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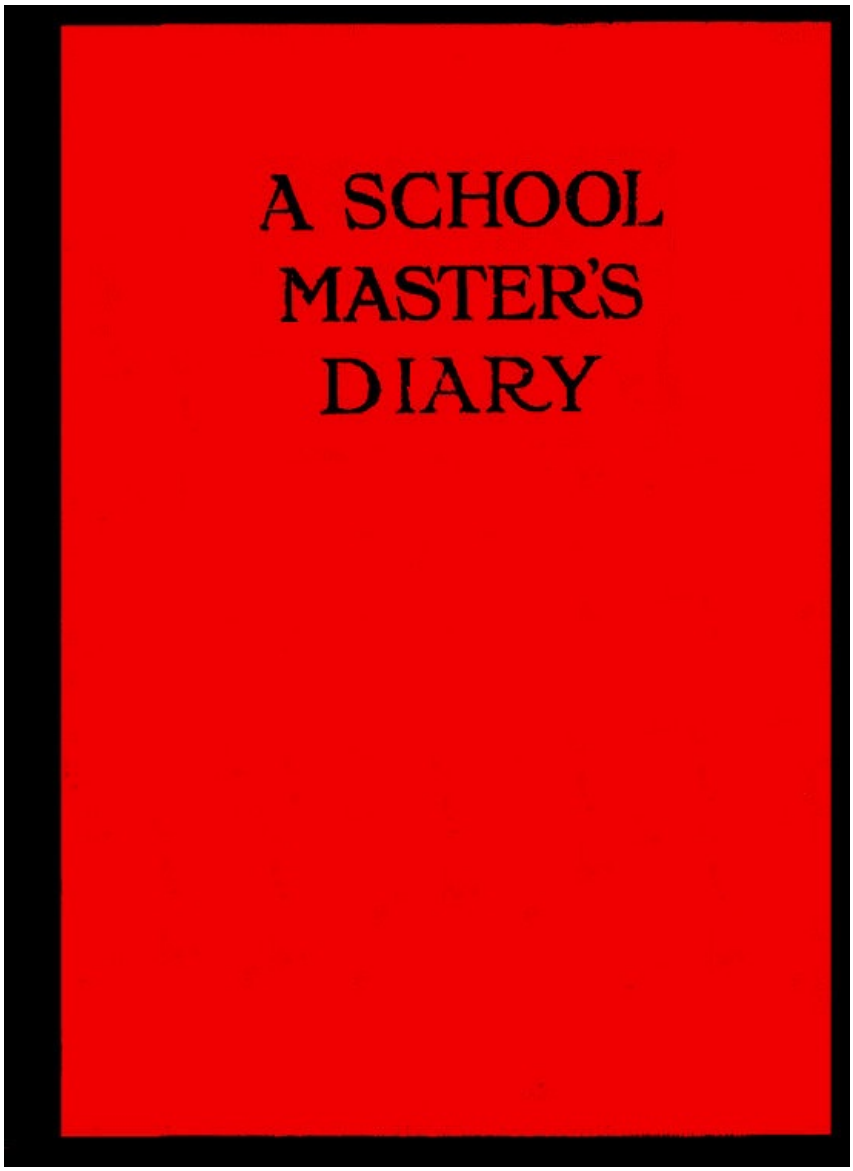

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A SCHOOLMASTER'S DIARY

"*The man who looks at this view, for the first time, with the naked eye, sees far more of it than the man who looks at it for the hundredth time through smoked glasses. Experience is the smoke on the glasses; it's the curse of our profession. We are all much more efficient when we're young than we ever are afterwards. Give me the young and inexperienced man.*"—"The Lanchester Tradition."

A SCHOOLMASTER'S DIARY

BEING EXTRACTS FROM THE JOURNAL OF PATRICK TRAHERNE, M.A., SOMETIME ASSISTANT MASTER AT RADCHESTER AND MARLTON

SELECTED AND EDITED BY

S. P. B. MAIS

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TO

ELSPETH TRAHERNE

WITHOUT WHOSE VALUABLE HELP I SHOULD
HAVE BEEN TOTALLY AT A LOSS WHAT TO
INCLUDE AND WHAT TO OMIT

IN MEMORY OF

PATRICK

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[9]

INTRODUCTORY MEMOIR

PATRICK TRAHERNE, only son of the Rev. Thomas Traherne of North Darley Vicarage, Derbyshire, was born on July 14, 1885. He was educated at Rugby and New College, Oxford, and immediately upon leaving the University he became a Public School master.

I well remember my first meeting with him. It was during my first term at Oxford. I had been reading "Centuries of Meditations" and in particular this passage, which I cannot refrain from quoting, because to it I owe my friendship with Patrick:

> "Your enjoyment of the world is never right till every morning you wake in Heaven; see yourself in your Father's Palace: and look upon the skies, the earth, and the air, as Celestial Joys; you never enjoy the world aright till the sea itself floweth in your veins, till you are clothed with the heavens and crowned with the stars: and perceive yourself to be the sole heir of the whole world, and more than so, because men are in it who are every one sole heirs as well as you. Till you can sing and rejoice and delight in God as misers do in gold, and kings in sceptres, you never enjoy the world. Till your spirit filleth the whole world and the stars are your jewels: till you are as familiar with the ways of God in all ages as with your walk and table: till you love men so as to desire their happiness with a thirst equal to the zeal of your own, you never enjoy the world. You never enjoy the world aright, till you so love the beauty of enjoying it that you are [10] covetous and earnest to persuade others to enjoy it. There is so much blindness and ingratitude and damned folly in it. The world is a mirror of infinite Beauty, yet no man sees it. It is a Temple of Majesty, yet no man regards it. It is the paradise of God, the place of Angels and the Gate of Heaven."

I remember rushing, book in hand, late at night to Stapleton's rooms (Stapleton was a school-friend of mine, who had come up with me that term) and reading it to him as one of the finest things I had ever chanced upon. After I had finished I noticed that he was not alone; sitting in a far corner, in the depths of a 'Varsity chair, I now saw a fair-haired, fresh-faced undergraduate whom I had not up till that moment met. He broke in upon my enthusiastic discovery. "I am glad you like that," he began. "It is not very well known yet. The author of that book, Thomas Traherne, was an ancestor of mine: my name is Traherne too."

Somehow from that evening I have always associated Patrick with that glowing passage. We became fast friends and for the four years we were at Oxford, Stapleton, Traherne and I spent all our spare time together. We were known, for some obscure reason, as "The Three Musketeers."

We were none of us brilliant scholars, but we were deeply interested in the problems of life: we read a good deal in a desultory sort of way, but our main occupation was athletics. We all played football, tennis, hockey, and cricket, and managed to put in some time with the Beagles and on the track. On Sundays we used to roam far and wide over the country round Oxford: we were all lovers of Nature and (I venture to think) in every way quite ordinary undergraduates. Stapleton was taking orders, while Traherne and I meant to be schoolmasters. We were jovial and [11] irresponsible in those days and certainly did not take ourselves seriously. We were not in the habit of getting drunk, but we were certainly not less rowdy than the majority of the men of our time: we enjoyed life to the full. In the "vacs" we would stay with one another in London in order to go the round of the theatres, or we would set out on walking tours through Wales or Devonshire.

I met Traherne's people a good deal. They were quite delightful, simple-minded folk, who took life as it came and always managed to see the comic side of everything. I know no house where peals upon peals of laughter were so frequent as in that vicarage of North Darley. Our four years at Oxford passed all too quickly. The other two managed to get a second class in their finals, I just scraped a third. We then separated, swearing however that nothing should really separate us. We wrote frequently and at great length to one another and tried to meet whenever possible. Gradually, however, we made new friends and were seized with different interests and somehow we became less regular in our correspondence and our meetings. It was not that we had ceased to care for each other, still less that "out of sight" was "out of mind"—I have never loved any man as I loved Traherne, but nevertheless we got out of touch.

I settled down quite happily to my job at Winchborough and became the stereotyped sort of plodding schoolmaster, while Stapleton passed from one curacy to another and finally had the good fortune to secure a living near London. So time went on. Then I began to notice Traherne's name in the papers. He had entered on his career as a writer. He was always indefatigable, though how he found time both to teach and to write I don't know. First of all he edited school books, then he wrote articles for the educational papers; soon I saw his name attached to critical papers in the magazines and reviews: he wrote middle-page articles for the daily press and short [12] stories. Later I saw the announcement of a book by him, closely followed by another and then a third.

Naturally all this interested me a good deal. If he would not write to me I still could follow his career through his books.

I must say, however, that I was slightly startled at the attitude he adopted in his writings. When I knew him he was the cheeriest and most modest of men. From his writings the casual reader would imagine him to be a red-hot fire-brand, launching out against all the accepted codes by

which we live. His method was that of "cock-shying" at a lot of "Aunt Sallies." He denounced everything, religion as at present practised, education, root and branch, the current codes of morality, the laws, politics—everything. There was a frightful acerbity in his language. One could detect the same boyish ardour which was the finest thing about him if one looked carefully and read between the lines, but his judgments were amazingly ill-considered. He seemed to lose all control of himself when he took up his pen. I wrote to remonstrate but he rarely replied, and when he did he would alternately change from a tone of humble apology to one of insolent contempt. It was easy to see that he was suffering from some appalling malady, a restlessness which threatened to destroy all the good that he was so anxious to do. At last the inevitable climax came: in a piteous letter he wrote to tell me that after eight years he had been ignominiously turned out, and that his career as a schoolmaster was at an end. From the language he used I feared lest he might be contemplating suicide, but his wife (who is one of the most charming women I have ever met and to whom he owes more than even he will ever realize) kept him from that.

On the other hand, there seemed to be considerable danger of his losing his reason. I went down [13]
to see him: I never saw a man so altered: he was completely broken. I sat up with him all through one night while he told me the whole story. It appears that he created enemies through his tactlessness wherever he went. Boys on the whole I should say, from what he said, understood him more or less, his peers not at all. He was always discontented with the average, always demanding an instant millennium. The war crushed him, the wretched estate of the poorer classes crushed him, the lack of intelligence among the country people with whom he lived crushed him, his colleagues' complacence that "all was for the best in the best of all possible worlds" crushed him. Poor devil, he must have suffered frightfully. He seemed abnormally sensitive. The least thing set him off: he always suspected that he had no sympathizers: he consistently managed to alienate those who really were trying their best to help him.

All through that night on which he poured out his soul to me I saw exactly how impossible it was for him to work in conjunction with any ordinary body of schoolmasters. What they denounced as disloyalty was with him honesty; he was so ferociously energetic that he could never rest: he must have his windmill to tilt against. There was no doubt that he was finding his break with Public School life very real tragedy. He was incapable of looking forward to anything else. I did my best to console him, to show him that life was only just beginning for him: but he swept away all the crumbs of consolation I produced and only just before I was leaving did he suggest any way in which I could help him. "I have besmirched my reputation," he said mournfully. "I can't clear myself. Will you try?"

"Of course I will, but how?" I replied.

"Take these," he said, suddenly producing five stout volumes. "Here is my diary for the last eight [14]
years. Go through it and select such passages as you think fit and show the world exactly what manner of man I was: 'Speak of me as I am: nothing extenuate, nor set down aught in malice; then must you speak of one that loved not wisely but too well,' just the bare truth. Justice is what I want, not charity."

It was the least I could do ... and now for some months I have been engaged upon this strange task. Even now I am afraid I have failed. These diaries were so incoherent, so much prominence was given to irrelevant matter, so little to the thousand things I wanted to know, but I have kept my promise, and this book is the result. I wish he could have lived to see it in the hands of the public who so misjudged him.

It is easy to see the tenets which Traherne held most dear: he looked upon education as the saving grace of a nation or an individual. The object of education with him was to develop imagination and sympathy, so that all men in the future should realize the value of Truth and Beauty, and be tolerant of other men's opinions. To this end he endeavoured to make his boys realize the importance of making the most of their brains: he rated the intellect highest of all.

He laid it down as a fundamental principle that each boy should be encouraged to be strongly individual and I don't think he quite realized the dangers which individualism brings in its wake. He hated tradition unless it could be proved that it served some useful purpose: he was averse from all forms of ceremonial. Consequently he set his face against the cult of "Bloodism." He does not seem in his diary at any rate to have dwelt on the humorous side of his colleagues: there is very little description of the vagaries of different masters, which I have found so extraordinarily [15]
amusing among my own acquaintances in usherdom.

He laid immense stress on the teaching of English and encouraged his boys to read omnivorously; by this means alone, he said, could they be expected to learn.

Where he failed most of all was in his inability to suffer fools gladly: he hated "sloppy" work either in colleague or boy; if he had only kept his hatred to himself, it might have been all right, but he was too honest, too impetuous. He would blurt out his natural feelings everywhere and expect everybody to see his point of view at once. Considering all things his colleagues were in some ways extremely long-suffering, for he was so sensitive that out of sheer nervousness and ineffectual anger he would show his worst side and hide his better nature. He must have seemed to those who only knew him superficially to be one mass of contradictions.

Take, for instance, his reading. He seems to have read everything of any note that appeared during these eight years, but his judgments on current writers are ludicrous: he hails any new-comer as a great genius, and yet at the same time he had a nice and exact taste in English literature and in talking could tell you just the strong and weak points of all big writers. In his

written criticism he seems to have no standards at all. As he himself says, he was like a motor-car without brakes. His motor-power was very high, but he had no control over it: consequently he was always running away with himself and finishing up with incredible smashes whenever he started out on a literary or educational excursion.

I have been going through his letters to me of late, but I have not found any clue in them to the mania which has led to his downfall. In the diary, on the other hand, he lets himself go; the constant friction, the unrealized ideals find expression: on the surface, in his letters to his [16] friends, he was charmingly lighthearted and humorous. One would never suspect the *sæva indignatio* which was ultimately to be his undoing, in anything but his published works.

I never met a man who was so different in his person from what you would expect after reading his books. To meet him at a dinner-party in London, to accompany him on a walking-tour, to play games with him, you would never guess that he had a care in the world. He seemed to enjoy life much in the same way as his great ancestor, the mystic, did. He was very devout, it is true, but his Christianity was of the optimistic Chestertonian sort, a kind of prizefighter's epicureanism, "Eat, drink, and be merry, but for the Lord's sake be careful not to get flabby." But suddenly, not so much in the holidays as in term time, some luckless creature would quite innocently introduce the topics of Socialism, Liberty, Religion, Morals, or Education, and at once Patrick would flush scarlet, stamp up and down his rooms and call down fire from Heaven on every existing institution. I never came across such an iconoclast. We who knew him understood that his frenzy was simply the burning ardour of the reformer who refuses to compromise: he was convinced that certain ideals were right and could not understand why the rest of mankind did not immediately forsake their old gods when he propagated his gospel of the new ones. Because he attempted to treat the boys with whom he came into contact as his intellectual equals, and never snubbed them, never punished or rewarded them, he expected every other master to employ the same methods.

"Show 'em," he would say, "that they've jolly well got to work if they want to get anything out of life; tell 'em that if they work to please a master, to avoid the cane, to secure a trumpery prize, or for any other reason than that work is a good thing in itself, they are committing an immoral and [17] indecent act, and then there's just a chance that the intellect may grow. Not one boy in five hundred even uses ten per cent. of his brain-cells: the average man or boy has no idea of what real work means."

He kept a most valuable notebook in which he jotted down any views that commended themselves to him out of all the books on education that appeared.

I loved Patrick more than any friend I have ever had. I am a poor counsel for the defence for that very reason. I am more likely to do harm to his cause than good by lauding him in this way: my duty is to let his diary tell its own tale. It is a document over which I would fain dwell at great length and explain to you, but that would only serve to show that I feared your verdict. I send it out to the world with much trepidation lest I should even now have so hacked and curtailed it that it fails to show Traherne in his true character, but I have this at least to comfort me. There will be but few of those who already belong to the noblest profession in the world or who are shortly to join it who will not derive help from the light it sheds on a most difficult task.

The schoolmaster of the new age needs all the assistance he can get. Patrick Traherne destroyed himself in discovering what he here gives to the world, but the results of his discoveries may be more far-reaching than he knew.

He was one of those who are never happy unless they are fighting; the end once attained he would be lost. It may well be that the Stevensonian maxim which was always so much in his mind carried him through even at his last moments (he was killed in the battle of Cambrai, December 3, 1917), "After all to travel hopefully is a better thing than to arrive." His failure may be a better [18] augury than success would have been, for in the end of all, have not the world's failures been most frequently the world's redeemers?

I would add further that I cannot bring myself to accede to all his dicta. Had he been permitted to live, experience would have surely shown him that his youthful judgments are not infrequently grossly unfair; but I maintain that his theories are not necessarily less interesting because they are, in many cases, erroneous.

S. P. B. M.

The names both of people and places mentioned in this book are entirely fictitious. Patrick Traherne did not portray any specific Public School or living person in his diary.

THE BEGINNING (1909). P. T. quoting William Blake:

I will not cease from mental fight
Nor shall my sword sleep in my hand
Till we have built Jerusalem
In England's green and pleasant land.

THE END (1917). P. T. quoting T. W. H. Crosland:

If I should ever be in England's thought
After I die,
Say, "There were many things he might have bought
And did not buy.

"Unhonoured by his fellows he grew old
And trod the path to hell,
But there were many things he might have sold
And did not sell."

I

September 20, 1909

It is very strange and frightening: all the boys seem to me to be grown men and I, a veritable minnow in a sea of Tritons, but I suppose really they are quite bovine and regard me much as cows regard human beings—as their natural master. I wonder! I confess I am in a panic about my ability to keep order. On several nights in the "vac" I had nightmares of classes of unruly boys refusing to obey me, shouting, throwing things about and generally making nuisances of themselves and a fool of me.

My first impressions of Radchester are not very comforting. It is like coming to a desert island to be pitchforked out at a wayside station miles from anywhere, with only the sea to the east, and flat dike-lands to the west, north, and south. There are no houses within sight. Certainly there is nothing to distract one's attention from one's duty: outside the lodge gates all is barren.

The first thing for me to do is to furnish my rooms. Alas, where am I to procure the means to do this?

At present in my sitting-room there is nothing but a frayed carpet, a few rickety chairs, a table, unstable on its legs, and an enormous bookcase and cupboard combined. My bedroom is ugly, bare and damp, with no fireplace. Apparently they encourage us to be Spartan in our mode of [22] living here. How different from the Oxford of three months ago.

I had a long talk with the Head Master to-night. He is an imposing-looking man, a sound disciplinarian I should imagine, one who gives no quarter. It is hard to associate him with the priesthood. He has less of the clergyman in him than any parson I have ever met. He gave me many "tips" about my work and laid stress in every other sentence about the necessity of exercising firmness from the start. He obviously looks upon me as willing, but lacking in experience and scholarship. I appear to have been selected rather on athletic than intellectual grounds. My "Blue" has gained for me this important post and I am evidently expected to play games daily. Well, I shan't mind that; I cannot conceive how men exist without daily exercise. Thank Heaven, I'm not in an office. After all, £150 a year and my "keep" is quite an adequate salary for a man of twenty-four without encumbrances.

There is something monastic about the life here: only one other master except the Chief is married: women are obviously not encouraged.

The staff live for the most part in Common Room: we breakfast and dine there, have lunch in the School Dining Hall with the boys, and have tea in our own rooms.

I got my first impressions of my colleagues at dinner to-night. Most of them were very hilarious and good-humoured, full of talk about the Alps, Scotland, Cornwall, cricket tours, golf, climbs, bathing, fishing and every sort of outdoor pursuit in which they had indulged during the last eight weeks. They were all obviously glad to see each other and be back at work.

Somehow they didn't strike me as being typical "ushers" at all. Quite a dozen of them appear to [23] be men about my own age, healthy, jovial and without a care. One or two of the older men look haggard and wan, but then again others look like prosperous gentlemen-farmers or country squires, hale, hearty, well fed and contented.

After dinner Hallows, who is games master (an old captain of the Oxford "Rugger" team), asked me to his rooms: some half-dozen of us sat there drinking whisky and smoking until chapel-time. They were all genial and friendly and we talked mainly about historic incidents in bygone Inter-University matches.

In chapel I saw the whole school for the first time. I was exceedingly nervous and imagined myself to be the cynosure of all eyes. I thought that they were all taking stock of me and sizing me up. I must remember to be strict from the very beginning. The start is everything.

September 27, 1909

I am gradually getting used to the routine. Certainly the breaking of the ice was very trying. Luckily I had prepared my lessons carefully before I went into form, so I had plenty to say, which prevented my extreme nervousness from being too apparent, and I punished two boys heavily for talking while I was trying to teach. On the whole most of them appear to be tractable. What does amaze me is their abysmal ignorance.

For the first few days I was talking over their heads the whole time. In mathematics I went too fast. In English I took it for granted that they knew something about the subject: I am gradually finding out that they know nothing. What is worse, only a very few of them want to know [24] anything. They exhaust all their energies and keenness on games: they have none left for work. It is looked upon as a gross breach of good form to take anything but the most perfunctory interest in class. I find that I am falling into the most insidious of traps. I am picking out favourites. There

are two boys, Benbow and Illingworth, both in my English set, who have shown up essays quite outside the common: they care about things: they read: they express a novel point of view: they are rebels against tradition. I have given them the run of my rooms and implored them to borrow what books they like from my shelves and to come to tea whenever they like.

