement if we looked upon Him as a keen Friend, interested alike in our games, or work, or stamp-collecting. He is interested in all these, because if we thus treat our life, our life and religion become one and the same thing. In our mind we must not have a State and a Church separated; but a State-Church or Church-State as it were. Despair, loneliness, misery, fear are qualities which many suppose are only felt by men and women, more especially those in novels; but in reality they are more keenly felt at school, because troubles assume such large proportions in immature eyes. Therefore it will come the more natural to a boy to develop this idea of friendship, which we so often need, and which we can never dispense with, if he is put on the right paths. By this the problem of religion will be solved, and by this the evils of immorality will be remedied.



EPILOGUE

IN conclusion I must say that I have done my best to put before you a fair view of Public School life, socially and religiously, and trust that in criticism you will consider the spirit of the book rather than the letter. The letter of the book is not finished English, and also it is taken from one school; the spirit of the book applies, I hope, to most schools. I have tried to show you that, of the attacks made on Public Schools, that of bullying new boys is exaggerated; that of worshipping the "tin god of Athleticism" untrue; that of immorality misjudged, and also that the blame is largely elsewhere; that of failing to teach due to lack of ability to instil interest and lack of a useful course in classics; that of

irreligion due to failure to regard what a boy needs, and to forgetting the existence of other religions, which are fighting for perverts. Further I have tried to show you what a glorious, romantic LIFE the "Public School system" really is; and what a lot depends on the prefects. I trust that I have not entirely failed in all those endeavours.

This book, I hope, will act as an introduction to better and larger works. It makes no pretence of being exhaustive on the subject, though it has tried to touch on most points.

I have said little about masters, because I feel I am not in the position to criticise them much, before I have myself left this college.

The time will come when there will be a Labour Government. They intend, I believe, to make sweeping changes in the Public Schools. If by then we have had internal reforms we shall prove ourselves worthy of second thought on their part; and we shall be

better able to defend our ancient heritage. This lies in the hands of masters and of college councils. These latter seem very apt to be counter-reformers and very conservative men, who hate adapting themselves to modern requirements. Unless they see the peril in which, as a whole, the Public Schools are placed, and act accordingly, we shall be lost.

Many years ago some admirals sat in solemn conclave to settle an important question: Should ironclads take the place of the old wooden ships? After a long and serious discussion they decided in the negative! This is rather the picture of a good many men who are in the same position to schools as those admirals were to the Navy. When we progress, old forms either adapt themselves or go under. That is the alternative before the schools, either they adapt themselves to the present-day requirements, or they will go under.

My thanks are due to him who has kindly written a preface to this little book; also to a friend who read through my ill-written manuscript, and to my prompt Stepney typist.

I should like to condole with those to whom this book is dedicated without their consideration.

Further, I am indebted to many poets and writers, whom I have quoted, with or without their permission.

THE END

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