I am beginning to find that I prefer the company of boys to that of my colleagues. Most of the staff seem to have reached the limit of their learning when they took their Finals. My Finals only served to show me what an ignorant ass I am. Perhaps it's a good thing to take a low class in "schools." At any rate it leaves you under no false impression as to your own level of intelligence and attainments.

A week of this life has taught me quite a number of useful things:

(1) That it is quite easy to keep order. A number of men here get persistently "ragged," but that seems to me to be due to their lack of humour, their uncertain temper, and their misunderstanding of the boy mind.

(2) I hate having to correct work at night. It is merely a mechanical drudgery and does the boy no good, for he does not strive to understand a mistake unless you correct it while he is with you, and one would be far better employed reading. Correction of exercises must have been instituted [25] to prevent masters from getting into mischief in their idle hours.

(3) I dislike compulsory chapel. I like services when I do not feel bound to go: they become merely a meaningless jingle of words when one is forced to attend when one is not in the mood.

(4) I love playing "footer" with the House every day. I have got to know already quite intimately a number of boys whom I should have regarded as wasters in form. This seems to me to prove that a master should share so far as he can in every activity in order to try to get at the point of view of the boys from every angle. I have therefore joined the Corps, the Debating Society and the Choir.

(5) I object intensely to the mark system. It inculcates selfishness, destroys any chance of getting any co-operative spirit in a form, and is thoroughly immoral. It tends to make boys work from a mercenary motive: they think of nothing but rewards and punishments: they even cheat when they get the chance in order to rise to a high place in the week's order. These orders bother me. Every Saturday night we have to collect all sorts of marks from other masters, scale and readjust them and produce an order, which takes up about two hours of valuable time. I don't mind giving up time to any useful end, but I do resent doing so for a senseless one.

November 1909

The monastic system is getting on my nerves. I find myself longing to hear a baby crying, a girl laughing, or any noises of the street. We are too much aloof from the outside world. I thought [26] reading would be a sufficient antidote. Most of my colleagues don't read at all. They "haven't time." Lately I have taken to going off to Scarborough on Saturday evenings, treating myself to a good dinner at the Regent (we are allowed no drinks in Common Room except water: Hallows alone drinks seltzer), and then going on to a show at the theatre or promenading the Winter Gardens and watching the shop-girls and men dance. These people have an irresistible fascination for me. It is a wonderful relaxation to chatter amiably to these girls and men, and hear their point of view of life, so many poles apart from that of the Radchester Common Room. From one of these in particular, a very pretty girl of about eighteen, with masses of corn-coloured hair and violet eyes, a complexion like a Devon dairymaid and a figure light as a fairy, I have learnt a good deal of another side of life. Her name is Vera Buckley: she works in a large milliner's shop. We meet and dance together now every Saturday night. At first when she learnt that I was a schoolmaster at Radchester she was suspicious and cold, but now we are firm friends and she talks unflaggingly about her hopes and fears, her likes and dislikes. She is a welcome change from the Tapers and Tadpoles of Common Room, who argue interminably upon the day's play and the moral defalcations of boys in their respective houses and forms.

I dined with the Head Master last night and found myself quoting from a new book on education. Just before I left, he took me aside and said, "The less you read about education the better. All this new-fangled talk about new ideas cuts at the very roots of the great tradition on which the [27] Public Schools were built up. I never engage a man who has taken a diploma in the theory of education: he can never keep order, he can't teach, he makes the boys rebel against their lot and is altogether very dangerous. I like your keenness and I think you have made a good beginning, but I warn you now against thinking that there is any reform needed, and suggest that you read no more upon a subject which you are called upon to practise, not to theorise about."

I attempted a defence but he refused to listen. Patting me gently on the back he said, quite kindly, "When you are my age you'll see the truth of what I've been telling you: youth is always in a great hurry to bring about the millennium. It never realizes that no millennium can be brought about by merely destructive criticism. Remember that all these writers are outside the profession and are writing in total ignorance of the conditions under which we labour."

He succeeded in making me feel very arrogant, very youthful, and very much of a fool.

After all he has some right on his side. Boys do understand the system of marks and of punishment and I suppose the way of least resistance is the best. Anyway it is far easier to make a boy work through fear than it is through love of the work: to rouse enthusiasm in the work itself is an exceedingly arduous business. The difficulty is that I hate the idea of caning a boy almost as

much as some of the staff relish it. They satisfy a sort of bestial lust by lashing a small boy and hearing him yell. They would be horrified at the suggestion, but I am certain that this is true. One has only to watch a man's eyes when he gives an account of some of his more successful efforts in [28] this direction. On the other hand, I firmly believe that there is a type of boy who can understand no other form of treatment. I only wish such types would not come under my jurisdiction.

I find that I am becoming unpopular with Hallows. One very wet afternoon I organized a paper-chase which was an overwhelming success: about two hundred boys turned out and we caught the hares about four o'clock, after a very tricky run over a well-laid course. Unfortunately every one was late for "roll." By getting up this entertainment on a "half" when there was nothing else to do I found myself launched into about six rows.

Apparently every boy has to pass the doctor before he is allowed to run on a paper-chase; whips had not been arranged for to see that the "laggers" did not drop out *en route* and find solace in a cottage or public-house; I had no list of starters to compare with those who finished to see whether any runners had died by the wayside, and, most flagrant of all, I had upset "roll." I am afraid I shall never hear the last of this. Hallows refuses to speak to me, but most loudly and pointedly speaks of me in no uncertain tone of voice whenever I enter Common Room: the direct upshot is that paper-chases are to be made compulsory on days when there are no games, and a printed list of rules to this end has been put up on the school board.

I suspect that Hallows framed them, for they are calculated to remove any innocent pleasure that any boy might have derived from cross-country running and implant in his heart an undying detestation of this particular branch of exercise. I am afraid the truth is that Hallows is jealous: I [29] had overstepped my province in getting up this run. He is the manager of all the school athletics and I had committed an unforgivable offence in not asking his leave.

I am beginning to see signs of mutual jealousy everywhere. Each tutor criticizes every other master's method of teaching, comparing it (adversely, of course) with his own.

House-masters resent any humane intercourse between members of their houses and junior assistant masters, though by the laws of common sense it would seem obvious that the senior boys would prefer the society of men only a little older than themselves as likely to be more in sympathy with their ideas, more helpful in their troubles than the elder members of the staff whom they, quite rightly, place on an unapproachable pedestal.

December 1909

Now that examinations are upon us I have been attempting to revise my mathematical and English work, with appalling results. My math. sets appear to have learnt nothing: just a glimpse here and there of an idea, all mixed up with the most amazing nonsense. I must have gone too fast. Some of them have certainly tried to work. Perhaps it is that mathematics is not the Queen of Sciences, after all, at any rate for the unformed mind. I know that in my own school days I was successful at it owing to a natural aptitude without understanding in the least its practical usefulness.

There are boys who go again and again over the same ground, term after term, working out quadratic equations, formidable and unwieldy algebraic fractions, solving problems about [30] triangles, parallelograms and circles quite mechanically and perfectly without the ghost of an idea as to what they all mean or what bearing they have on practical life. They are, if questioned, content to talk about "mental discipline" and "the more odious a task is the better it is for one's education" in a manner unbearably priggish and foolish.

If a boy can work out a hundred examples correct to type, most of us seem to think that we are teaching him something. On the contrary, I believe that the only point in mathematical teaching is the training of the mind to think logically and exactly, and to detect all vague and shallow fallacies in argument or writing.

According to this theory the better a boy was at mathematics the better he would be at English, whereas the truth is that the able mathematician is rarely able to express himself in writing at all, and certainly is not remarkable for simplicity or direct reasoning power in his essays. It never strikes us that if a boy is capable of working out an intricate equation he ought to be able to build up a paragraph of carefully connected sentences, all sequent and working to some definite solution or proof.

I am coming to the conclusion that all true education is a striving after Beauty, and what does not actively pursue this end is a waste of effort.

No sooner do I reach this idea than I begin to wonder what can have induced our forefathers to erect such a hideous structure as Radchester, in the middle of so barren, ugly, and terrifying a country.

Surely there can be no more depressing district in England than the country round the school. On [31] Sundays I occasionally go for walks, but I never return without being obsessed by the gloom and drabness of it all. If I walk down the seashore I see nothing but a bare waste of grey waters, relieved by an interminable stretch of sand. There are no gorgeous colourings on sea or land, such as we expect from the sea and get in Devon and Cornwall. If I go inland I have no alternative but to tramp over muddy fields the grass of which is as colourless as the sea, and the only variety to the monotony of the level stretch is a wind-swept naked tree, wan and haggard as an old tramp who has been buffeted by Nature too long to care about his personal appearance: if

I take to the roads I am immediately led to contrast the solitary deadness of these straight lanes, where you know for miles exactly what is coming, with the rich lanes of the south, with their high hedges, a riot of colour and song, deviating romantically every few yards, up and down, round and round, ever calling you on to explore some gem which an all-provident Nature has built for you just round the corner. There are no mysteries to be explored in the vicinity of Radchester unless you dive down a drain.

It is not strange that the cult of Beauty is neglected in such a place, for where is Beauty to be found? The answer I find within my rooms: only in my books and my few chosen friends among the boys can I rid myself of the discontent which is so persistently seething within me.

Perhaps I should make an exception in the matter of games; I love strenuous exercise but I object to making football my God, as so many of my friends do. The boys, at any rate in the presence of masters, talk of little else. Their only other topic of conversation is the characters of their other [32] masters, which is insidious and delightful, but savouring too much of disloyalty and scandal-mongering.

One of the things I have enjoyed most this term has been the O.T.C. All members of Common Room, by an excellent rule here, have first to serve in the ranks. I have got to know the boys in this House infinitely better by mixing with them on parades and field days as a private than I ever should have by any other means: they seem to forget all sense of difference and talk glibly and unconsciously about all sorts of topics that normally would not crop up between master and pupil. They no longer restrain their language quite in the same way they do before a master. I imagine that pretty vigorous swearing is prevalent in all schools: it seems to add a picturesqueness to their vocabulary which would be entirely lacking otherwise, for a boy's paucity of orthodox adjectives is astonishing. He is exactly on a par with the farm labourer in this respect. He swears simply because he has no other language to fall back upon. It is not his fault so much as the master's. So far as I can gather no subject seems to be so badly mishandled as the mother tongue. The average boy is expected to write Latin prose and is caned for a false quantity in verses. He tries his hand at original verse composition in both Latin and Greek: no one thinks of asking him to write poetry in English, and when he does he is looked upon as a freak. It seems a most topsy-turvy system: he spends at least one hour every day at Latin: to English (of which he knows nothing) he devotes two hours a week and during those two hours his masters don't know what to teach him.

Some spend the time in parsing and analysing, though what utilitarian benefits are to accrue [33] hereafter from these it would be hard to see. Others "read a play of Shakespeare," which is a euphemism for note-taking and note-learning, a philological discourse or an exercise in repetition; others again read out notes on the Mendelian theory, which they call a skeleton, and require the form to clothe this skeleton and reproduce it in the form of an essay.

I find that all my English lessons this term have been of the nature of tentative experiments. First I read a play of Shakespeare very rapidly, allotting parts to every member of the form. My first shock was to discover that not one of them could read aloud. They were afraid of their own voices: they gabbled through their parts at top speed without paying any attention to the punctuation or attempting to express emotion. Then I decided to make them come out and try to act the play with the books in their hands. This was looked upon as a grave departure from precedent and an opportunity for "ragging." When I pointed out that there was plenty of chance for a display of horse-play in the crowd scenes in *Julius Cæsar* and *Coriolanus*, they possessed themselves in patience until the time to read these plays. Heavens! How they loved the mob scenes. Here was something after their own hearts. At last I had roused their interests. Most of the comic scenes fell very flat and so did all the more long-winded speeches, but once there was a call for an uproar or a pageant they were as pleased as Punch.

I have now discovered that the only way to read plays is to go straight ahead and disregard all difficult passages and notes and get them amused and keen to perform. Incidentally, it makes [34] them far keener if they are permitted to "dress" the part. In *She Stoops to Conquer* and *The Knight of the Burning Pestle* I had them all in shrieks of laughter. But now, as I said, examinations are at hand and woe is me. I'm afraid they won't be able to answer anything. Perhaps their ideas of the characters may be more sound than if they learnt them second-hand from Mr. Verity, but they'll get badly "pipped" on historical inaccuracies and difficult contexts.

Then again, how am I to expect them suddenly to produce an essay on "Town and Country," or "Conscription," or "Capital Punishment" when I've always given them *carte blanche* to write short stories, or imaginary dialogues, or one-act plays or original verses on any subject under heaven?

I think I'm going to hate examinations. I wish we could dispense with them altogether. Most of the staff appear to revise all the work of the first two months in the third month, and so get their pupils thoroughly tired and stale of the tiny scrap of ground they have covered and re-covered until they have worn it threadbare.

December 31, 1909

When it came to the end of term I was amazingly loath to leave Radchester. In spite of the ghastly ugliness of the country, the bitter winds from which there is no refuge, unsympathetic colleagues (somehow I seem to have alienated most of the elder members of Common Room) and the shattering of several of my ideals, I cannot deny that I have enjoyed my first term as a Public School master immensely. I have not rid myself of my nervous fear lest my forms should rise [35] against me and "rag" me as they "rag" poor old Pennyfeather and Dearden; I certainly did not

gain much kudos from the results of the examinations, either in mathematics or in English; many of the boys dislike my methods and do the minimum of work necessary to evade punishment, yet I have made a few firm friends; I have led a healthy life, I have read a good many books, and I am as keen as mustard to prove my ability to teach.

Benbow and Illingworth have each written to me and I find that I treasure letters from boys above all others. Where other men of my age fall in love with girls I suppose I give my affections to those boys who show promise in English and take advantage of the seclusion of my rooms to come and pour out their petty worries and ask for advice.

I have been reading somewhere of late that it is a dreadful thing for a man with any brains to live always in the society of others less mature than himself: he becomes didactic and in every way obnoxious: I know that Charles Lamb was not alone in flying from the presence of all schoolmasters: there is a distinctly noticeable trait in us, as a profession, which makes us want to teach and advise, to lay down the law: it is a habit against which I must most carefully guard.

On the other hand, always being with crowds of healthy youngsters certainly tends to keep a man young: there are very few responsibilities, I am catered for, I pay no rates or taxes, I have £150 a year to spend on books, clothes, travel, and any other incidental expenses I like: I have longer holidays than any other professional man: for four months in the year I am free to do whatever I like. [36]

Of course I shall never be able to marry, never have sons and daughters of my own. But then, as I never see a girl of my own class at Radchester, I am never likely to want to settle down to domestic life. After all, instead of one wife and a few children, I have three or four hundred children of the most fascinating ages: I stand *in loco parentis* to countless numbers.

I don't feel that I want to become rich: I am willing to forgo all the ordinary ambitions if I may have a more or less free hand in education, and at last realize my many ideals about the training of youth.

It seemed unduly lonely at home during Christmas week compared with the noisy cheeriness of school. For the first time in my life I am beginning to feel quite bored with life at Darley. I long for the games, the chatter, my form, my books, yes, even for Common Room, with an aching heart. I hope the rest of the holidays will pass more quickly than these last ten days. I take no pleasure in bridge-parties or tea-fights: my only solace is to write reams of nonsense to Illingworth and Benbow, and to read all that I can lay my hands on which bears on the million or so theories of education.

[37]

II

January 20, 1910

I SUPPOSE it is an ineradicable trait in human nature to want to be where one is not: when I was at home I longed for Radchester: now that I am safely back in my own rooms I miss the civilization of home, the constant presence of the other sex, the beauties of our moors and combes. This is really a very savage, uncouth sort of place: at present we are snow-bound, which seems to cut us off more than ever from the outside world. I should hate to be ill here: the school doctor is, I imagine, capable within limits, but there is no chance of securing any kind of adequate nursing or home comforts. We are in very truth a colony of Spartans. I find that I am hankering after the flesh-pots. I want to see Vera Buckley again. I must write and fix up a dinner and a theatre with her. I suppose if the Head Master found out I should be ignominiously "sacked." Yet I can't see that such conduct can really affect my status here. I don't propose to have her to tea in my rooms. She amuses me and I amuse her. She lives in a world poles apart from the one in which I live: she is a wonderful tonic after Common Room; her talk is all of gaiety and the different sorts of men she meets, pretty frocks and romance. By her side I feel amazingly old and dull and careworn: she is really my sole link with the workaday world outside. There is no chance of our [38] friendship ripening into anything else: I fail to see where the harm or the danger lies; we like one another: we do each other good. As she so frequently tells me, I am different from all the other "boys." I don't make love to her or any nonsense of that sort; she acts as a refining influence on me. After parting from her I feel less of a boor, more of a man of the world.

I suppose in every profession there are points of routine and minute details that have to be observed that yet offend the new-comer's sensibilities, but I doubt whether anything so utterly devoid of purpose or so calculated to rub a man up the wrong way could ever have been devised to compare with a masters' meeting.

At the beginning of term we all assemble in Common Room and the Head Master reads out a list of proposed changes in the curriculum, which as a rule affect but two men out of the thirty or forty gathered round the table: the pros and cons of the changes are, however, heatedly discussed by the parties concerned, while the rest of us yawn and eat our heads off with boredom.

If, however, I or any junior member of the staff should have the effrontery to propose any alteration or reform, a storm of abuse immediately bursts on our heads and we are met with a final retort which is meant to quash us for all time: "The existing system has been in vogue for twenty-five years and no one has seen fit to question it before: it has become hallowed with the passing of time and it would be a sacrilege to tamper with it now."

Another feature of these meetings is the way in which each head of a department fights for his own hand. The choirmaster thinks of nothing but getting more time for choir practice, the officer [39] commanding the corps strenuously tries to procure an extra five minutes at each end for his parades, the gymnasium expert urges the necessity of physical training in school hours, the modern language master vainly begs for less classics, the mathematicians for more hours devoted to preparation, the games manager for less school work for the teams, and so on.

A stranger would guess (and he would not be far wrong) at the end of one of these meetings that we were all deadly enemies, each suspicious of the other and certain in his own mind that he alone among the many suppliants has been treated with great unfairness and that the school is rapidly going to the dogs because he has not obtained his request. The irony of the situation is heightened by the fact that we pray both before and after the meeting that we may all work in complete harmony for the common good of the boys, whereas in reality we are all as disunited as any body of men could possibly be.

One man will ardently support a motion solely to irritate his dearest enemy, who will suffer if the proposal is carried; another will just as strenuously oppose it for no other reason than the fact that his opponent might gain by it if it were carried. The common good seems to be about the last argument to carry weight. There are men here who never speak to one another from year's end to year's end, although they are forced to meet some twenty times a day and even sit next to one another (we sit in order of seniority) at meals. Hallows is, I fear, a case in point. He refused to shake hands with me when I came back this term and I know perfectly well that he will not take my part if I ask him to "ginger" up any boy in his house who shirks his prepared work. [40]

March 1, 1910

A dreadful thing has happened. A boy in my form called Chorlthwaite has been expelled for stealing. He happens to have been in Hallows' house. He was certainly a boy without any moral sense at all. Twice I detected him in the act of "cooking" his marks: the first time I talked to him privately and gave him an imposition long enough (one would have thought) to have brought the lesson home to him; on the second occasion I went to see Hallows about it and he as good as told

me that it was my fault for putting temptation in his way by making it possible for the boy to do such a thing.

"Trusting to a boy's honour?" he said with an ugly laugh when I tried to explain, "you might just as well trust a bookie with your purse: boys haven't got such a thing. The only way to keep them out of harm's way is never to trust them an inch, that's my way and I've never had a failure yet."

He is in a towering rage over this expulsion: he has told the Head Master that the whole blame lies on my shoulders, because I encouraged the boy to come up to my rooms and ransack my cupboards for chocolates and cakes. (I always allow all the boys in my form to do this.) They are not overfed here and several of them are too poor to be able to afford to go often to the tuck-shop. The wind is apt to give one a prodigious appetite, and most boys are only too glad to avail themselves of my offer. I have only just heard that Hallows issued an edict that no boy in his house was to come to my rooms under any pretext except with a signed order from him. [41] Chorlthwaite revenged himself by helping himself lavishly from the cupboards of Benson, the assistant music master. It is all frightfully depressing. In my Divinity lessons on Sundays and Mondays I have always tried to put before my boys a rigid code of moral ethics and I had hoped that I was meeting with some success.

I trusted them all in everything: I always make a point of letting them give up their own marks and, except in the case of Chorlthwaite, I have never detected a boy in the act of cheating; neither have I come across a single case of cribbing, but there would be little point in that because a boy only cribs through fear of punishment and I punish so rarely that I have even been told by the Head Master that I am unduly lax. Anyway the boy has gone and I am abased and ashamed. I hope that this sort of thing won't happen often or it will wreck all my happiness. If my influence isn't good enough to keep my boys straight it were better for me and for them that I should become a street scavenger or a coal-heaver.

All the same I am not sure that expulsion meets the case. What is to happen to Chorlthwaite in the future? Is he to be branded for life? He had the elements of a Christian in him. I cannot think that his power for evil was strong enough to make him a bad influence over his fellows: their united good influence, on the other hand, would, I should have thought, in time have changed his perverted sense of morality.

Now I am fearful lest he should become callous and bitter and continue to the end in the path which he at present treads. Punishment never yet acted as a sufficient deterrent to any one who [42] really wanted to commit a crime.

One of the minor things in life which infuriates me about schoolmastering is this silly rule about smoking. Every boy knows quite well that practically every grown-up man smokes, and at home he sees not only his father and elder brothers but also every man in the street with a pipe, cigar or cigarette in his mouth, and yet he is supposed to believe that his masters (unnatural beings) never condescend to the vice. In Common Room we may smoke and in the seclusion of our own rooms when there is no chance of any boy suddenly breaking in upon us ... but nowhere else. We are expected to hide all traces of pipes, jars of tobacco, or cigarette boxes before we admit any boy into our presence. It is a laughable pretence, but apt to be infernally annoying. It also strikes me as being immoral: we give our consent to the universal acting of a lie. What makes it worse is the fact that most of the boys smoke secretly far more than is good for them, solely from bravado.

If only, as in some schools, all boys over sixteen who have permission from home were allowed to smoke at certain hours of the day, the difficulty both for them and for us would be solved. It is like the question of drink: in some schools boys are given a glass of beer with their midday meal and again at supper. This effectually removes any sort of temptation to dive into the secret recesses of a bar parlour and there drink deep and long, as is the fashion among the bloods here.

I found this out by accident last Sunday. About four o'clock Jefferies, a brilliant scholar and athlete, came to my rooms, white as to the gills, and in a state of nervous terror unfolded a tale [43] over which I could not help but gloat.

Some half-dozen of the more "sporting" prefects apparently have a habit of disappearing every Sunday after lunch and walking four miles to an inn, where they flirt with a fat and ugly barmaid (I have only Jefferies' word for the "fat and ugly") and drink until such time as they are expected back in their houses. On this Sunday afternoon the place was unfortunately raided by the police and Jefferies (luckily without a school cap) was seized: he gave a fictitious name and address and found that he was expected to appear at the local Police Court to answer the charge against him.

Naturally the whole thing was bound to come out and he would inevitably be expelled. The boy was in a state of pitiable terror and wanted to know what to do. As luck would have it, we did hit upon a scheme before he left the room which left him a loophole. He acted upon my suggestion, which was a simple one, and as it turned out everything was solved satisfactorily. He was fined heavily but did not appear, and I had the immense joy to see the case reported in the local weekly paper and read all unsuspectingly by members of Common Room, who never for one instant guessed that the George Holmes, clerk, etc., who was fined for obtaining drinks after hours, had any connexion with the noble and honourable foundation of Radchester. I suppose I ought not to have been a party to this nefarious scheme, but Jefferies was far too valuable a member of the school to lose. He certainly did not deserve to have his career ruined for a foolish prank like this.

If this came out, I imagine that I should also be thrown out into the streets: I wonder how much [44] of this hushing up goes on in all Public Schools.

I remember that I took Dearden into my confidence over the case of Jefferies. He is a dear, good

soul: why on earth he allows the boys to "rag" him as they do I can't think, except that he's too gentle and generous with every one.

He has the next rooms to mine, and whenever I'm out of cigarettes, or whisky, or cakes, I just raid his cupboards. Heavens! that places me exactly on a level with Chorlthwaite: it is true that I have asked him to take whatever he wants whenever he likes from my rooms, but my cupboards are usually bare owing to the appetite of my own form. When I told Dearden about Jefferies he laughed long and loud: he has an infectious laugh, and his already rubicund cheeks become purple with mirth. When his noises had somewhat subsided, except for a few intermittent guffaws that he seemed unable to suppress, he replied:

"Oh! I suppose we all behave like that really: it's a rotten game turning King's Evidence. I caught a fellow in this house with his arm round a flapper's waist on the beach, kissing her with great energy one night last summer term. It did me good to see them. He thought he was safe for expulsion. As a matter of fact I had him up and tried to lecture him, but it was all I could do to keep a straight face. What do you think his defence was? 'It's so jolly monotonous here, sir, with this continual round of work and games and corps and chapel, and never a decent-looking girl for miles.' I couldn't resist asking him how he unearthed so desirable a creature in a district which [45] breeds little but sea-gulls and mussels.

"'I met her in a village about five miles away one Sunday afternoon and ... well, she was as bored with life as I was, so we agreed to walk to meet each other down the beach every Thursday and Saturday night: it meant two and a half miles each way for each of us, sir. It was rather a sweat, but it was worth it, just for the fun of the risk of being caught.' I warned him to be careful in future: I hadn't even the heart to make him promise never to see the girl again; I'm a rotten bad schoolmaster."

From this he went on to a heated disquisition on the advantages of co-education.

I'm in luck to have so delightful a companion as Dearden next door to me. He is about ten years senior to me and has had a chequered career. He has been already at about half a dozen schools and never given any great satisfaction. He is, I imagine, too easy-going: he just drifts along idly; he likes his game of bridge, his whisky, his nightly chatter, and beyond that very little except good holidays. Like most schoolmasters he is quite without ambition: he looks forward to nothing better than his present state. "I can conceive," he said once to me, "nothing more delightful than my present life, if only I were not so persistently 'ragged'; it does so lower a fellow in his own esteem."

I have been attending all the recent debates at the School Debating Society: it is a very formal and rigid body attended usually by some fifteen or twenty persons, all very nervous and none of them able to speak at all coherently or interestingly. Each time I have attended I have said something, but I find I am as bad as the rest: there is an air about the society which effectually [46] prevents one from saying what one means. I don't know what it is. The debates are dull and mainly consist of long uncomfortable pauses, during which no one dares even to whisper, varied by grotesque attempts at humour which make me want to cry.

It seems to me that the power to state an argument concisely, without stammering or hesitation and in an interesting way, is a very necessary factor in our educational equipment. I have, therefore, started another private debating society, which meets in my rooms every Saturday night, limited to boys whom I take during the week. The bait of free food has netted a prodigious catch. I rarely have less than fifty: they lie about on the floor or prop themselves up against the walls. The atmosphere after an hour and a half is indescribable, but we certainly do debate. Blood-feuds seem to spring from the results of our arguments: tempers are really lost, and at times I have imagined that they resort to physical tests to prove the truth of their assertions as soon as they get outside. At any rate I get them interested and they certainly can talk—the difficulty is rather to make them desist.

We vary these debates with charades, mock trials, and readings of plays ancient and modern. Occasionally I read to them humorous extracts, for choice from Saki, Stephen Leacock, or some of the older school of comic writers.

I find that I look forward to this more than to anything else in the week: it unfortunately prevents me from going in to see Vera, but somehow she and I always seem to be able to hit upon mutually free evenings whenever we like. I never allow a week to pass without seeing her. She is my [47] safety-valve: she gives me a proper perspective. After I have quarrelled violently with some colleague or taken some mistake of mine too seriously, she acts as a corrective and makes me see that Radchester is not, as Common Room fondly imagines, the whole of the world. I do not over-emphasize my importance to the State when I have been with her: to her I am just one of a crowd, very ordinary, fairly cheerful and companionable, less flighty than if I were merely "one of the boys," but not necessarily much more precious on that account. England would not materially suffer if Radchester were razed to the ground to-night; Radchester's idea is that England would cease to count if such a dire catastrophe were within the bounds of possibility. Yes, it is very good for me to see Vera weekly. I told her the story of Dearden about the flapper, and she replied somewhat to my astonishment, "Oh! you old goose. Why, I've been out with heaps of Radchester boys. They come into Scarborough quite often. Of course you wouldn't see them: they're not quite such fools, but I wouldn't mind betting that they've seen you with me. Oh! don't get frightened. Boys aren't likely to give you away: they understand only too well. They probably think you're the only sensible master on the staff for having the sense not to pretend that you can do without girls. I think it's a mad idea shutting up four or five hundred boys in a lonely place like Radchester. I shouldn't be surprised at the most horrible things happening there: it's unnatural."

"But, my dear child," I replied, "if you'd read any of the old books you'd realize how necessary it is, if you want to work, to get as far away from distraction as possible. Now what greater or more charming distraction could there be than you?" [48]

"Oh! get along, you old silly! You're always pulling my leg. All the same I'm certain that nothing but harm can come of separating the sexes in this way."

"Oh, then, you are like my friend Dearden, in favour of co-education?"

"What's that?"

But I was not to be drawn into any argument. When I'm out with Vera I'm out for lightness, sweetness and gaiety: I want to forget school altogether. I go back refreshed, revivified and with new ideas. She is the finest pick-me-up I know. She doesn't quote the classics at me. For that alone I could hug her.

April 3, 1910

And here I am at the end of my second term. Anything more terrifying than the way in which time flits by here I cannot conceive. I made so many good resolutions at the beginning of term and none of them seems to have materialized. I am still going too fast in mathematics, although I keep a strict hold on myself all the time. I think the secret is that I am more of a lecturer than a teacher. I find it very hard indeed to repeat over and over again the same formulæ, dinning them into thick heads day after day for weeks on end without any variation. I want to keep the boys interested. Some of them make tremendous headway with me: others learn nothing from me at all. In English it is otherwise: most people who come to me for this subject are beginning to read, [49] which is the best possible sign. In the past they seem to have read nothing, not even "The Arabian Nights," nor "The Canterbury Tales," nor "Gulliver's Travels," nor any of the novels of Thackeray, or Dickens, or the Brontës, nor any poetry, nor essays nor plays. Now at least they do search the library for books which I recommend.

The school library is worse than useless. In ecclesiastical history no library can compare with it, but for the standard English classics one may search in vain. Even if the book you want does by some strange chance happen to be there, you are not allowed to remove it unless you are in the Sixth Form. When I remonstrated with the librarian (a foolish thing to do: I have now made him my enemy for life) all he could say was, "My dear man, these rules have been in existence for generations: what was good enough for our fathers is surely good enough for us. Tell your boys to get these books from their House libraries." I have lately been for a tour of inspection round the House libraries. Edna Lyall, Charlotte Yonge, Conan Doyle, George Birmingham, H. A. Vachell, Harrison Ainsworth, Mark Twain, Seton Merriman—yes, but no Swift, no Pope, no Browning, no Thackeray, no Jane Austen, no Fielding, no Johnson, no Milton, no Chaucer, no Keats, no Shelley, no Meredith. Apparently the authorities wish boys to imitate Ruskin and not descend to libraries but to purchase for themselves the masterpieces if they want to read them.

Only the other day the Head Master posted a notice on the school board urging the school to devote less time to the perusal of sixpenny magazines and more to the reading of good, sound [50] literature—very good advice too—but it isn't every boy who can afford to read the best authors, besides which the greatest writers cannot be tackled without due preparation and a sharpening of the wits: the average boy is prejudiced against all the classics as being intolerably dull. It never strikes him that these works were written for our enjoyment, our solace in woe, our constant companions in every mood.

He prefers to talk about the form displayed during the afternoon by his House captain in a school match, or ruminate on his own shortcomings in a recent House match.

Games seem to me to lose half their charm when they are taken so seriously that a boy contemplates suicide because of his failure in a House match.

I might give a hundred lectures in Big School on any subject under Heaven and very few would voluntarily attend, but if I suggest giving a few hints on how to train for games there wouldn't be a vacant seat. I am certain this making a fetish of games is too much of a good thing. There is a limit even to keenness. I love watching a fierce senior final House match and all school matches. I love going "all out" when I am playing any game, but I certainly object to treating it as if it were a religious ceremonial, or rather a display before my Supreme Judge and that on my merits or demerits I shall be saved or damned everlastingly.

Quite the most enjoyable days of this term have been those wild, wet, windy afternoons when I have expended all my energies dashing up and down the shore in that peculiar game, half rugger, half hockey, which is only played at Radchester, but I don't go back to my rooms and weep if I [51] play badly, or preen myself like a peacock if by some lucky chance I give an exhibition beyond the normal.

This has been a better term than last, if only because of the three new men on the staff, all of whom are younger than I am. It was pleasant to watch them first of all roundly chafe at the limitless number of rules and restrictions placed upon us all, and gradually succumb to the tradition and become unquestioning, staunch adherents of a system against which their better judgments first taught them to rebel.

One excitement of the last month has been the visit of the Inspectors: they are due once every five years and are supposed to be selected with scrupulous care. They are fêted for a week and shown everything at its most abnormal and best: it is no fair test at all. For one whole week no

boy dared to "rag" even such a pitiable ass as Pennefeather, lest the Head Master and Inspectors should suddenly come in. Richards having carefully worked out an admirable lesson on the Siege of Syracuse meticulously went through it every hour with his form for the whole period on the off-chance and, as luck would have it, no Inspector came near him.

I was not going to change my curriculum for any of the old dodderers, and they called on me daily. The English expert was a gentleman, and simply sat down and took notes of my methods all the time I was teaching, while the mathematical inspector did all the work for me and told me how to teach factors, without so much as worrying to ask how I got on or watching me display my talents at all.

These inspections are merely farcical. Their report was one long succession of "very good," [52]
"brilliant," "astonishingly capable," and so on.

I have of late been worrying over the code of honour that prevails among the boys. Apparently to cheat, to lie, to give way to unnatural vice, to torture poor, half-witted, feckless youngsters are venal offences, hardly counting as offences at all, whereas to make a friend of a master, to "cut" or "slack" during a game, to work hard, are unforgivable and heinous sins to be ruthlessly punished with the utmost severity. Mixed up with the innocence and almost angelic tenderness of some young boys there is a strain of dirt, craft, and hollow insincerity that appals me. I would give a good deal to know whence these theories of life have their source. I am certain that such things are not inherent in the boy-nature: it is a fungus-growth that is become part and parcel of the Public School spirit, the tares growing up with the wheat, and no one has the courage to try to exterminate them.

I am always priding myself upon the fact that none of my boys ever "crib," but last week I discovered a boy writing out a theorem in geometry from a fair copy which he had brought in with him. He knew that I always walked round and round the room (I make it a practice never to sit down in a classroom) and counted on my mistaking the fair copy at his side for one of the propositions which he had already written out. I could find it in my heart to wish that all propositions were deleted from the mathematical syllabus. If we were always to invent new exercises this temptation would be removed.

I am glad to be going away to-morrow: I want to think out all these myriad problems of education: I am very tired and rather depressed at the result of all my efforts. I have worked hard [53]
this term and yet I have a feeling in my bones that most of my keenness is wasted: I am almost a butterfly on a wheel. The system is going to be too strong for me. I have a lurking suspicion that schoolmastering is not a man's job at all. It only really appeals to humdrum invertebrates who can live in an entirely unreal atmosphere, who like being placed on a pedestal and held up as models of all the more insipid virtues and who can lay down the law and see that it is obeyed to the last letter.

In no profession is the danger of thinking too much so obvious: any one possessed of an introspective or imaginative temperament is quite out of place in a Public School. Every day by reading I find that I am enlarging my mind and getting to know all sorts of interesting things, but most of them are not for the ears of babes and sucklings, and so I am compelled to lead two quite different lives and am become a sort of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde.

What I do hate about the end of the term is the fact that to-morrow night I shall no longer be able to hear the merry shouts of the boys in the House Room below or the careless chatter of hundreds coming out of chapel or school: there will be no more games; but I have one consolation. I am not, as I did at Christmas, going to a lonely home. Illingworth is coming with me on a walking tour through Devon. I am looking forward to that very much indeed.

III

May 4, 1910

I AM glad to be back again, but I never enjoyed any holiday in all my life as I enjoyed the one just finished. Illingworth and I took a train to Bideford on the first day of the holidays and put up in the hotel where Kingsley wrote "Westward Ho!" The difference between that old, bizarre, mediæval sleepy town and Radchester is impossible to believe. We spent our first evening talking to old sailors on the quay, and it did not require much imagination to take us back to the brave days of Elizabeth.

It was an idyllic holiday: we never had any definite end in view: when we felt hungry, regardless of the time, we would just go in to the nearest cottage and fill ourselves up with junkets and fruits and cream and then lazily stroll on, regardless of rights of way, over fields, through dense woods, by rabbit-warrens and carefully guarded preserves. Often we had to run from farmers, gamekeepers and their dogs, which added a good deal to the enjoyment: it just gave the extra spice of danger which we wanted. Once we got cut off by the tide and had to row over to Clovelly, where we put up for the night in a white-washed cottage, which smelt so sweetly of lavender and thyme, and was altogether so delectable with its spotlessly clean "flags" and old oak panelling, [55] that we swore that if we ever got rich we would retire there and live as hermits, with a vast library to console us for the loss of the outside world. One day we bought a couple of rucksacks and set our faces towards Hartland Point and tramped all round the coast until we got to Bude. We took several days over this, because neither Illingworth nor I could ever help turning aside to explore any lane which looked promising. We found so many wonderful old Tudor manor-houses and cheery farm-houses that we could never tear ourselves away before we had called and been given leave to explore to our heart's content. Alone, I should never have dared to ask for so strange a courtesy, but Illingworth is one of those boys who no sooner sees than he must possess, a trait that he must have inherited, for his father is one of the most famous and successful cotton men in Manchester. In the end we arrived at Chagford. I don't quite know why, except that Illingworth liked the sound of the name. We got there by way of Okehampton and Sticklepath.

He had become very interested in John Trevena's novels, "A Pixy in Petticoats," and "Arminel of the West," which he unearthed from my shelves at school, and when he heard that we were in the neighbourhood of the scenes therein depicted, nothing would content him but that we should see for ourselves whether the people were as delightful or the scenery so wonderful as Trevena had made them out to be; so we tramped round the fringe of Dartmoor and put up at the first house we saw that appealed to us on the outskirts of Chagford.

Looking back on it now I can honestly say that in this sweet village, nestling under the shadow of the great moor, I found my ideal home: no other place has ever given me, from the first moment I [56] saw it in the distance, quite the same sense of security and home. We were welcomed at Fernworthy View as if we were prodigal sons returned home at last.

We had a wonderfully capacious sitting-room with a piano, which we thumped on every night, singing ribald songs, "Buffalo Gals," "The Mulligan Guards," and the latest musical comedy bits with Betty and Thomasin, the two daughters of the house who waited on us. Before we had been there three days we had made friends with the parson, the doctor, one or two hunting men and all the villagers. We used to go and gossip in the pubs, over the counter at the shops, and up by the village pump opposite the church, where the majority of the yokels used to collect in the evening to discuss the doings of the day: we learnt a good deal of local scandal, accounts of the day's sport with the hounds, or fishing or shooting. Wherever we went we seemed to make friends.

And then by day, when the villagers were at work, we used to go out on to the moor and follow the Wallabrook, trying to trace each part of the stream to its source.

The moor always has an amazing effect upon me. I know that Eden Phillpotts and John Trevena talk a good deal about the malicious spirit of the great monoliths and the permanence of the stone, making even more futile by contrast the efforts of puny and transient man, but I find Dartmoor infinitely consoling. Here at Radchester I certainly do feel a malign influence in the ugliness of the flat lands and the hideous waste of sand and grey water, but there is a richness about the moor that makes Nature there seem much more the Eternal Mother and Generous [57] Giver, sympathizer at any rate with strong and lusty youth. Grandeur and beauty in scenery surely can never do anything but elevate and purify the spirit of man. I am never happier than when I have scaled the top of one of these Tors and can turn north, south, east, and west and see no living soul. The wind sweeps through me, the sun shines for me alone, all the blue of the heavens is mine. I am nearer to the elemental things than at any other time in my life. I am no longer introspective, dwelling on human imperfections; I am just filled to the brim with thankfulness, and opening my arms wide I feel that I am about to be taken into the embraces of my Lord Himself: He is never so near as He is on these Mounts of Transfiguration: for all hills tend to transfigure not only God but man. As he rises farther from the valley in body, so does his soul expand. Young Illingworth and I found that we could talk of things on the moor that we

should never have dreamt of discussing elsewhere. After a long and arduous climb, just to throw oneself down on the heather and gaze languidly, in sweet and utter content, up into the sky! How remote and unreal Radchester and all it stands for seemed at such moments, how small and ridiculously inept the quarrels and troubles that loom so large in Common Room; these hills certainly sweep away any malice that one may feel, or grudge that one may bear against one's fellow-men. Like St. Peter I never want to come down from these heights: I want to live in that rarefied atmosphere always, but the workaday world calls and we have to descend again into the fray.

Betty and Thomasin, as an alternative to the noises on the piano, used to get us to go into the [58] kitchen and read aloud to them till bedtime stories out of "The Arabian Nights."

As an alternative to the moor there was always the Teign, in which river we used to paddle and bathe and shoot at fish with a horrible old revolver which Illingworth had been prevailed upon to buy from a poacher. Another of our sources of pleasure was an old disused mill, a survival of the eighteenth century. Illingworth found a chain by which we could be hauled up from floor to floor by a system of pulleys on the fifth floor: he never tired of this particular form of amusement, and on really wet days we used to spend hours pulling one another up and down like sacks of wheat.

Alas, it was all too soon over: the weeks sped by like wildfire and yesterday was a day of sad partings from many firm and fast friends among the moor-folk. At any rate we have promised to go back. It seems incredible to think that it was only yesterday ... and here I am making out my scheme of work for the term, paying last term's accounts, getting ready to renew my feud with Hallows, full of determination like poor old Perrin in that school-story of Hugh Walpole's that this term shall be better. I really will not go so fast in mathematics, I will instil my own sense of morality in my boys, I will do something to alter the ridiculous codes which govern their mode of conduct. At any rate to-night I feel amazingly strong and healthy, and I am as fit for the fray physically as a man can be.

[59]

June 10, 1910

I suppose each individual master unconsciously draws to him a peculiar type of boy. I begin to think that the pariah finds himself especially attracted to me.

There have been two horrible rows this term, one during the first week when I was fresh from the healthy wilds of Dartmoor, full of vigour to instil my high ideals into the minds of all who came into contact with me.

Immorality appears to be all-prevalent; some of the finest boys in the school had to leave at a moment's notice, among them Illingworth. Even now, a month after the event, I can scarcely credit it. I cannot believe that it is the small boys' fault. Jefferies came up to say good-bye and appeared to be heart-broken: yet he was the most flagrant offender of them all. I felt quite unable to cope with the disaster at all. I didn't know what to say to him. I tried to elicit from him what it was that first of all started boys off in this hideous vice, and I think he tried his best to give me a rational answer.

"I suppose with me, sir," he began, "it was pure boredom. Life here seemed so narrow; there was no possibility of an outlet for the emotions. We are so narrowly confined, so closely watched, so driven and looked after every hour of every day: the routine is killing to the imagination. Then comes along a good-looking small boy; a longing comes over one to make a friend of him, but the school rules most stringently forbid that, so we are driven to secrecy and secrecy breeds vicious ideas. We can't meet openly: we have to think out lonely and unlikely places: then human nature [60] asserts itself and the rest follows only too quickly."

"But surely," I interposed, "surely the thought of your own honour, if not of the physical ills that are bound to follow, act as a deterrent? Sermons and house-master's warnings and so on must have some effect."

"None, I'm afraid, sir, when it comes to the point; the attraction proves too strong and the added spice of danger, as in the case of those Sundays in the public-houses, is a tremendous incentive. The sin seems to lie, not in the action, but in being found out. There are heaps and heaps of fellows who have left here loaded with honours, thought by all of you to be paragons of virtue, veritable Sir Galahads, who in reality are infinitely worse than any of us who are now being sacked. You don't cleanse your Augean stable by firing out a score or so of unfortunate wretches every year as a horrible warning to the rest. Immorality is not like a fire which can be stamped out; if there is any certain method it lies in gentle handling and weaning us gradually from impure thoughts to higher things. I know that you are awfully sick with me and I feel a rotten swine to you, as if I had betrayed a trust, but you came too late for us; probably you'll do more for the new kids. It can only be done by catching us before we are bored and making us really interested in literature, music, art—something with Beauty in it which is not compulsory. I know the prevalent opinion is that those who are interested in art are the worst of all: the truth is quite the reverse, the worst offenders are the unimaginative beefy bloods. There seems to be a lurking suspicion in the average schoolmaster's mind that all beauty is effeminate, if not actively [61] immoral. I believe in reality that immorality is as much due to the suspicious and not too clean minds of our masters as to any other agency.

"We are never directly spoken to on the matter. If a house-master does talk about it he blushes and stammers and talks about sex as if it were in itself foul. He makes a quite innocent youngster begin to take a delight in these hidden things. The truth is that they ought not to be hidden at all.

Once people begin to talk openly and discuss without false shame all these matters, this vice will disappear, not before. I've got to suffer, so there's no point in my making excuses, but you, sir, if you are really keen on getting rid of this evil, remember that the only way to do it is to get hold of boys and interest them in life. Give them something to occupy their minds, so that there is no empty corner of their souls swept and garnished ready for the occupation of the spirit of evil."

It is altogether horrible; all my best friends have gone, the very boys that I had trusted most and loved most. I cannot imagine evil of young Illingworth after our month together on Dartmoor. I dare swear no evil thought once crossed his mind the whole time we were together. I am certain in my inmost mind that this vice is not an essential part of life as some writers try to make out; I do not believe that youth must pass through this stage of adolescence and that it would be uncanny if he did not give way to his natural feelings.

I believe one reason for our failure here to cope with this dire disease is the lack of feminine society. I wonder how co-education schools stand in this matter. I believe the natural throwing of [62] boys into the constant society of girls would result in a total elimination of all foulness, whether of thought or deed.

One of the most disgusting things in all my life here is the uncleanness of so many boys' minds. I hate the idea of a Bowdlerized Shakespeare, for instance, and yet when I come across a passage that could possibly be construed in a dirty way, I find my boys sniggering, loving the innuendo: it is then that I want to make the reading of Rabelais compulsory: that would cure them. I have never passed occasions like this without bursting forth into a vehement tirade against the clod-like state of a mind that can find matter for jesting in such things.

It is the secrecy that ruins everything. If, for instance, I were openly to proclaim my friendship for Vera Buckley, whom I still see weekly, I should be suspected at once of having seduced her. Just as it is imagined that no older boy can make a friend of a younger boy without having some ulterior, filthy motive, so no man can be seen with a shop-girl (or any girl for the matter of that) without giving rise to scandalous suggestions as to his attitude towards her.

I wish some members of Common Room could be privileged to hear the sort of conversation that passes between Vera and myself. She is something of a philosopher, and her outlook on life, which is eminently cheery and healthy, does me a world of good when I am depressed. I talk over with her all my schemes for educational reform and she is intensely sympathetic and alive. She offers a vast number of amazingly good suggestions: one of her most frequent points is that I [63] should try to teach my boys not to divide all her sex into two quite separate divisions, (1) their mothers, sisters, and girls whom they meet at dances, parties and games, to whom they are studiously courteous and chivalrous, and (2) the rest, shop-girls and others, whom they ogle in the streets, take out for walks, kiss and fondle and treat as instruments for their own pleasures, to be discarded at will as soon as they tire of them.

July 4, 1910

The golden days of summer are fast slipping by and I do little else but bathe, play cricket, and read in my spare time.

Most of the boys hate having to play cricket every afternoon of the term and chafe exceedingly at the tediousness of "half-holidays," when they are expected to stay out at their games for four and a half hours. The more sensible take out rugs and books, and bask in the sun until they are called upon to field, but the temptation to go off and bathe must be pretty strong when you can hear the waves softly lapping on the beach below, calling you to come and cool yourself in the water. There is a most absurd rule here that only school prefects may bathe in the sea: the rest of the school has to content itself with the covered-in baths at stated and only too rare intervals.

These rules seem to me to be the ruin of the school: long summer afternoons ought to be given up to freedom and jollity. Boys should be encouraged to go as far away as possible for picnics, bicycle rides, and walks, to keep themselves fresh, instead of which "roll-calls" are held at [64] ridiculously close intervals; not more than two hours are ever allowed to pass without assembling the whole school to answer their names. The place seems to be run on the basis of "Out of sight, up to mischief." Every one suspects everybody else.

The Common Room garden, which is the only place in the whole neighbourhood where one can see flowers growing, possesses one tennis-court; the rivalry to secure it for a game among those who like tennis is comic to watch. Intense hatred is bred if any one dares to use it more frequently than any one else. If any of the junior members of the staff try to get a game among themselves they are taunted with a lack of loyalty and duty. It is the young man's privilege to keep an eye on the games, to umpire at cricket and see that fellows don't "slack."

Luckily for me, I much prefer the society of the boys, and I play or umpire every day. Equally luckily I am tremendously keen on fielding and I thoroughly enjoy every game I play, so long as I am not expected to take it too seriously. But I certainly sympathize with those unfortunates who hate the game and yet are compelled to waste all these precious afternoons chasing after a ball, not caring in the least who wins or loses or how badly or well they play.

Quite a number of boys have told me that they would infinitely prefer that there were no "half-holidays." The hours in school pass so much quicker. If only the surrounding country were passably interesting and we could get up excursions to explore woods or churches, it would to some extent solve the difficulty, but though it is less depressing here in the summer than in the [65] winter, there is no beauty anywhere, nothing to call one away from the eternal round of cricket.

The only break is Speech Day, a most amazing ceremony which gives one furiously to think. We had an Archbishop and several famous men of the day to talk to us this year, but the sole business of the affair seemed to be to feed the parents as lavishly as possible and to laud ourselves up to the skies. The only criterion of success, to judge from the Head Master's speech, was the number of Higher Certificates gained in the annual examination. He obviously makes a fetish of this; he publishes it in all the papers and recurs to it at constant intervals, in sermons, at masters' meetings and at dinner-parties. Apparently we stand or fall by this one qualification. Anything further from the true end and aim of education it would be hard to imagine. For this one day of speeches and lunch the whole place is transformed: it becomes almost civilized, a part of the world that we know outside. There are motor-cars, pretty, smartly dressed girls with their mothers, and proud fathers full of malapropos comments, and—most important of all—no compulsory cricket. For one whole day we get a chance to breathe, to look round and talk, and at night if a boy is lucky he may even dine with his people at their hotel in Scarborough.

It need scarcely be said how flat the rest of the term seems after this great day, so eagerly looked forward to, so long in coming, so quickly over when it does arrive.

I think I derived most of my joy from comparing the garb of my colleagues on this day with their ordinary, every-day habiliments.

I suppose no class of men dresses more shabbily than the schoolmaster; as he is so abominably [66] underpaid that is not to be wondered at. What is a matter for comment is the extraordinary costume he dons on gala occasions.

Grey frock-coats with black trousers and a straw hat, dark morning coat with brown boots and a bowler—there is no end to the grotesqueness of the combination of ill-assorted garments. We look like a lot of master grocers tricked out for an annual convention. After all, clothes are not a very important part of life, but it does somehow emphasize our aloofness from the workaday world to appear clad like Rip Van Winkles once a year. Our gaucherie when we are called upon to talk to our visitors would make even a shop-walker wince. We seem to have lost the art of conversation: our tongues are rusty; we have no commonplaces, we cannot even hand round tea or food without falling over one another. We feel all the time that these parents are laughing at our awkwardness, that the girls have labelled us all as old fossils, bloodless, not unlike harmless lunatics: their brothers will certainly not tend to remove that impression when asked.

Altogether I felt ashamed of my profession for the whole of that day. I would willingly forget it.

I have been wondering lately whether I am not wasting such talents as I have at Radchester. I certainly do not want to stay here for ever with no prospect of ever earning more than £300 a year, and yet there is no denying that on the whole I love the place and that I feel an insidious temptation to take root here. Just by way of experiment I have answered a few advertisements to [67] see if I have any chance of getting anything else.

One man wanted me to act as secretary to a firm of motor manufacturers, but that seems to be tame and dull compared with this.

The Board of Education have offered me a post as Junior Inspector of Board Schools in Essex, but I dislike the smell of board schools and constant travelling up and down the county does not appeal to me at all. The most tempting offer has come from India, to take over the job of Professor of English at a native university. I dallied with that idea for some time, but my people were against it, so I reluctantly refused it. The pay was good and the life would certainly be interesting, besides which I should then be able to gratify my desire to travel. The East is always calling me, ever since I first began to read Conrad. But should I find an Illingworth or a Benbow among the natives? I imagine the contingency to be a remote one. On the other hand, I should broaden my mind and come into contact with men and women with ideas as different as possible from those current here.

One result of my tentative efforts to leave has been a sort of restlessness which has made me buy guidebooks to all sorts of places. Illingworth and I had arranged to spend the summer holidays at Chagford, but now that he is gone I am likely to be at a loose end and I don't know where to go. I've thought of the Highlands, the Lakes, Ireland, Cornwall and Wales: I cannot make up my mind. I find that I want a companion and there is no one in Common Room with whom I should care to go.

[68]

July 31, 1910

Now that I have come to the end of my first year as a Public School master, I am trying to take stock of the situation. I have learnt a good deal since last September and I certainly am devoted to my job. I have not yet got over my initial nervousness. I still have nightmares of my boys getting out of hand and yet I have had no great difficulty in keeping order. I certainly don't like taking prep. or looking after "Hall" while three hundred and fifty boys eat, but I can cope with any number of boys up to forty and keep them at work. During the last week I have been invigilating and correcting examination work: my boys have not done particularly well in mathematics. Apparently I still go too fast or else I am unable to explain adequately. Compared with my English work I find mathematics uncommonly dull. In English I have got some really good results. Some boys have written short stories, others plays, others verses, many of which show originality, good sense, and a capacity for expression which I certainly did not get last year. I have interested them, too, in reading: they borrow all my books, new and old. I read extracts from all sorts of authors in form and try to whet their appetites for more. I only wish that instead

of a paltry two hours a week I could inveigle the Head to give me an hour a day. All the other English masters here confine themselves to analysis, parsing, précis, and one play of Shakespeare per year. I have run through (lightly) the whole course of English Literature in the last three terms and some boys have specialized on drama, others on ballads, others on fiction and a few on poetry, each following his own bent.

I wonder why this all-important subject has been so neglected. That it has is evident from the [69]
silly letters most boys write and the twaddle that gets into the school magazine. Why any one pays sixpence for the monthly *Radcastrian* passes my comprehension. It consists of a facetious all too brief Editorial, badly strung together, followed by pages of description of games which interest no one except the players, and them only if they receive honourable mention, a sentimental piece of artificial versifying, a list of elevens and fifteens, promotions, colourless reports of debates and lectures, and a few letters of abuse. I'd guarantee to turn out a better journal from the weekly output of my form. The worst of it is that the average boy is interested in nothing at all, there is nothing that he wants to read about. So a tradition springs up that a school magazine shall be solely a chronicle of games.

I am now in the middle of writing reports. I wonder why it is that as soon as we are confronted by one of these queer documents all powers of criticism and expression desert us, and we, one and all, descend to a jargon which is quite meaningless. I find myself filling about a hundred of these slips with such idiotic remarks as "Industry adequate," "Painstaking," "Very fair but could work harder," "Lacks concentration," "Very weak but tries," "Neat and hard-working," and so on. When they are filled up they are about as much good as a guide to parents as when they are untouched. No one could possibly gauge a boy's merit or progress from these things. They remind me of marks, which as a criterion of a boy's terminal success are as bad a test as could be devised. I always feel that I am being paid £150 a year simply to do this sort of hack work, to fill up reports [70]
and to make out a weekly order for my form. All the rest of my work I give willingly without payment.

The first part of my summer holiday has been decided for me. To-morrow morning we leave for Salisbury Plain, where we are to camp out for ten days. To that I am looking forward immensely. Sharing a tent with seven boys in this house should bring me closer to them than ever and I ought to be able to learn something valuable about that most elusive and tricky thing, a boy's mind.

They are never quite natural in the presence of a master; perhaps they'll forget that I am one at Tidworth.

Our O.C. here is a strange fellow. I like him very much, but his views on life are diametrically opposed to my own. He is as hard as nails and is a twentieth-century Stoic. He despises all beautiful things; his bookshelves are lined with Kipling and guides to military strategy and tactics. He lives in and for the Corps. He is never happy unless he is in uniform. Like myself he is a mathematician, but he makes all his work as military as possible. Day and night he evolves schemes for field-days, outpost, advanced guard and other exercises; he is an expert scout, signaller, and drill-master. He demands the utmost punctilio in matters of ceremonial on parade: he coaches individually each boy who shoots on the range; he spends most of his holidays in barracks or on Army manœuvres as a lieutenant in the Special Reserve. He is one of the few men I know who is convinced that we are shortly to embark on a colossal European war, and naturally all the rest of Common Room laugh at him. He really is rather absurd, yet I cannot help but love [71]
him, he is so splendidly sure of himself. His is one of the rooms to which I feel any inclination to go when I feel lonely. He sits up to all hours of the night drawing maps and working out military problems from old examination papers, but he is always eager and ready for an argument. His principal bone of contention with me is that I don't "ginger up" the boys enough. He is a firm believer in the rod; he canes nearly all the boys in his House weekly, just to keep them up to the mark and himself in training. He detests my theories that boys should be taught in comfortable rooms with good pictures on the walls and æsthetic colours to delight their senses. He is one of those men who is suspicious of all Art as tending towards the immoral. They say he is admirable in camp, and that all the other Public School officers stand in awe of him because he knows his job so much better than they do. He certainly is unlike any other schoolmaster whom I have ever known. There is a sort of Straffordian "thoroughness" about him which makes him an idol in the sight of the boys who, to give them their due, certainly do bestow all their hero-worship on the Nietzschean superman when they find him.

IV

August 10, 1910

I AM back in Chagford again after ten of the best days I can remember. Camp was one continuous round of sheer joy. The weather was good: they gave us plenty of work to do; I learnt an immense amount of soldiering and I have become quite as keen as any of them.

O'Connor, our O.C., has recommended me for a commission and I go into barracks at the Depot in Exeter next week. I had no idea that life under canvas could be so good. To be woken after a dreamless sleep at five on a perfect summer morning, to open the tent-flaps and look out on the gorgeous woods of the Pennings and then to dash up and have an icy shower-bath before first parade, to come in to breakfast with an appetite as keen as that of a baby, to spend the greater part of the day in the open air, washing up, cleaning the tent and my uniform, or running about as a scout searching for information, to shout rowdy songs in company with a couple of thousand other spirits as healthy and care-free as oneself, to gossip in the lines as the light gradually dwindles away at night, and last of all to be sung to sleep by the bugle's "last post" and "lights out," in short to live as man should live, in a sort of half-savage, wholly healthy way like this is one delirious dream. I loved every minute of it. Would that it could have continued for a hundred [73] instead of ten days. The boys in my tent treated me exactly as one of themselves. I was ordered about by my section commander just like any other private; in fact, I was privileged enough to be taken by everybody just as a private, as if there were no Radchester and this was all. It was just one glorious "rag": the fight for food and drink as orderly of the day, the hustle to get everything cleared up in time for parade, the deadly funk lest one's buttons should not pass muster at the inspection, the fear lest one should do the wrong thing in close order drill on parade, and so bring ridicule down on the school or oneself from the tyrannical sergeants who bullied us into shape, everything was thoroughly good and I loved it.

It is very quiet and tame at Chagford after that strenuous time, but I have never before realized how precious a thing a hot bath was, or clean sheets and a comfortable bed, and entire liberty with regard to the way in which one spends one's day. Chagford is becoming my home, my refuge from the world. Betty and Thomasin even came as far as Moretonhampstead in the motor-bus to meet me. I could have hugged them both for this. They were disappointed not to see Illingworth and it was hard to account for his absence. I said that he had gone to Switzerland to complete his education. I miss him even more here than I did at school. We sang all the old songs to-night and I read some more stories out of "The Arabian Nights." It is hard to imagine that three months have passed since I was last here. The village, they tell me, is crowded: all the summer visitors [74] are now here. I don't like to hear that—I am jealous of my find. I don't like hordes of Londoners prying into my favourite nooks. I shall find banana-skins and orange-pips on the Wallabrook to-morrow, and probably the way to Cranmere will be indicated by a long succession of paper bags and bits of discarded bun.

I wish I could describe the fascination of the moor. As soon as I got to Exeter I saw the blue hills in the distance with their quaint, craggy tors, and my heart leaped within me. I wanted to get out of the train and run to greet them. By the time that we had climbed out of Newton to Bovey I was racing from side to side of the carriage to glut my eyes with the rich sights which met my eye wherever I looked, the white-washed cottages, the prosperous farms, the rookeries, the rock-strewn streams, the thick woods, the riot of many-coloured flowers, the red loam and real green fields—how different these from the poor parched pastures of Radchester; the square squat church towers, the tapering spires, the big mansions of the squirearchy, the slow plodding farm labourers in the winding lanes, the myriad animals squatting, running, flying, chasing and being chased; everything spoke to me of home and then at last at Moretonhampstead to be met by such dear creatures as Betty and Thomasin: my cup of happiness was indeed full.

August 21, 1910

I am to go back to Chagford as soon as I have finished my military training here in order to coach young Willoughby (whose brother was at New College with me last year) for Woolwich. He said that he didn't mind where he went and so he fell in at once with my suggestion of Chagford. I am [75] not altogether liking life in barracks after my wild and free week at Chagford. There I got up when I liked, ordered what I liked for meals, was waited on hand and foot by Betty and Thomasin, lazed by the side of the Teign and bathed at frequent intervals in a deep pool which nobody knew of, far from all inquisitive eyes, and trapesed about the moor to my heart's content every day. I took a heap of books but except in the kitchen at nights, when I read aloud, I never had any temptation to open them. After the strenuous life of camp I was only too glad of the opportunity to meander and gossip. Life seems to move very slowly in these Devon villages. No one seems to have been married or to have died since I was last here: the same girls serve in the same shops, the same men occupy the same seats in the bar parlour at "The Half-Moon" and "The Goat and Boy"; the only change is the influx of visitors attired in immaculate flannels, who get excited

because their copy of the *Times* "was not sent up at the usual time to-day."

Thank Heaven, I've only got to endure ten days more of this: I am not overfond of the officers. They resent my presence, I think, because I am not a *pukka* soldier: I never could be—I have not O'Connor's temperament. There is such an amazing amount of ritual and ceremony about the mess. There's not much to do except to drink and read the papers, and "get up" the parts of the "rifle," which bore me. The Sergeant-Major has taken me under his wing and given me tips preparatory to my exam., but I'm not so grateful as I ought to be. Every morning I go out on first [76] parade, usually in a parlous funk about my clothes. Do I wear a sword or not? Whom exactly am I expected to salute? What are my duties? Everything is hazy: there is nothing definite laid down and frequently I loiter about all the morning only to find that I am not wanted. Most of the senior officers seem to spend their time filling up papers in the orderly room. In the afternoons they go off and play tennis or fish, and I am left to my own devices until dinner, which meal I am expected to attend. I have explored the city, which is an attractive one. The inhabitants are sleepy, but extraordinarily healthy-looking and rubicund of hue: the girls almost uncannily pretty.

Betty and Thomasin came in from Chagford for the day yesterday at my invitation and I took them out to lunch and tea, and we had a rare good time together. They are very anxious for my release and complain that Fernworthy View is very dull without me. Whether that be true or no, all blessings be upon their sweet heads for saying so.

I have had letters from heaps of Radcastrians who were in camp with me, declaring that they find home very slow and boring after the ecstatic days in camp.

September 15, 1910

I passed my exam. all right at Exeter and very glad I was to shake the dust of the barracks square from my feet and once more to get back to my beloved Chagford.

Willoughby is a Wykehamist, who is trying to get into "The Shop" in November. His mathematics are sound but his English is lamentable. He seems to have read nothing except, quaintly enough, [77] Norwegian sagas: he is always quoting "Burnt Njal." I find him excellent company: and he has ravished the hearts of most of the girls who are staying here. It is much gayer than it was when I was last here; we have had three gorgeous dances. I wish I did not feel such a fool at these shows. Radchester has unfitted me for all these society gatherings. I feel abominably out of it; it is so long since I used to dance regularly. I get in a paralytic fear lest I should tread on my partners' toes. I imagine that I am wooden, gawky and stiff, in spite of my partner's eulogies on my ease and lightness.

We play tennis, golf and cricket a good deal and even got up some amateur theatricals, in which I took the part of Myngs in a Pepys play. These people are as different as possible from the north-country manufacturers. None of them have much money, but they all possess honoured names and an intense pride of birth: Cruwys, Polwhele, Chichester, Acland, Trefusis, or Champernowne. I wish we boasted such names at Radchester. They are all exceedingly kind to me. I feel thoroughly happy and at ease when I am gossiping with the villagers or running about on the moor with Willoughby, who is very slack about walking, and always wants to hire a car; he has heaps of money and is certainly lavish with it. He flirts outrageously with all the girls he comes across, but he is healthy and altogether lovable.

We work all the mornings and sometimes at night. I don't think there is much doubt about his getting in. He is beginning to take quite an interest in his English work and constantly bewails the fact that he never discovered at school what a delightful subject it is. He is interested in all [78] sides of life and like Illingworth is afraid of nothing. If he wants to get into conversation with any one he just does it, whereas, however much I wanted to, I should always hold back through fear, what of I don't quite know.

I have tried to set down on paper exactly how this country affects me, but I cannot do it. I envy Eden Phillpotts and Trevena more than I can say. I look for romance in the faces of the passers-by and try to weave stories about the villagers but they all fail to materialize. I cannot make any of them live in my pages; they are all dolls. I haven't really been taught to observe properly. Willoughby comes back from a garden-party and can conjure up an exact picture of all the old frumps, the parsons, the retired civilians, their lovely daughters ... every one. He knows the colour of their eyes and hair, peculiarities of their hands and bodies, the material of which their clothes are made, together with their colour and shape.

I talk to a girl for an hour, find her captivating, come home, essay to describe her and fail entirely. I can't even remember whether she is dark or fair, what sort of frock she wore, what was the colour of her eyes, or whether her features are regular or not. I suppose I don't look at people enough. I simply daren't. I can't scrutinize: I wish I could overcome this bashfulness. All the time I keep on thinking what a fool all these people must imagine me to be. But all the same there are one or two types here who interest me a good deal. The captain of the cricket team is a retired colonel of an Indian regiment, an old M.C.C. man who lives for the game and curses us [79] roundly when we fail to come up to his expectations. When we win he praises us extravagantly, when we lose his language becomes positively Oriental. He never misses an opportunity of net-practice and requires us to be equally keen. His one aim in life is to go through a season without losing a single match. In August he always invites the most famous cricketers he knows to come and stay with him, but they do not always come off on these tricky wickets and he gets much more furious with them if they fail than he does with us.

The doctor is another good type: he is very handsome and beloved of every one. He bears his honours lightly so long as every one gives in to him, but he sulks like any two-year-old child if he is crossed in any way. He likes to keep himself surrounded by pretty girls and as there is no dearth of them he has a good time.

One of the best points about Chagford is the way in which every one collects at different houses without any special invitation. I find that the Chagford people have done me no end of good. They've laughed me out of a good deal of my awkwardness. Though I am much slower at making friends than Willoughby, I have ceased to regard all mankind as hostile to me.

The parson here has become a great pal of mine. He is young, extraordinarily well-read, athletic, and madly keen about his work. It is a treat, by way of a change, to leave the roysterers and sit smoking in his study and talk about books and education and social problems. His life is full to the brim with that happiness which comes from service. It seems to me an ideal existence to try to keep the vision splendid before the eyes of these moor-folk, to comfort them in their distress.... [80] I have often thought of taking Orders. I don't quite know what keeps me back. I can conceive no finer life than that led by the preacher. Of all men in history I think I should like to have been John Wesley. At home nothing delights me so much as taking my father's Bible Classes or preaching to his Sunday afternoon congregations from the lectern. I've read the Thirty-nine Articles again lately: I don't like the thought of swearing my allegiance to them, but there are heaps of parsons who do excellent work without regarding a great many of them. I like visiting the cottagers and for the most part they seem to like me. I know that at home they all expect me "to go into the Church," as they call it, in the end. The difficulty is about the call. Is the Church my vocation? One thing I would not do and that is to take Orders solely with a view to preferment at school.... No, I could not become a parson unless I felt a clear call and it is that call that I am so uncertain of. I don't like separating myself from my fellow-men by wearing a sombre garb. I believe that it is possible to fulfil one's life-mission quite as well by remaining among the laity. Certainly points of ecclesiastical etiquette give rise to no wild enthusiasms or hatred in my breast. I was educated as a High Churchman and I like incense and vestments, good music and ritual, but I am quite happy with the Evangelicals. I could never get so tempestuously wrathful about minor points of doctrine as that flamboyant, truculent paper that represents the Catholic Anglican party does. I attend Wesleyan chapels and Roman Catholic churches and from all of them I derive some measure of comfort. I have been reading the lessons in church here for the [81] last few Sundays.

Willoughby always laughs at my church-going; like most of the visitors he never enters a place of worship. I see no reason why any man should unless he feels the need of it. I do. He doesn't, and there's an end of it. The psalms and collects and hymns uplift me and the sermons I look forward to more than anything in the week. There is always some strain of philosophy in sermons which appeals to me. I certainly dislike chapel at school, solely because it is compulsory. The sermons, too, there are curiously uneven. Most of the parsons on the staff are good, conscientious Christians, but some are devoted to dogma and others to moral conduct, and they tend to separate these two features of religion absolutely, which I am certain is a mistake.

It is like our Divinity lessons: one has to test whether a boy has done his preparation by asking all sorts of silly questions, while all the time one is longing to preach, to point out the inspiration, to expound the Bible as a complete guide to life. It is very difficult to reconcile the two. My best Divinity scholars are certainly my least reliable boys as regards Christian practice.

I wish I knew where the solution lies. I am tempted always to let the exact knowledge go and preach from a text whenever I go in to class. The object of education is to fit a boy for life, so that he may learn to conduct himself honourably and valiantly wherever he goes. Does our present system succeed in doing this? If not, it is a very serious shortcoming. What we want is much more Christian doctrine taught—it ought to pervade every lesson. There is still far too great a tendency [82] to regard Sundays, chapels, and the Divinity lessons as something quite outside the ordinary things of life: boys are not made to perceive that their whole life is a religion and that where there is no religion there is no life, and that to try to live according to one code of ethics on Sundays and an entirely opposite one all the rest of the week is simply to kill either the spiritual or the material.

During these holidays I have devised several new schemes for next term: I don't know how many of them I shall bring to fruition. I've been reading a good many books on school life lately, but they all seem to me to lack something, I don't quite know what it is. Most novelists at one time or another try their hand at a Public School novel—but I expect that the next generation will smile at our present efforts, just as we do at "Eric, or Little by Little."

H. A. Vachell in "The Hill" wrote a most readable novel and certainly portrayed that amazingly sentimental side that is really very prominent in the human boy. He hates and loves whole-heartedly. Other men and boys become the whitest of heroes and the blackest of villains in his eyes. But beyond this there was nothing of truth to life in what was an exceedingly successful book.

Arnold Lunn in his counterblast to this, "The Harrovians," dwelt too distinctly on the reverse side of the picture, on the more drab side of life at school. He is certainly truer in his descriptions but somehow he missed the soul: "The Harrovians" and "The Hill" are both like Academy pictures.

I don't know if the real Public School novel will ever be written: I don't quite know if it can. In the [83] first place, to make it both readable and true, you must take an exceptional boy like Denis Yorke in St. John Lucas's "The First Round," or those immortal scamps in "Stalky and Co."

The average boy's life is too humdrum to make material for a book: of course a good journalist could make an excellent chapter out of an account of a house or school match. Most novelists are quite bad at this journeyman sort of writing. Modern writers are trying different tactics. The popular way at present is to focus the reader's attention on Common Room. Boys are dull compared with men; their conversations inept; all the normal plots round which novels spin i.e. love-making, are out of place in a boy's life, so clever Hugh Walpole in "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill" has approached nearer than any one else in presenting at once a readable, exciting and true picture of a certain sort of school. Certainly there are men on the Radchester staff who might have walked straight out of the pages of this remarkable novel. Anything truer than that sordid, lurid picture of the petty jealousies that exist between grown man and man at a school has never been written.

"But surely," said the parson here to me the other night, while we were discussing this, "no two cultivated men of the world would be at daggers drawn simply over a ridiculous umbrella."

"That's just the hideousness of it all," I replied. "Men do behave in that incomprehensible way at schools. They are like naughty children: you'd never believe that they are graduates, picked men, both intellectually and physically. You'd never believe how spiteful and inhuman men can be to one another until you've lived with them in a school. I suppose we see too much of one another. I [84] cannot believe that all schools are like Radchester, but certainly Hugh Walpole must have suffered at one not unlike it."

I have had a great many talks about education with the parson while I have been here: he is very keen on raising the age-limit to sixteen in elementary schools. At present he says that the education they get is of no use to them. There are heaps of boys and girls of eighteen and nineteen in Chagford who can neither read nor write, although they were taught to do both when they were children: as soon as they go on to the farms they find that these accomplishments are not marketable, and so they forget them in an incredibly short space of time. Apparently, too, the standard of morality in village life is deplorably low. When the youths attend church it is, only too frequently, so that they may ogle the girls: the church makes a good rendezvous. Neither drunkenness nor immorality have decreased with the spread of education, nor are the people any more thrifty or ambitious.

The farmers are as ignorant as they were before the Corn Laws were repealed. Altogether he draws a lurid, hopeless picture of the country yokel.

There must be at bottom a wonderfully fine instinct at the heart of every Englishman for, however bad the system of education may be, and that it is bad from the highest to lowest I am becoming surer every day, he still makes a good thing of life.

The Public School product is a fine specimen of a man: he is strictly honest in all his dealings, he will never turn his back on a "pal," he is capable of handling men with sympathy, he can adapt himself at short shrift to almost any circumstance: if only he could be prevailed upon not to [85] despise learning and beauty no other type of man could touch him.

I have lately been trying to understand more of foreign countries through their fiction, particularly Russia. Years ago I read and loved Tolstoi's "Resurrection"; last week I tried to get through "Anna Karenin" and failed. I can't explain quite why, unless it is that Dostoievsky has supplanted him in my estimation. I never read any one in the least like Dostoievsky. I think "The Brothers Karamazov" is the greatest novel I ever read. No man rises from it with exactly the same outlook on life which he had when he sat down to it. Dostoievsky seemed in that book to be on the point of discovering all that hurt and puzzled us about the world: every now and then we seem to get a glimpse millions of years ahead into a timeless, limitless space where truth and beauty at last prevail, and misery and suffering are no more. Everything that he writes seems to turn on this word "suffering." Light, not salvation, comes to man through his capacity to suffer. The characters in "The Brothers Karamazov" are not human beings at all: they are disembodied spirits with an amazing power of self-analysis: this gloomy introspectiveness is the chief feature of all Russian writing. They seem to know so much more than we do about the actions of the human heart: their sympathy with humanity is deeper than ours: we are too apt to dismiss from our thoughts what we do not immediately understand—the more complex a man's character the more we shun him, but the Russian seeks to disintegrate it and account for his contradictory traits: how Iago must appeal to the Russian mind. They appear to be a nation of Hamlets. Those [86] that are not are Lucifers.

I am not pleased with the German mind. There is, in their plays at any rate, an awful playing with fire. Nietzsche paralyses me—this will to power would be frightful if it were ever given full play. The present effect of their refined system of education seems to drive the flower of their youth to suicide. English stupidity is better than German kultur if that is what love of learning leads to. There must be some middle way.

It is a relief to turn to American fiction. All the world seems to be passing through a stage of transition much as it did in the days of the Romantic Revival.

Then all Europe was bothered about the Brotherhood of Man and the Return to Nature; nowadays we are casting off all the conventions of our fathers and pressing towards the rights of the individual to be a law unto himself.

In "Jean Christophe" Romain Rolland seems to be expressing on the Continent what Wells, Bennett, J. D. Beresford, Gilbert Cannan and others are trying to express here, that the young man of to-day is not content to accept religion, or the codes of morality or conduct which his father believed in and acted upon. The new age asks the right to discover a fresh religion for

itself and to live according to the light of its own reason. The hero of the modern novel, if hero he can be called, is feckless and unsteady: like Dostoievsky he is continually on the look-out for what is round the corner. He prefers misery to happiness, for out of intense misery and unhappiness he learns to harden himself, in Hugh Walpole's words, by this means alone can he come to real [87] adequate manhood and subdue fear and hypocrisy.

The most outstanding characteristic of the new school of hero is his selfishness: he thinks of no one but himself. It does not matter very much that he should be unhappy: he deserves to be and he almost seems to delight in being so, but unfortunately he brings every one else with whom he comes into contact into a like state—his womenfolk, his parents, are left heart-broken while he continues on his wild way, Mazeppa-like, riding rough-shod over old-established prejudices, subverting the minds of the young, overturning traditions and setting up new gods only to desert them in their turn.

I certainly prefer this new generation to the decadents of the nineties; at least we are spared artificiality, idle philandering, and that delicate languor of lilies and harping on vice as a desirable thing. Our new heroes are never dirty-minded though they frequently perform rotten things. If only they would not think so much they might be quite decent beings.

Unfortunately all these supermen lack the one great essential of all true men, they have no glimmer of humour in their composition. They are so deadly in earnest to find out the meaning of life that they have no time to turn aside and browse in the pastures which Aristophanes, Shakespeare, Charles Lamb and Dickens so enjoyed; the comic spirit seems to be dead in us.

They leave jesting to the music-hall artiste—they have no room for laughter in their scheme of existence. This is where the great American short-story writer scores so heavily. He is incurably romantic and yet alive and alert: he is interested in all humanity and like all sympathetic [88] observers of erring mankind, he can afford to laugh not at but with them at the absurdity of things.

I find in J. M. Synge the best epitome of this age. He has a superb intellect (most of the young writers are prodigiously clever), his style is clear, simple, forcible and exact, and he tears up all our old ideas by the roots. In "The Playboy of the Western World" he has offended his own people of Ireland for all time. They cannot understand the universality of the theme. He did not write his play to show how excellent a thing it is to be a parricide, though incidentally he does carry on the Shavian idea that sons owe no duty to their parents—they did not ask to be born. What he did set out to do was to show how the feckless, unappreciated lout may realize that he has a soul, and how easily he stands alone without love of women or any other sentimental prop when he has found it. Stanley Houghton is another exponent of the twentieth-century philosophy. "Hindle Wakes" merely shows that the new theories of life have spread not only to the other sex, but to mill-girls and shop-girls. Fanny was willing to spend a week-end in the society of a man simply for enjoyment, and refused to bind herself to him for the rest of her life just to satisfy an effete convention. What she wanted and meant to have was freedom: she was well able to take care of herself; she was earning a good wage and had become self-supporting. Her parents might turn her out; she was not, on that account, like the forsaken mistress of the nineties, therefore bound to go on the streets. She could live her life in her own way, beholden to no man.

We are passing through grave and strenuous times and it is quite obvious that we shall have to [89] adapt ourselves to new conditions: "new truths make ancient good uncouth."

We have come a long way from the sentimental, the artificial, the Restoration attitude to life. In the new age men and women are coming to work side by side, are beginning to understand one another better and do not contemplate seductions or marriage whenever they meet.

What are our schools doing to prepare their pupils for this new world? Nothing at all so far as I can see. Masters do not trouble to read the very obvious signs in the sky. At girls' schools I am told the same old methods of stringent secrecy about everything that matters are carried out. The girl of to-day leaves school with an outlook on life formed on an incomplete acquaintance with the world of Jane Austen. There has been no gradual unfolding of the new ideas—what an awakening lies before some of the wives of the next generation. But boys are in no happier case. They are being brought up to believe that they will go out into a world exactly similar to that in which their fathers lived. Theirs too will be a troublous time before they learn the lesson. I don't quite see how the problem is to be tackled. It is scarcely possible to give readings from all the modern novelists to schoolboys: the outspokenness of this new writing is frightening even to adult minds.

What we want is more knowledge; the zeal of the present day is for facts. We want the truth at all costs: we don't mind how much it hurts. We are not like the men who have to create a God if there isn't one, we are able to bear anything except shams and lies; we recognize one aristocracy [90] only, the aristocracy of intellect and truth.

As an honest man I feel that I ought to resign my post at Radchester after reading these moderns, because I am paid to go on retailing hypocritical untruths to my boys. Having caught me out in one falsification they will be suspicious of me altogether. I wonder how much Illingworth and Jefferies already look on me as a charlatan—but then, according to my lights I was proclaiming my faith ... and now, well I find it hard to put down how I stand with regard to the new school of thought. After all, these men are all experimentalists, they are in the position of men who are testing the scaffolding of a house: they say our edifice is insecure, that our props are rotten, that the architects who built our house of life were jerry-builders, but how do we know that these men are any better? I am so afraid of offending the susceptibilities of one of my charges that I dare tell them nothing, but on the other hand, surely it were better for them to be guided now than to

be flung without a guide into the maelstrom of conflicting public opinion when they leave school.

If only some of my colleagues had read these new writers it would be so much more helpful. But all books since Dickens and Thackeray are taboo at school as new-fangled and hence ephemeral. The attitude to life of the mid-Victorians is the attitude we ourselves are expected not only to adopt for ourselves but to teach. No wonder we are looked upon as hopeless old fogies by our boys as soon as they leave us.

The old idea that fiction was written as Fielding wrote it, solely for our amusement and not at all for our instruction, appears still to prevail pretty well everywhere, so that even the most omnivorous readers here in Chagford do not take the new men seriously; they think that they are trying to shock and startle us but have no sort of propagandist theory at the back of their minds. It is the same with the theatre. People resent the thought that they might learn something of value by listening to a play: they go to the theatre to be amused, not to be preached at, consequently they miss the point of quite half the plays they see. They are very good lessons for every one except ourselves, but *we* never need correction. [91]

V

October 1, 1910

I HAVE joined the *Times* Book Club. I find that I cannot get along without a constant supply of new books. I want to keep abreast of modern thought at all costs. I don't see why, because I am condemned to teach Descartes and Pythagoras, I should deny myself Henry James or Bourget. I find that standard works are not enough. There are times when Pope palls on me, when Dickens and Thackeray ask to be given a rest. At such times I want to read some of the new school, the men who have broken away from the old traditions and carved out a new world. Perhaps if I were not in such a deadly fear of getting into a groove I should not pin my faith so largely to these very restless and rather morbid young men, but a schoolmaster seems to be expected to stifle any growth that a nation might be showing signs of, to prevent youth from essaying out of the beaten tracks into the many virgin jungles that surround life.

This term so far is going fairly smoothly. We have a new German master who gets unmercifully "ragged"; O'Connor looks upon him with extreme suspicion. He thinks that the German Government have sent him here purposely to spy out this part of the country. A more harmless fellow than Koenig it would be hard to find. O'Connor really is a prodigious ass. In the first place [93] the man is very nervous: he has no idea of keeping order. Boys have a habit of entering his classroom by the window; they also burn bonfires in his waste-paper basket; they bring mice into form and chase them all over the room; they cheer when any boy gets good marks and hiss when any one fails to score. Altogether his sets derive a considerable amount of amusement from him and we in Common Room profess to be shocked but are in reality secretly pleased to think how infinitely superior we are to him. Nothing gives a man self-confidence so quickly as to see another one making a havoc of his job.

Benson is also getting "ragged," not so much by the boys as by some of the younger members of the staff. Last term we started a club which meets nightly in his rooms and "rouses the welkin with a succession of catches." We drink whisky and consume vast quantities of fruit and cake, while he plays to us on the piano or violin and we shout snatches from the latest musical comedy.

Benson's forte lies in the subject of boys' smoking. He is certain that boys use the music-rooms to smoke in. To encourage him in this idea, several of us have lately dropped cigarette ends in different parts of the building; these he discovers, picks up and treasures, revealing them to us later. He has a wonderful scheme (which he thinks is his own but which in reality we have put him up to) by which he means to catch the miscreants red-handed.

Half of the club are to sit in darkness and silence in one room, the other half in another: we are all to listen until we hear the boys come in, and at a given signal dash out upon them from two [94] directions and so catch them.

Jackson and I have been deputed by the others to dress up and do the smoking; we are to get out of the window after smoking two or three cheap cigarettes one night and then be chased up and down the shore. That is, Benson will do the chasing, the others will slip back in the dark to consume whisky and wait for his return. He will then be told and the sight of his face ought to be good to see.

October 24, 1910

We have brought off the rag: it didn't turn out as we expected. Both Jackson and I elaborated the jest. I was produced in a (pretended) faint, covered with mud and bleeding at the nose, after a supposed fight with one of the boys, who "in the end got away by pushing me into a pond." I put so much realism into this that Benson was quite concerned about me. I felt an awful pig and so seriously did Benson take it that we did not feel that we could let him know the truth of the matter.

I have been restless again of late and to cure myself have taken to going into Scarborough and roaming round the streets at night. I find this an excellent remedy. I love watching crowds, especially a seaside crowd. They are so obviously out to enjoy life once work for the day is over. They are hail-fellow-well-met with everybody. I don't know why I get so fascinated with the life of the streets: no one else at Radchester ever thinks of any other strata of society than his own.

I want to probe the drama of life: each lighted window conjures up some vision of domestic comedy or tragedy to me. I want to know. I want to play eavesdropper to whisperers in the dark: [95] I scent romance at every corner of the street. Partly I attribute this to reading O. Henry's short stories. "We live *by* habits, but *for* adventure" would seem to be the foundation of his belief about life. The skirts of Romance are always swishing past us; we just hear faintly the sound of her tread, we see dimly the sheen of her garments, but we are so bolstered up and surrounded by convention that we dare not give chase, much as we should like to. So Romance for us, as O. Henry says, comes to mean a mere matter of a marriage or two, a few old letters, and a ball programme stuffed away in a drawer—the memory of one scent-laden evening, and for the rest,

our existence consists of a lifelong feud with a steam radiator.

I find that my boys love these American short stories, with their quaint extravagances of language, their three-fold surprise upon surprise, their outspokenness and world-wide sympathies with every sort of man and woman, from train-robber to shop-girl and man about town to murderer and convict.

I have been reading lately Edmund Holmes's book on "What Is and What Might Be." He seems to express the ideals of education better than any one I have ever read: yet no one on the staff does more than sneer or laugh at him as an idealist and an impracticable dreamer. I like particularly his six instinctive desires of youth. Every child, he says, wants passionately (1) to talk and listen, (2) to act (in the dramatic sense), (3) to draw, paint, and model, (4) to dance and sing, (5) to know the why of things, and (6) to construct things. To develop all these six instincts he declares is the [96] true aim of all real education.

How little do we care how well or badly a boy talks, reads, acts, sings, reasons or constructs. If we were to model ourselves on a right system we should pay as much attention to the development of a boy's æsthetic as to his physical side.

As it is we distrust music, painting, acting and reading as effeminate and degrading. We look on the cult of the beautiful as in some degree immoral: O'Connor's theory of Spartan ugliness, of working always in a room as bare as a barracks, unrelieved by colours or comfortable surroundings, is looked on as the ideal method of training youth. Subjects are taught just in so far as they are distasteful: the fact that one can work hard at anything just because it is interesting is regarded as impossible. If one begins to argue you are countered by the shibboleth of "mental discipline," which is supposed to be the final word on any topic of controversy. If grammar grind provides a mental discipline, grammar grind must therefore be invaluable, quite apart from its utilitarian aspect. Consequently boys are taught many things which serve no useful purpose and lead nowhere simply because it is good for them to have to perform arduous, pointless tasks without asking the "why" of them, in direct contravention of Mr. Holmes's theory. The fact that beautiful natural surroundings connote that the mind also assimilates a beauty of demeanour is entirely lost sight of, or flatly contradicted. I should like to impose upon our leading educationists of the old regime one task which they would find distasteful—a very severe "mental discipline" and hence very good for them—I mean a compulsory reading of Mr. Holmes's book: it would do [97] them a world of good.

I find that my greatest joy in life these days is having boys to tea. However much one may mix with them in games, in hall, in form, in debating societies and elsewhere, one somehow misses the personal relationship, whereas at these tea-parties boys are altogether natural and throw off the protective mask they usually wear before masters.

I like to see them pottering about the room, picking books from the shelves, looking at photographs in albums, arguing frenziedly among themselves quite regardless of me, with unrestrained freedom of diction.

Some of the younger ones of course simply regard my rooms as a refuge, a place where it is possible to keep warm in front of a fire, instead of having to sit on the hot-water pipes in the passages, a tuck-shop where one doesn't have to pay and where "bloods" don't come and turn you out of the good seats.

But several who come solely for food stay frequently to talk and unburden themselves of their troubles. It is then that I begin to think that after all there may be some chance of my doing good work as a schoolmaster. I cannot rid myself of the feeling that most of my time here is wasted. I cannot pretend that my mathematical teaching is really successful. Apparently good mathematical tutors are extremely rare: all through the school the standard here is lamentable. We keep on trying new methods and new textbooks, but with very little result. We can secure a dozen good classical scholarships at the University every year, whereas one mathematical exhibition every three years is considered extremely good. Mathematics, like English, is better taught at the grammar and secondary schools than at the Public Schools. I suppose they get more [98] capable teachers at schools which are directly responsible to the Board of Education. I cannot believe that the material they work with is better. Of course, one reason why the secondary schools score so heavily in science and mathematical scholarships is because boys educated at these places know that they will have to depend entirely upon their own efforts to secure a living, whereas the Public School boy usually knows that if he fails entirely to make good there still remains some sinecure or other which he will be able to obtain through his family's influence. This and the fact that he will be rich anyhow combine to make him careless about taking every advantage of improving his mind while he is at school. To do any work which isn't definitely required is to call down upon a boy's head from his friends insult and abuse. The principle of "work for work's sake" is unknown to them: incentives of all sorts have to be provided, the honour of the House, the sporting tendencies of the master who takes them, the possibility of a prize, the fear of punishment, any and every device is employed except the right one.

December 21, 1910

I have had my fill of refereeing in House matches this term. Nothing is so calculated to bring one into bad odour with a House or with other members of Common Room. I only do it because they never can get any one else. One strives to be scrupulously fair, and the result is that the whole game devolves into a series of whistles and free kicks. The excitement of playing in a House match causes quite the majority of boys to forget that they are merely playing a game: they try to [99]

do everything in their power to secure the advantage, however alien to the spirit of the game. They are told before they go on to the field that unless they lose their tempers and fight from the very beginning they will not do themselves justice, which in itself is counsel of a most doubtful kind; they certainly act up to instructions. Every decision the referee gives is construed as a direct piece of favouritism, and conversation and argument run high on a doubtful try for weeks after the event.

Another thing that I have come up against this term is the dignity of the prefects.

As one grows older one forgets the awe in which these mighty men are held by the school, mighty, that is, if they have been elected for their physical prowess: they are of no account if they are prefects merely because of their intellectual attainments. I have been trying quietly to counteract this state of things by being peculiarly courteous and dignified in my treatment of the scholars and rather hail-fellow-well-met with the "games bloods." They are certainly obtuse, but they quite quickly saw through this. Of course a "games blood" takes infinitely higher rank than any assistant master under thirty, in fact than all of us except the House-masters: he resents being patronized by such an upstart, for instance, as myself. Consequently, by my action in this matter I have let myself in for a feud which may last for years. I have deeply offended the real rulers of the school.

It came about owing to the fact that I have several prefects (elected solely for their "beefiness") [100] in my low mathematical sets. They never do any work and altogether set a rotten example to the others. Of late I have been punishing these boys very heavily, to the great astonishment of themselves and no little enjoyment of the other boys. One of these giants complained to Hallows, his House-master, who came to me in a towering rage and told me that I was subverting the whole of the Public School tradition, lowering the dignity of the prefects and—Heaven knows what besides.

"How the blazes are these fellows going to keep order when the rest of the school see that a young new master can defy them at will and set them punishments which degrade them in the sight of their own fags?"

"Wouldn't it be a good idea," I replied, "if prefects were not elected until they had risen high enough in the school not to have 'fags' in their forms? After all, one of the reasons for coming to school is to work, though we seem to do our best to gloss over that inconvenient fact."

I have had a series of visits lately from Stapleton, who was at Oxford with me: he has been appointed curate at Todsdale, an enormous mining town, and the life there is nearly killing him. The eternal squalor and dreariness of the life, the pettiness of the routine at the Clergy House, the lack of any intellectual or æsthetic interests all bid fair to send him out of his mind.

He usually comes over on a motor-bicycle on Thursday afternoons, and pours out all his troubles as we walk up and down the seashore: he reads to me his sermons, he gives me graphic accounts of the quarrels about ceremonial and duty that occur daily over meals in the Clergy House, of [101] some of the hovels he has to visit, of his opponents among the laity and so on. He seems to be getting mixed up with some mill-girl in a way I can't quite understand: it sounds as if her people were trying their hardest to secure him as a husband for their daughter: perhaps they know that he has considerable private means, for the average curate is not much of a catch in the eyes of the north-country factory worker: he has no prospects.

I must say I admire Stapleton's courage and devotion to duty in cutting himself off from the beauties of the south, from all decent society, and all chance of meeting a girl of his own status: it must be a terrible life for him, for his senses are not blunted. He sits and mopes, thinking over old days when he too lived in Arcadia.

I don't think that I could ever settle down in the north. I like the bustle and the sense of importance that possesses the money-makers in Leeds, but I object to the absence of sun, of the sleepy happiness of the south; the crude dialect, rasping and hard, seems typical of the people here. They seem to have no time to devote to anything which does not actually increase their income, they pride themselves on their parsimony and yet they are strangely inconsistent.

I have just got back from a House supper, a quaint terminal affair held by the House which wins the Senior Athletic Cup for the term: how different these tame, nervous affairs are from the full-blooded, riotous orgies of Oxford days. It appears that it is necessary to get a man drunk before you can really put him at his ease at a big gathering. The much-watered claret-cup which passes for strong drink at these school-shows is pitiable enough, but it is typical of the spirit of the whole [102] thing. Most of the principals concerned are in a state of pitiable terror because of the speeches which they are expected to make at the conclusion of the feast. Conversation is tedious and conducted in undertones; there are frequent dead silences; House-masters work unflaggingly to put people at their ease, but every one feels conscious of his clothes and his neighbour's criticisms. We are all afraid of saying the wrong thing or of omitting to praise some one who coached the team or played well: every time some name is left out which ought to have been included, some one asked to sing who breaks down, some one to speak who only succeeds in stammering out platitudes.

And yet if there ever was a man calculated to put people at their ease, it is the House-master in whose house I live. Heatherington is one of the finest men I have ever met: he represents the high-water mark in schoolmasters.

He is an excellent scholar, bred in the best traditions of Eton and Christ Church, of good family, hard as nails physically, a double Blue, a prominent mountaineer, a born humorist, well-to-do,

whose one great aim in life is to make and keep his House famous for sportsmen, scholars and gentlemen. He knows his boys through and through and makes friends with all of them: every one in the place is devoted to him. He belongs to no clique in the Common Room, but preserves the best traditions of the Englishman in his own life and in that of his boys. Yet even he cannot attain the unattainable: he cannot make a House supper "go." The only people who enjoy themselves to the full are the fags: they have no responsibility, they simply eat and drink and [103] applaud. For the rest of us it is one long agony.

Christmas, 1910

As usual I have come home for Christmas: as usual I miss Radchester and my boys more than I can say. There is nothing to do here except visit the villagers, go for walks with my mother, and write letters.

I like the villagers best at our Christmas dances. They are more natural then, and sing and talk and play games and dance with utter abandon: they no longer suspect one of ulterior, hidden motives. They extend the right hand of fellowship and we all give ourselves up to whole-hearted enjoyment. They are all, young and old, content to be as children, innocent and friendly, actuated by no other motive than the giving and taking of pleasure. Would that they were always like this.

I have been getting up debates in the village institute this Christmas, and I have been surprised at the high level of intelligence displayed and the sincerity of the oratory of the few who speak. They were diffident at first, but soon warmed up as they got interested and we have always roused considerable warmth of feeling before we have finished the evening's entertainment.

What does distress me about village life is the education. I am almost certain that no education at all would be better than the present half-and-half system. To take away a boy or girl from school at thirteen or fourteen is criminal: children at that age have just been trained to want to know—and they are then taken away and the labour of years all undone by being pushed into mills, on to [104] farms, or behind counters, where nothing but mechanical obedience and servility are required. They forget to read, they forget how to write, they have no interest in the things of the mind. It amazes me that they grow up at all with anything but animal instincts. Education in England, so far as the majority of the children go, is useless and will continue to be so until it is made compulsory that no boy or girl shall leave school before the age of sixteen or seventeen. You can't do much with mindless louts of eighteen with one hour's Bible lesson a week. If any one disbelieves this, let him try to coach a dozen villagers in amateur theatricals: I've tried it and I know. They are simply blocks of wood once you put them on a platform. The average Public School boy of fifteen is quite at home on the stage: your yokel of any age is simply stiff and lifeless, unable to be anybody but himself, charcoal his face never so deeply.

January 15, 1911

I have had a gay fortnight in the Potteries, staying with the Pasleys. Young Pasley is in Heatherington's house and in my form; his father is a tile manufacturer and fabulously wealthy. I found the whole family lovable. They live in a large house in the middle of grimy Hanley. They are real sons of the soil and proud of it. The father and mother speak broad Staffordshire, the three girls and the two boys as the result of Public School education are ultra-refined and are inclined to bully their parents, who, however, hold the whip-hand. They have high tea instead of dinner; they sit down soberly in the evening to hear Adela (who is fresh home from Dresden and is [105] engaged to the local curate) play the violin. At ten Mrs. Pasley rises with, "Well, lads, it's time for bye-bye: I'll be sayin' good neet to you, Mester."

They delight in showing me over the warehouses. They love every inch of their hideous streets and proudly point out the excellence of their schools, their public baths, their shops and theatres; every one knows every one else. They almost bow the knee at the name of Wedgwood, they unaffectedly despise London. They know that the hub of the universe is to be found in the Five Towns. The exact income of every visitor to the house is known and talked about almost to the exclusion of every other topic. They read nothing at all; they genially regard me as a fool for wasting my brains at "school-teaching," as they call it, but they are genial and hospitable. Looking back on it, my visit seems to have been a long succession of feeding fowls, dancing, shopping, and looking at priceless china in the making.

I had one or two long talks with father Pasley on the subject of Public School education: he is not quite certain that he is getting his money's worth at Radchester.

"That lad of mine is not squeezing all he might out of yon school: I don't like throwing a hundred and twenty quid a year into the sea. You've got antique methods of learning a lad mathematics at your place, Mester, and I don't hold with ignorance; classics and such fal-lals is all right for parsons and the likes of you, but my lad's not going to be a parson nor a school-teacher neether: he's going into t' business and he knows it: he's going to have to earn his brass, same as I did [106] mine. I don't believe in a lad being brought up soft with the notion as 'ow he's going to have a mint o' money at his fingers' ends to play the fool with. Pasley and Son's a firm as wants men as 'ev got some grit to 'em: I sends my boy to school to get grit—learn 'im that, Mester, and let the rest go."

[107]

VI

March 3, 1911

These Easter terms, short as they are, are a big strain on the nervous system: no sooner do we get back to work than some luckless youth spreads measles, chicken-pox, scarlet fever or some other malady through the school, and we have to teach depleted forms, drill depleted companies and play House games with half our side away. I find that my favourite illness is influenza. I usually manage to keep a sort of running cold all through the winter months, which develops periodically into that vile sickness; it is then that I get pessimistic. I feel intolerably lonely and uncomfortable, and sigh for the sunny south and warmth and cosy fires and more humane companionship. The doctor here is a dear, but rather rough and ready in his methods. He hasn't the time to waste his hours on individual cases, neither is he exactly an expert. It is dreadful to lie in bed and hear the tramp of feet down the cloisters, the bells ringing for chapel, hall and school and not be in it.

One is forgotten almost at once by every one. People simply haven't the time to sit at a bedside even if they wanted to, and I long for conversation and a cheery laugh on these occasions. School is all right so long as one keeps fit, but once fall out of the race and it is a veritable hell. My last [108] bout of "flu" has left my nerves in a thoroughly disordered condition: I feel almost suicidal at times. I get very restless. I long to create in writing: of late I have been trying, without any great success, in all sorts of directions, verse, short stories, plays, articles—even a novel. Everything I submit to publishers comes back after I have endured agonies of anticipation in waiting. Something is wrong. Yet I feel convinced that I have it in me to write. I can only let myself go in this diary: here I don't have to think of publishers or editors. I write just to please myself. That is what so delights me in reading Pepys. He just rattles on with no thought of an audience, absolutely unselfconscious. I look on this diary as a secret companion to whom I can confide all my troubles and joys: my hatred of Hallows, my love for the boys, my theories on education, the good days of the holidays, books I have read—anything and everything that interests me.

I am quietly amassing a library. I only wish that I could rely on borrowers to return the books I lend them. It is not the slightest good my going into form and advising boys to read Lamb and Browning and Dickens and Thackeray unless I can provide the books for them. The House libraries are under-equipped, the school library is only accessible to the Sixth Form. But boys have no consciences in the matter of returning books: they prefer to cut the fly-leaf out and substitute their own names in some cases! Still my job is to instil a love for the old and new masters of literature by whatever means, and to do this I suppose I must not grudge an impoverished library.

One thing that annoys me is the fact that I cannot share all my treasures with the boys. Most [109] modern writing is too strong wine for adolescents. I wish Common Room did not also imagine that it is too strong meat for their innocent minds. It seems to me that the man who refuses to try to keep abreast of all the modern thought has no right to be a schoolmaster at all. What in the world is the use of living solely on a diet of the *Times* and the *Spectator*? I advocated the *New Statesman* for the reading-room and was promptly howled down. Apparently the idea that a man can look on both sides of a question is looked on here as preposterous. What the *Spectator* says is looked upon as a final judgment in all things. The middle articles of that quite estimable paper are read aloud as examples of perfect modern English style to boys in the top forms, and they are incited to ape it assiduously.

Occasionally, on Sunday mornings, a progressive young master will read a little "In Memoriam" or "A Death in the Desert" to his form as a variant to ordinary Divinity, but he does so tremblingly lest authority should hear of it and rebuke him.

One of our men preaching last Sunday even ventured to read an extract from "Romola," in the pulpit, but apologized profoundly for so doing and damned poor George Eliot with faint praise by saying, "She was not a bad woman."

There have been a number of feuds in Common Room lately which have reminded me of the umbrella episode in "Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill."

Young Rowntree who joined us this term has a brother in the army who happens to be stationed close by: he had him over to dinner one night last week and brought in some "fizz" to liven things [110] up a bit. He sits, of course, at the bottom of the junior table, not very far from me. Not wishing to appear niggardly to the rest of us he brought in three bottles in order to pass them round to those who sat near him. We had a quite riotous orgie and for the first time since I have been at Radchester the junior table quite drowned the senior both in laughter and conversation.

It really was funny to watch the white drawn faces of the water drinkers of the top table, with the one syphon of seltzer as relief, while we, upstarts of a new age, were regaling ourselves with Pommery. There was a fearful row about it afterwards. Rowntree was written to by half the staff (who had not tasted the champagne) about the etiquette with regard to visitors. It was only by courtesy of the senior members that junior masters were allowed to invite visitors at all: it was taken for granted that if such a privilege were extended juniors would not abuse it by drinking

anything but water. There was a battle royal. Rowntree is young enough not to give in without a struggle: during the last week he has taken in a bottle of some sort to dinner every night. He is the kind of man who won't be kept longer than a term. He "rags" his form and incites them to "rag" him and everybody else. He refuses to take Radchester seriously: he walks across the prefect's lawn (an unpardonable offence for a master), he walks about arm-in-arm with the boys in his form if he likes them; he swears quite openly and fluently in Common Room, he takes away the papers so that he can read them comfortably in his own room and forgets to return them, he even smokes cigars in the masters' reading-room. The old men can do nothing with him: he is [111] impervious to black looks and misunderstands rebukes. He cuts every other chapel and usually forgets to take "prep." or "roll." On "halves" he always goes away, sometimes as far afield as Leeds or York on his motor-bicycle, and does not arrive home till two or three the next morning. He wears bright ties, silk socks, soft collars, and very well-fitting light clothes, totally regardless of the convention which demands black from boy and master alike. He is a very disturbing factor in Common Room and every one is moving Heaven and Earth to have him "sacked." What worries me about him is his ability: he writes with considerable success. He confessed to me one day that he only meant to stay one term: "I want copy for a novel I have in my mind—these old fossils with their moth-eaten, stereotyped conservatism give me a grand field. I guess this is just the best Public School in the country for my purpose, but my hat, I shouldn't care to have to stick at it for a year. It's funny to think that you all were alive once as undergraduates."

He read a chapter or two of his book to me the other day: he's got the spirit of the place exactly. I wish I had his gift. He sees everything and has the power of sifting his evidence with wonderful accuracy: he misses nothing.

Since he came I have given up my Sunday walks with Renton, who talks of nothing but dyspepsia and his own powers of teaching, and have accompanied Rowntree on some of his excursions on his motor-bicycle. We lunch in Scarborough and get into conversation with week-enders. Rowntree looks on all humanity as "copy," and is without any sense of modesty. He picks up loungers in hotel bars, girls behind counters, girls on the pier, tramps, hotel porters, "nuts" in the [112] hotel lounge and all sorts of unexpected people. He always gets some fantastic story out of them: he is as good a story-teller as George Borrow and just as great a liar. His imagination combined with his experience make him a rare raconteur. He doesn't buy many books, but he is not averse from borrowing mine. I only regret that I can never get them back; he is quite shameless in the matter of purloining literature: he takes books out of the school library without "entering them" and soon begins to think that they really belong to him. He reminds me a good deal of a boy called Senhouse who is also unable to bow the knee in the house of Rimmon; he conforms to none of the school regulations and how he has escaped expulsion up to now beats me. At present he is raising for himself untold trouble by making friends with a small boy called Gillman in Hallows' house. He is desperately fond of this child, and waxes quite sentimental over him to me. There is no harm in either of them, and they are as open as the day in their relations with one another: they wait for each other after chapel, hall, and school. They go for long walks together, they contrive to sit together at school lectures and in prep. Hallows and Heatherington have each lectured both of them, and Hallows has caned Gillman frequently, but they refuse to give up the friendship.... Common Room is as usual in a frenzy over it and I have been reported to the Head Master for aiding and abetting them in their scandalous defiance of rules by having them to tea together in my rooms.

In my defence I mentioned that boys came and went just as they pleased in my rooms and that I [113] couldn't very well prohibit any one of them at any special time. I also pointed out that I failed to see where the harm lay in this particular case of Damon and Pythias, that such a friendship might well be the saving of Senhouse, who is naturally inclined to be wild and restless. Like Rowntree, he has a habit of cutting chapel, prep., school, games, and everything that is compulsory, whenever he feels like it. He always takes his punishments without a murmur, but he likes to feel that he can escape from the routine when it bears on him too harshly: there is no speck of harm in his composition, any more than there is in Rowntree, but no one here could ever understand the point of view of either of them. Meanwhile the storm rages and Gillman and Senhouse continue to meet, while Hallows grinds his teeth in impotent anger. All the same the iron system will prevail in the end, routine always has the last word: they will both be expelled for continued disobedience of school rules, though nothing criminal can be proved against them. A boy's love for another boy is a pretty strong thing: it can withstand ridicule, punishment, and any weapon that authority can bring to bear against it in the case of such a faithful pair as these two. I cannot see what useful purpose can be served by these iron rules, which allow of no exceptions; that, normally speaking, it is better for boys not to make friends outside their own Houses, and not to encourage friendships in which there is any disparity of age is perhaps open to question, but at any rate strong arguments can be adduced in support of it—but when it comes to a piece of wanton cruelty like this, the whole business becomes silly. I have aired this opinion in Common Room to the no little indignation of all the staff. It is a relief to get back to the seclusion of my [114] room and my books after all the riots, alarums and excursions of these school rows. I wish we could learn to pull together instead of squabbling like a pack of gutter children. I suppose I ought to keep quiet myself if I wished this consummation so devoutly, but I cannot stand by and see all my ideals smashed without remonstrating.

It is a mistake to herd thirty or forty men together for meals and companionship for three months on end: we ought to have our lives sweetened by marriage. Yet I suppose that married life would take off the edge of our keenness for our work: we should have domestic interests which would prevent us from devoting ourselves whole-heartedly to our work. Sometimes I find myself dreaming and pining for the life-companionship of some girl who would understand me and

soothe my ruffled senses after a Common Room fight. Yet I suppose marriage fetters one: the married man is bound hand and foot, and can no longer set out on great adventures. He has given hostages to fortune and must be content to play for safety for the rest of his life. I can't see myself doing that. I want to be free as the air, free to play games, free to say what I like and risk being "sacked" if I offend. Yet I wonder sometimes, like Charles Lamb, what my children would be like. It would be splendid to perpetuate my name, to see another generation carrying on the work I have begun. There are so many changes to be wrought in education. We live in an age of pioneers: we are no longer content merely to accept the traditions of our fathers. We want to better their methods and results: we learn by the mistakes of our forbears. The Head Master [115] hates this view. His idea is that only through experience can a man really teach, therefore we should accept the tenets which our elders hold and abide faithfully by them.

April 3, 1911

I have been of late reading numbers of books on education. The days of Thring and Arnold are over; instead of two textbooks on the theory, there are now two hundred or two thousand. Every day sees some new thesis appear hot from the press. People are beginning to take an interest in what is, after all, the most important department in the State. In all of these books I find the same points raised. As at present practised, education does not teach the younger generation to love the beautiful or the intellectual: without such a love all education is worth nothing. How to attain these affections is the next question. One man advocates the abolition of examinations, another the substitution of any method rather than that of rewards and punishments, another sees salvation in the teaching of English literature, geography and history, to the exclusion of the classics, and the cutting down of mathematics—but somehow I can't make much of these books on theory. I make marginal notes, underline passages, copy out good advice and I try to put what I believe to be practicable into practice, but on the whole I am left somewhat cold. I am on the search for a rich mine and, although I often feel that I am near it, I never quite succeed in doing more than unearthing one precious morsel of ore. In some ways the Head Master was right when he told me to read no books on education. He was right because I find nothing really new there. I [116] am told to foster a boy's imagination: I spend all my time in trying to do this, and should do so even if I had read nothing whatever about education.

Only on Sunday nights, after a peculiarly good sermon and inspiring hymns, can one at all reach the mood in which it is possible to discuss quite openly with boys exactly what education means to you and ought to mean to them. Instead of rushing out of chapel and fighting for places at the sideboard in Common Room over the chicken and salmon, I go to my rooms and talk quietly to such boys as can get leave to come then. Most House-masters refuse to let their boys come to my rooms at all during lock-up. They think my influence is quite definitely pernicious and immoral. In other words I try to develop the imagination.

I have made friends during the last two or three weeks with Copplestone, who is a House-master of a very religious turn of mind. He dislikes corporal punishment and is hence looked upon as anæmic both by his boys and his colleagues. He reads (quaintly enough) nothing but Arnold Bennett. I go up to his rooms and talk by the hour about "The Old Wives' Tale," "Clayhanger," and "Hilda Lessways": he is rather a pitiable sort of man: he feels that he owes his allegiance to the old school, and yet he feels that we represent the humanitarian side of education. He is like Sir Thomas More, torn between his reason and emotion: like Sir Thomas More he is going to suffer for his ill-timed birth. Had he been born ten years earlier he would have been a whole-hearted upholder of *l'ancien régime*. Had he been born ten years later he would have been one of us and not cared a rap about the old men or tradition. His only course is to resign and become a village [117] priest: he would be admirable with old ladies, and the younger members of his congregation would approve of him because of his love for Arnold Bennett. Here he behaves like Shelley's mother, alternately petting and spoiling his boys, punishing them out of all proportion to their offence at one moment, only to let them off and feed them extravagantly the next. The result is that no boy can tell what he is going to do. He is quite unreliable: he allows himself to be hopelessly "ragged" for two days and then flares up and half kills a quite inoffensive youngster who happens to cough.

I feel really sorry for him, for no one cares for him. He has successfully fallen between two stools and become despised by both the great opposing forces on the staff. He is neither new nor old, hot nor cold, and exactly fulfils that horrible prophecy of Ezekiel about being spewed out of the mouth of all parties.

Thank Heaven this term is over. I haven't learnt much more about my job: I have had some illusions shattered: I have luckily made a few more friends, but boys are queer—one is apt to offend them without in the least knowing why. I shouldn't care to spend my time, like Smithson, who lives for nothing but to curry favour with every boy he meets: he's as bad as the type of boy who always "sucks up" to masters, the very worst sort of creature. Smithson "treats" them all lavishly: he makes fun of the weaklings and the unpopular, he "toadies" to the prefects and generally makes a damned fool of himself. He doesn't see, poor devil, that popularity, like Fortune, is a fickle jade, and only pursues those who take no notice of her at all. Good God! [118] Fancy becoming a schoolmaster in order to be popular!

May 4, 1911

This has been one of the best Easter holidays I can remember. Stapleton managed to get a

month's sick leave from his curacy and we set off for Oxford and the Cotswolds, to try to regain something of the irresponsible gaiety of Oxford days. I had no idea how hateful the country round Radchester was until I got back to the City of Spires. It seemed impossible to believe that only two years ago I had still to take my Finals, that I was disporting myself on the upper river and the Cher, lazily enjoying all the sweets of life and now—well, I felt about a hundred years old at the end of last term. There was no beauty or interest anywhere or in anything, and then Stapleton wired for me—and since then life has been one all too short ecstasy. We stayed in Oxford just long enough to buy tobacco, a few books and some clothes, and then set out on foot to go over again some of the country we had learnt to love so well as undergraduates. Rucksacks on back, we climbed Cumnor Hill on a glorious spring morning and made our way down to Bablock Hythe and then kept along by the river for the rest of the day: we strolled languidly and talked rabidly about our scholastic and church experiences, our disappointments and successes. The air cleared our minds: we evolved great schemes of new schools and new religions, undefiled by effete traditions. Gradually the beauty of the meadows and the old-world villages made us forget our worries and we gave ourselves up to the enjoyment of the time. We travelled without map or [119] guide and just wandered at will. When we saw an inn that we liked we stayed there, and ate and drank ourselves drowsy. At night-time, when the bar-parlours were closed and we had reluctantly to say good night to the labourers who came in and gave their views on world-politics, we used to read for a little, and then to a ten hours' sleep.

I had taken the "Note Books of Samuel Butler" as my pocket companion for this journey, and I never took a book which served its purpose so well. In compact paragraphs the philosopher sums up with amazing shrewdness, humour and insight into the human mind all that he discovered to be interesting or worth repeating. The "Note Books" are crammed with the cream of his thinking on every sort of subject, science, music, literature, religion, architecture, sheep-farming, authorship—everything that could possibly appeal to any thinking man. It is an invaluable book to argue about. Butler at least clears the brain more than any writer except Swift. He scatters pedagogy and all cant and humbug to the winds: just as the air of the Cotswolds scatters all thoughts of Radchester from one's mind, so does Samuel Butler fill it with new ideas and fresh weapons of thought.

Stapleton and I kept on discovering old Tudor houses with moats, and churches containing carved screens and tombs of Crusading Knights. We stayed for three days at an old mill at Tredington on the Fosse Way, miles from any town or station, and there heard the farmers sing all the old Gloucestershire folk-songs in the Wheatsheaf Inn.

This has been a wonderful holiday for me. I wonder how many men become schoolmasters simply [120] in order to be able to have such good holidays. It is a great temptation to a man who cares nothing for education: he can submit to the routine all the better if he is indifferent and has no ideals. All he has to do is to sit tight for three months at a time; he is certainly not bound to exert himself very severely by the letter of his contract. Then come these golden weeks of lovely spring when he may disport himself as Stapleton and I have done, prying into unknown nooks and crannies of mediæval England, lazily wandering by hedgerow and riverside, gossiping over gates to farmers, reading to his heart's content on sunny beach or secluded meadow by day, or in the ingle-nook by night. He has no cares, no worries: his salary will pay for all these jaunts so long as he steers clear of London and big hotels. If the truth were told, I think that the reason why a number of men enter the profession is no more than the lure of possessing freedom for a quarter of their lives.

I wonder if this is how old "Jumbo" Stockton became a master. He is a most lovable fellow and quite content with life. He is associated with none of the school activities; he plays no games except golf; he is not in the corps (very few members of Common Room are); he never entertains boys in his rooms; he does very little work and is always ready for a chat or a walk at any hour of the day or night. He just purrs contentedly like a cat and rambles on about Vacs. that he has spent in the Ardennes or the Pyrenees, yachting round the coast of Scotland or caravaning in the New Forest. His one business in life seems to be the holidays; his rooms are filled with Baedekers, "Highways and Byways," and guides to every place under the sun. Of educational [121] reform or ideals, in other words, of shop he never talks. Most of us talk of nothing else. Common Room conversation gets dreadfully oppressive at times owing to the continued debates about rules and the characters of endless boys. Stockton never enters into these controversies, consequently he is never at daggers drawn with any of us. We all affect to despise him, but secretly we are rather envious of his detachment. He seems quite popular with the boys, he finds that it pays to adopt a strict demeanour; his work is never shirked and he rarely has to punish any one. I sometimes wonder whether he does not feel a sudden pang when one of his old associates at Oxford comes to the front after years of struggling at the Bar, in politics, or the Church, and leaves him behind in the race of life. Yet I have never met a more contented man. He doesn't regard teaching as anything but a sinecure: his main occupation in life is travel. He is rather like a city clerk who goes up to his office every day solely in order to earn enough to take a holiday. The difference lies in the fact that Stockton gets his reward three times a year, the clerk only once; the master gets three months, the clerk (with luck) three weeks.

I suppose that I may regard myself as exactly the opposite of Stockton in every way. I live for my work: he lives for his holidays. When the term is over I love to get away principally because Radchester would be intolerable once the boys were gone, secondly because I want to fill myself up with new ideas, to develop my theory that the cult of beauty and imagination is the whole duty of the schoolmaster. I rarely forget the school in the holidays. All the time that I am exploring new scenes I am storing up memories which I hope to use in my work. All my talks with Stapleton [122]

during these last few weeks have been so much sifting of matter which I want to get clear before I start on a new term.

The difficulty is that so few of the men in Common Room think it necessary to do more than prepare the textbooks they propose to read with their forms, while I read up all I can on social problems. I strive to discover new methods of interesting boys in the conditions of life outside school. In so doing I am frequently attacked on the ground that I am making them restless and dissatisfied with their narrow round at school. I am not certain that restlessness is a thing to be condemned: unless you are discontented with abuses you will never stir a finger to reform them, and unless a boy leaves school firmly convinced that it is his duty to leave the world better than he found it, education means nothing.

Stapleton has gone back to work reinvigorated, fully determined to bear with the many thorns in his flesh, in the shape of irritating curates, the dead weight of indifference to religion, morality, or high ideals in the bulk of his parishioners, with notes for a dozen sermons in his head, and a healthy conviction that in spite of temporary setbacks the world really is progressing.

I return to Radchester determined to alter for the better the code of morality of the school, to make boys see that work is not a disgraceful thing to be avoided whenever possible, but the only means by which any one can equip himself to fight the battle of life: I return determined to live at peace with my colleagues so far as it is possible, to be more sociable and less critical, to dwell more insistently upon the things that matter, and to try to wean away my boys from spending [123] themselves upon unworthy objects, to foster a love for all that is pure and good and holy and to appreciate the millions of manifestations of Beauty that nature displays even at Radchester for our spiritual delectation.

VII

June 4, 1911

We've been back a month and many things have happened since I last wrote in my diary.

In the first place Marshall has gone. I am much too near the event to be able to judge of it sanely and I can't write of it at length. He was always antagonistic to me. I can't say I liked him but I tried never to show my aversion. He was repulsive in every way, but his sermons were good: he was a good disciplinarian and teacher. Boys in his form were at any rate thoroughly taught. In mine they fail because I always attempt too much. I envied him his gifts a good deal.

The reason of my quarrel with him was Daventry. Daventry is in his House and in my form and is the most astonishing youth I have yet come across. He has a fertile brain and his sole object in life is "to do every one down": he will probably end in prison or Park Lane. He is quite unscrupulous (I have already found him rummaging among my letters and this diary to find out things about masters and boys): he finds me useful just at present, because he can sponge on me for food and books: he reads and eats omnivorously. He has decided gifts and is safe for a good scholarship at Oxford unless he gets sacked first, which is exceedingly likely. Somehow he has [125] the trick of getting out of all the scrapes he finds himself in: he has the power of making people believe him, even after he has deceived them before. He haunts my rooms night and day. Marshall resented this and forbade him to come except on business. He immediately invented business by writing verses and essays, which he produced for my inspection at the rate of about two a day.

After all it hurt me to be told by Marshall that my influence on the boy was bad. I am afraid Daventry is bad through and through, but I'm going to make a big effort to cast out the devils in him before he leaves. There are signs of grace certainly: he is very emotional and is passionately fond of reading and music. I have lately bought a gramophone, and any records that he wants to hear I buy for him at once; consequently, I find him in my rooms when I come in from games with a rapt expression on his face, having spent the entire afternoon by himself, giving himself up to the joy of hearing good music. He cuts games with impunity—if there is any likelihood of trouble he forges a "leave"; he is disconcertingly open with me in these things. Having put me in a difficult position by relying on me not to give him away, he divulges one scheme after another for outwitting authority. That he needs very careful handling I naturally see, but why Marshall should have taken it for granted that I only do the boy harm I don't know. Anyway, Marshall did his best to prevent my seeing Daventry at all. That naturally only piqued the boy to try to circumvent him in every possible way. Things came to such a pass that I had to let Marshall know that he was driving the boy to extremities which he might regret. It was rather silly of me. He [126] rated me loudly before all Common Room for interfering in another man's business. He then launched into a diatribe against the uppishness and "infallibility" of the junior masters, and declared that the school was quickly being ruined by the new blood. He ranted at some length and for a wonder I kept silent and listened to it all without comment.

And now this awful thing has happened. Daventry kept away from me when I told him that there was no other course open. He went about threatening vengeance on Marshall, and even started writing to me by post. He was badly "hipped" at being deprived of music and books and food. I don't believe he cares a tuppenny curse about me.... Then came that never-to-be-forgotten Sunday morning when I found him in my rooms after breakfast with a small, untidy fag in tow. They both looked as though they had been condemned to the guillotine.

"Hello, Daventry," I began, "what on earth are you doing here? Don't you know——" He cut me short.

"Erskine has something very important to say to you, sir," he broke in, in a voice I scarcely recognized as his.

"All right; fire away, my son," I replied. "Get it off your chest, whatever it is—all the same I don't quite see what Daventry is doing."

"He—he made me come, sir," said Erskine.

He then told his story. It was so revolting that I first refused to believe it; I thought it was some damnable scheme of Daventry's, got up to ruin his House-master—I nearly kicked both of them downstairs without hearing them to a finish. Instead of which I went straight to the Head and [127] took them with me.

Marshall went on Tuesday. Every one believes that he is seriously ill: after this term they will give out that he has retired. I have lately wondered whether I ought not to have gone to see him and told him that I knew: couldn't it have been possible to keep him on at his post? Never again shall I move a finger towards the undoing of any man, however much an enemy of mine he may be. All Marshall's interest in life was bound up in Radchester. I am daily assaulted by fears lest he should commit suicide: his blood will be on my head if he does.

Expulsion is no cure either in man or boy. It's a frightful confession of our own weakness. It's our

fault that Marshall went wrong: Common Room ought to have sweetened his life so that such malpractices would have been impossible to him; instead of that the ugliness and pettiness of the life he led there, the miserable lack of real friendliness all combined to undo him. There are men here who can extract sweetness from their life. What could be finer than the devotion of Patterson to Northcote? Both these men have been on the staff for years. Neither would accept any job, however lucrative, unless he could take the other with him. They live in each other's pockets: they are as close as man and wife: their friendship is strong enough to survive any momentary difference of opinion. They discuss their methods of education, the boys they take, the games they play, the books they read—everything together. They spend all their holidays in each other's company and it is impossible to know the one without the other. Neither of them would be capable of a mean action—they are a beacon-light to all the rest of us. [128]

I wonder if I shall stay on here interminably friendless, and soured like most of the others. It's a rotten prospect. Now of course the boys keep me fresh, but as the years roll on I shall become more and more unfitted for any other profession and get further away by reason of my age from sympathizing with the youth of the time. Yet there are some men, Heatherington is one of them, who keep perennially young: they carry their boyishness with them to the grave. They can understand youth's difficulties as well at sixty-one as at twenty-one. I wish I knew the secret of this.

At present I can play games and take an active part in Corps work and so keep in touch with most of the boys I want to know, but when I am no longer able to do these things I shall lose touch with a generation that knows not Joseph and become despised like old "Soap-Suds," who thirty years ago was the hero of the school owing to his athletic prowess. I suppose the secret is that games ought not to count for so much as they do. No boy despises Heatherington, yet he can't play "Rugger" any more. Privately among themselves, of course, the boys "rag" his peculiarities, but they stand in fear of him and quake inwardly as they hear his footsteps coming down the passage, and old boys can testify how deep their love for him is.

I suppose one of the few rewards of the schoolmaster is that his name is bandied about in all the strange places of the earth. Old Radcastrians meet in the Himalayas, on the high seas, in a fever camp, on a lonely ranch, and they immediately begin to discuss their old masters. Mostly they [129] speak of them with love if not with reverence. Our little mannerisms and tricks, which we imagine are known only to ourselves, lie open to them and endear us to them. They roar with laughter over our peculiar phraseology, our methods of punishment, our impotent rage over little things like chipped desks and false quantities.

I should like boys to remember me by the books I introduced them to: I like to think of them equipped with a taste for the best literature, gloating over Conrad or Doctor Johnson, Charles Lamb or E. V. Lucas, new God or old Giant, in some forsaken place where ordinary cheap reading would not satisfy any of the heartache, or remove any of the sense of desolation that comes upon the mind at such times.

Each time I come back to school I try a different method with my English classes. If only I had more time I really believe I could achieve something. At present all I can do is to read a short story of Stevenson like "Markheim" or "Thrawn Janet" and then get the form to reproduce the substance of it, or to rewrite it from the point of view of one of the other characters. I have found this method pay very well. Once jog a boy's imagination and he will produce quite original and diverting matter. The difficult thing is to hit on the particular sort of literature that boys like. Only too frequently Shakespeare palls; Milton, Pope and Wordsworth are quite beyond the average boy. On the other hand they cannot have too much of balladry. "Tam Lyn," "Sir Patrick Spens," "Sir Cauline," and the rest they love. So with mediæval legends like "Sir Gawayne and the Green Knight." Most boys after a careful introduction to the life of the age of Queen Anne and the curious characters of Swift, Steele, Addison and Defoe, appreciate quickly the beauties of the [130] *Spectator*, and are only too glad as a weekly essay to interpolate a paper on some foible rampant in that school. Boswell, too, they can tackle if only you prepare them by giving a Macaulayesque account of Johnson's quaint tricks and mannerisms. Spenser, Shelley and Keats I find are only for the few. Most of them love Byron. Tennyson, like Dickens, they have been taught to revere at home. They are not very fond of either. But Browning and even Meredith quickly become bosom friends of theirs, as do the Pre-Raphaelites. But by far the greatest boom at present is the Masefield cult. I read "The Everlasting Mercy" when it came out in the *English Review* to all my sets and they were intoxicated. Hallows got to hear of this and was furious with me for introducing "so foul-mouthed and immoral-minded a poet" to boys. Poor old Masefield. I don't suppose he reckoned with the Public School attitude when he set out on his mission of outspokenness. In order to keep the problems of modern life before my form I strew my classroom with daily and weekly papers, monthly and quarterly reviews, and demand précis of all the more important articles before or after debates on all sorts of modern problems. I have started to do more original work myself. The *World of School* has accepted two or three articles on educational reform which I submitted to them, and I now have the lust of authorship on me badly. It's a very wearing disease. I am for ever planning books. I want to write a complete English course, eliminating all that nonsense about weak and strong verbs, different uses of the gerund and all grammar grind and analysis.

What I want is an historical survey of the whole of English literature, liberally interspersed with [131] examples, with a list of the books they ought to buy and enjoy reading, imaginative questions which should spur them on to original composition in verse and prose with a stimulating introduction on why, how, and what we should read. I would make such books as Arnold Bennett's "Literary Taste" and "The Author's Craft" compulsory for every boy in every school in

the kingdom. I would also make every boy learn by heart those passages in "Sesame and Lilies" where Ruskin points out the value of reading in practical life.

But all this would not gain a boy many marks in a modern examination, and we live or die by results in examinations. English papers seem to me to be the worst set of all. What can it profit a man to know the context of obscure passages in Shakespeare if he has not got the spirit of the play in him actively shaping his own life? If a boy does not feel the Hamlet or the Richard II within him shouting for utterance when he reads a Shakespeare play, he is doing himself no good at all. The whole argument brings one back to beauty and imagination. I want to see every boy's study crammed with copies of the "World's Classics," the "Everyman" and the "Home University Library." There is no excuse for anybody not having read standard works at this time of day.

I try to instil a love of books into my forms by telling them of men like George Gissing, with whom it became a question of breakfast or a precious volume acquired in a second-hand shop: a book must cost you something before you can expect really to value it at its true worth. As Ruskin says, we despise books simply because they are accessible. I've always had this book-fever on me. I [132] remember even as a small boy suffering unduly from the pangs of hunger, going from fruiterer to book-shop and from book-shop to fruiterer, wondering which I really wanted more, the romance or the pound of cherries. I know that I always hated myself when I succumbed to the latter temptation, for the cherries were soon eaten but the delights of the book were perennial.

July 4, 1911

The joys of the Coronation were not for us. Some of the Corps went down to London to line the streets, but the rest of us went into camp and had a gorgeous time. We spent the time bathing and washing up, and celebrating Coronation festivities in all the villages near by. We made speeches and helped to feed myriads of children: we led processions and drank vast quantities of liquid at other people's cost. Money seemed to be poured out in honour of George V.

All the same I was lonely because most of the boys I require by me to complete my happiness were in London lining the streets. However, we were not parted long and we are now just back from the Windsor Review. That is the most impressive ceremony in which I have ever taken part. All the Public Schools and Universities paraded before the King in Windsor Great Park. It was a sweltering hot day and we were as tired as could be after our long journey and the fatigue of camp, but no one fell out or fainted except some of the Oxford and Cambridge contingents. Good for the schools! It was wonderful to get down south again, if only for one day, to see real trees, civilized people, pretty girls, the Thames, respectable houses built for comfort, culture and [133] leisure. We spent all the long hours in the train in rushing up and down the corridors "debagging" people, "scrumming" forty or fifty unfortunates into one carriage and then leaping on the top of them. No wonder we were tired. How any windows remained unbroken is a miracle to me.

We have had a good term with regard to the Corps—about four of the best field-days I can remember. The best was in Wensleydale amid peerless scenery: about ten big schools took part, and I, as usual, was engaged in scouting most of the time. It is rare fun stalking the enemy on these lonely moors far from your own people. With a little imagination you can picture the reality ... and in any case it's a rotten game to be captured by some other school. I don't know why, but after you've left the school about ten minutes you feel as if you'd been soldiering all your life and lived only for food and sleep. No meals are more acceptable than field-day lunches, usually eaten by the side of a dusty road in the full glare of a hot sun, but it's hunger that makes the meal, and marching is the best appetizer I know: the only thing I object to about these sham fights is the powwow afterwards and the stupidity of the umpires. Every one knows that umpires can't be everywhere at once and human nature doesn't admit of one's giving oneself up unless real force is used; consequently the most ridiculous decisions are given, for the conditions have always altered by the time any umpire turns up; the weaker side which has been ambushed becomes reinforced by a body ten times as big as the ambushing party, and so turns the tables, and the clever strategist who really brought off a good coup finds himself a prisoner and harangued by [134] his O.C. Field-days are very unfair, but they are amusing. It's rare fun chasing an enemy into a farm-house and forcing an entrance into every room in pursuit of him: it's good to see a motor-bicycle belonging to some officer lying by the roadside and to ride away on it. It's worth any amount of powwow to sit under a hedge within sight of a bridge on which you have chalked "This bridge is blown up," and watch the enemy debate whether or no they have a right to advance across it: it's very like the real thing to be told off to act as guerillas and to keep on irritating an advancing force by appearing at inconvenient times and unexpected places, and holding up their plans and then trying to escape and repeat the experiment farther along the line. Close order drill, ceremonial and inspection are distinctly boring, but field-days are red-letter days.

For twelve hours one gets right away, away from work, away from Common Room, away from games, and it does every one a world of good. We lose our petty animosities: we become more broad-minded and regain our ordinary sense of camaraderie: we sing ribald songs, we fill our lungs with good air, we discuss philosophy or any mortal thing with our next-door neighbour on the march, not caring whether he listens or not; we silently form good resolutions about our work, we think upon great days long past, of famous runs with the beagles, childhood's days on the moor, tramps across country as undergraduates—all the best things of life come back to one on the march. It isn't that we take soldiering very seriously: none of us does that. I hate shooting on the range; rifle-firing frightens me; I should be a damned fool at *pukka* fighting, but this make-believe is good sport and I suppose it teaches us something. At any rate it's amusing. [135]

One of the quaintest things about this term has been my friendship with Chichester. He is a new boy in my form who speaks but seldom, not because he is nervous (he is one of the most self-assured people I ever met) but because he doesn't want to. He writes already bizarre but quite original verse. He goes his own way in everything. He somehow became attracted by me, and now we spend all our spare time together. It's a queer friendship. He's a largish boy for fifteen, with curly light hair and penetrating blue eyes and a delicate pink and white complexion.

We lie on a rug together and watch House matches, eating strawberries and cherries. He borrows all my books and reads them at an astonishing rate. Masefield bowled him over completely. He has written at least four poems based on "The Everlasting Mercy." He is about the cleanest child I have met and yet he employs the foulest metaphors I ever came across. He is an anomaly. He is in for a bad time here: people won't understand him and every one will do his best to ruin him.

He appears to be quite fond of me and calls for me daily to go down to games with him. Common Room is scandalized and I have been warned by most of my colleagues that such things are not done. It is not good for a boy to be taken up and made a favourite of by a master. With that sentiment I entirely agree. I wonder why every one here does it. But I'm not making a favourite of him: he has honoured me with his friendship. I have no fast, firm friend; neither has he. He certainly is not the type of boy to trade upon such a relationship; in form he works like a "navvy," [136] he plays his games adequately: he is quite normal except for his gift for writing English. Surely no one can blame me for fostering that.

At any rate I should prefer to leave rather than break off our relations, so people must just talk and think what they like. Of course the school doesn't like it. They hate any boy having much to do with a master, but Chichester has a will of his own and I rather fancy he will take his own line right through life. Not that he is self-assertive: he is quiet and unassuming, but he always contrives to get his own way. Luckily for me he is in Wade's house, and dear old Wade, who ought to have been a country squire, never denies any one anything; so when the boy goes for leave to come to my rooms he gets it every time without a murmur.

The only blow about camp this year is that Chichester won't be there. His people are taking him abroad for the whole of August.

I have been bothered a good deal lately about a peculiarly silly habit of mine. Sometimes, in mathematics especially, I get violently angry at intervals because I realize that my sets are not working hard enough. I so rarely punish that of course there is a temptation for boys to slack in present circumstances: when I find that they take advantage of my ideals to practise this trick on me I usually "give tongue" forcibly and "drop on" them as heavily as I can with a quite colossal punishment. This I take down in a book and—after five minutes I've forgotten all about it. The boy always looks contrite at the moment, but I realize that he knows that he won't have to do the punishment at all.

There is a silly system here by which one has to enter the names of all the boys one punishes in a [137] book: I simply can't remember to do it. It's like looking at "roll" lists. I'm always slack about checking the reasons that my boys give for their absence. I always believe what a boy tells me. How can you expect boys to tell the truth if you always verify their statements by outside corroborative evidence? It seems to me to be asking for trouble.

There seems to be everlasting espionage here. The school sergeant is known to be in the "secret service" of the Head Master, and is popularly supposed to wander about with a pair of field-glasses scouring the countryside for miscreants. This seems a quaint conception of education. Wherever and whenever we meet boys we are expected to extract information from them as to their precise occupation.

The only safe place seems to be on the cricket field, and even there you are surrounded by seniors waiting to lash you if you drop a catch or (in their opinion) field badly.

I spend most of my afternoons, when I am not wanted to fill up last place in a Common Room eleven, in coaching the "Rabbits," which is a league composed entirely of those who are unable to play cricket at all, the worst two dozen in the school. It is really amusing: no one could possibly pretend to take it seriously. The only time when it perhaps gets monotonous is when some elderly fag appears and insists on playing, and I find him coercing all the others to field for and bowl to him, while he scores about a hundred and fifty. That only happens when there is no master about.
The House matches this term have been frenziedly exciting and Chichester and I have spent most [138] afternoons watching them. It is an Arcadian, simple life in the summer term. Every morning at 6.30 I pull Dearden out of bed and race him down to the sea in pyjamas. We have a hasty bathe and arrive just in time for chapel at 7, unshaven. We there (pernicious custom) have to take a "roll" of our form. We look down chapel to see the faces of friends and at some intimate verses in the hymn or psalms we smile as at some hidden secret between ourselves. 7.25 sees us running to first school. We run everywhere at Radchester. I hate these dreary lessons before breakfast: 8 o'clock seems an interminable distance ahead. There is supposed to be cocoa in Common Room between 7.20 and 7.25, but no one ever has time to drink it, unless he cares to risk being late for form, which is not a vice masters here are prone to. At 8 o'clock on two days of the week two of us have to deny ourselves breakfast until the whole school has finished, for we have to say grace in hall, collect the names of all absentees, walk round to see that no one cuts the cloth or indulges in undue ribaldry, and then when all is over we dismiss them. Only then (at 8.30) do we get our own breakfast. By this time all the best of the food is gone. Feversham will probably be helping himself to his fourth egg and sausage and fifth piece of toast, the morning papers will all have been seized and we shall be thoroughly irritable.

One of the things that makes me loathe the Common Room system is this herding together for breakfast, a meal that ought to be eaten in communion with the morning paper and no living soul to interrupt.

From 9 to 9.45 we punish, we practise fielding, we correct work. From 9.45 to 1.15 we rush from subject to subject, from class to class, attempting to drive some rudiments of mathematics and [139] English into the heads of boys who don't want to know anything. If only they were born poor and knew that they had to depend on their wits for their livelihood, it would be infinitely easier for us. Occasionally one gets an hour off in the morning (I get three in the week) and this is spent either in writing letters, taking the illustrated weeklies from the House Room, or in going for a lonely walk or bathe. Sometimes I lie on the sand-dunes and eat and read, or try to write a few words more of an article. At 1.20 we all assemble in hall again, this time taking our food with the boys. I like this meal; the food is not good but the conversation is. I love all the clique that sits at my end of the table. Jimmy Haye, who sits on my right hand, is an argumentative soul who frequently sulks and refuses to speak to me when he thinks that I am doing the wrong thing, such as going about with Chichester, speaking against the classics at a debate, or advocating educational reform. Jimmy is a boy I should much like to know intimately, but he rarely comes up to my rooms: he doesn't care to mix with the riff-raff he finds there. I have occasionally persuaded him to come for a walk; he spends most of his life in "ragging" in the house and in being bullied by Naylor, the senior maths. tutor, who is endeavouring to raise him to the standard required for University scholarship. On my left sits Montague, Jimmy's greatest friend. He is easy-going, clever, very good at games, quite wild and irresponsible in the house, with a temper like a fiend. He has Spanish blood in him and has travelled all over the world. He treats me as I like to be treated—as a boon companion: although he doesn't take advantage of my standing invitation to [140] use my rooms as an hotel he always comes to me for advice when he is implicated in a row. He likes to take me for walks on Sundays and pour out his many grievances against life. Sometimes neither he nor Haye talk to me at all for a month, then they suddenly relent, become their old gay selves again and chatter away, to my endless enjoyment.

It is at lunch-time that I generally hear the scandal of the day. In the afternoon immediately after lunch there is punishment drill—some twenty to fifty miscreants have to run or march round the square under direction of the drill-sergeant for half an hour, while other people are changing, going out to nets or playing tennis.

We bowl at nets till 3.30. Not many days pass without an accident. It's a wonder to me that boys aren't killed at this exercise: all the nets are very close together and hardly protected at all. Once the House matches start, of course, nets are "dropped" and we simply lie on rugs and applaud or groan according to the fortunes of the game. Most of the masters sit on an elevated mound, Olympians on their dung-hill, near which sacred spot no boy may approach.

At 3.45 we get a scrappy tea in our own rooms: the old witch of a bedmaker is supposed to put out the tea-things and the kettle, and produce the roll and butter provided by the school. She frequently forgets, just as she forgets to dust the room or wash up the dirty things. Usually I have to write orders for chocolate, walnut cakes, and fruit and jams or bananas and cream, and dispatch fags to the tuck-shop. There are never less than half a dozen urchins clamouring for tea: [141] at 4.15 the bell rings for afternoon school.

Shall I ever forget in the years to come this hellish bell? It rings not less than fifty times a day, usually for five minutes at a time: nothing is so calculated to get on a new-comer's nerves as its incessant tolling, day and night, calling us to some fresh duty.

At 6 o'clock the school goes into hall for tea. If one is on duty that means more "calling of rolls" and counting of absentees; if not we have a blessed half-hour in which to prepare for Common Room dinner at 6.30. At 7 we hurry off to take prep. The senior men get half a crown a night for taking prep. in Big School, we poor juniors have to hustle along to supervise one of the other innumerable preps. for no reward. I hate this invigilation. It means that one tries to correct work, but has to interrupt oneself all the time in order to help boys over ridiculous points about cisterns and pipes, quadratic graphs or a line in Homer. Of course one can refuse all aid: most men do lest they should be found ignorant of some department of school study. At 8.45 we again rush to chapel and at 9 another prep. starts, in studies this time, and juniors start to turn on baths as a sign of bed. At 10 o'clock work for the day is over except for masters and the Sixth Form. Shouts and screams come from all the dormitories, and twenty minutes later we go round to see that every one is in bed.

By eleven most of the buildings are in darkness. Bridge-parties and conversations over whisky are kept up till twelve or one, but it isn't every night that we have time to indulge in these practices. Such is our normal day, but it's the unusual that finds its chronicling most frequently in [142] this diary.

August 1, 1911

To-morrow we go away to Aldershot for the annual camp; another school year is over and I now have two years to look back over. I don't know that my experience has taught me much yet, except a distrust of the old men. I still love boys as much as ever, though not in the mass. I hate them at school lectures when they cough in order to make a nervous lecturer break down, or when they express mock approval by prolonged ironic laughter and stamping of feet. I hate them most of all when they choose to "rag" an unfortunate master who can't keep order in hall or at "roll." I always funk taking both these ceremonies, though I have never had any trouble except in

my dreams. If I did I suppose I should half-kill the boy nearest to me and let out with my fists all round.

I like boys best singly in my rooms. Chichester makes up to me for lack of wife or sister or brother. I am never happy when he is out of my sight. He has shown up a prodigious quantity of good verse and some short stories, all of which I store away in the hope that some day I shall have collected enough to publish.

I've got a new idea in English composition with the lower forms. I take in a copy of a really good picture and get them to describe it: as a model for this I read Pater's description of the "Mona Lisa" with a copy staring them in the face as I read. I don't know where I got this idea from, but I find that it brings out a good deal of latent talent from boys who can never express themselves on [143] paper in normal circumstances.

I wish it could be possible to have school without the first and last days of term: they are never-ending. At the beginning one misses all the comforts of civilization and mourns the absence of all society: at the end, after a strenuous turmoil of thirteen weeks there is nothing whatever left to do. Marks are all added up, examination papers corrected, reports written, prize sheets made, clothes packed. Boys besiege one's rooms with requests for photographs, and with a catch in the throat say good-bye. They are going into the firm, going up to the University, going abroad—going to the ends of the earth on their different missions, and Radchester will know them no more. Their office another will take and one gasps at the handful that will be left to carry on the glorious traditions of the House and school. The last day is pitiable.

Most masters are unfeignedly glad to get away. I never am. I sometimes chafe about the eighth or ninth week, but by the thirteenth I have become so used to the life that I hate the thought of any change. I have learnt to do without civilization. I just want my boys by my side always: I want to go on teaching English. I don't mind a holiday from mathematics. I wish I could find the soul of algebra and geometry. It's hard to make a moral lesson out of a circle. I am not Sir Thomas Browne. I shall miss my daily bickerings with Jimmy Haye and Montagu in hall. I shall miss the cricket and the bathing; above all, I shall miss Chichester and the rug. Luckily he is coming to camp this year. Camp lets one down gently. Gradually the longing for society steals over one [144] again and the strenuous ten days' soldiering makes one pine for clean sheets and mufti, ordinary hours and meals at a table, but while it lasts it's just one great picnic.

VIII

August 10, 1911

It's been a good camp in every way. I was battalion scout most of the time and had the extraordinary luck to outwit a whole section of Cameronians (regulars) in one field-day while I was investigating behind the enemy's lines. What an ideal country for fighting this is, with all the pine-trees and the long stretch of Laffan's Plain and Cæsar's Camp. I wish that Radchester could be burnt down and rebuilt somewhere on these Surrey hills. Every evening I used to tramp over to the Aldershot baths from Farnborough, tired as I was, and then back to join the riotous "sing-songs." I find that one gets through a good deal of money at the canteens. I always want to eat like a pig and drink like a fish at the finish of each day's manœuvres. I have never been so bronzed as I am this year: my face is almost black with the sun and the dust. We had some excellent fights during the ten days, not always as on the programme. We had a first-class row with the Melton corps. They "swank" as if they owned the whole camp, so we let all their tents down one night. There was a battle royal and an inquiry the next day, when about eight Generals all gave tongue and talked about the honour of the Army. You can't suddenly pretend that a schoolboy ceases to be a schoolboy because you dress him up in khaki. He will have his "rags," [146] whatever Guardsmen say.

There was, too, the usual smoking row. As a matter of fact, the great majority of fellows don't smoke in camp: they can afford to wait till the holidays begin. It is an education in itself to meet all the people from the other schools, to see how those with the great names take it for granted that they are cock-of-the-walk and "hold up" the canteens, while members of less well-known schools have to wait.

As a matter of fact, the officers' mess is the place to learn things. I dined there one night as a guest. I had no idea that Oxford and Cambridge were, or could be responsible for, such bounders as I met on that one evening. Good-hearted fellows for the most part, but it was ludicrous to see them in the same mess with these *pukka* officers of the Grenadiers and Coldstreams. They are keen on their job, too, but without the ghost of an idea how to behave, or how to speak the King's English. They are indescribably funny to watch as they sidle up to the Colonels and Generals and try to adopt a sort of Army attitude to life. There are heaps of men here whom I used to know at Oxford; most of them, however, are in the regulars and not O.T.C. men at all.

One of the "stunts" is for the boys to get the General or some big "nut" to go to tea in their tents. They provide a palatial meal and the wretched old man has to gorge himself nearly sick in order to please these fifteen-year-olds, who would be tremendously upset if he didn't eat all that was offered to him. But the man we all stand in dread of is the Brigade Sergeant-Major, who has a voice of thunder, and puts the fear of God into every one who comes near him, officer and man [147] alike. He seems to be a walking encyclopædia; there is nothing he doesn't know and he requires absolute perfection every time. I must say ten days of this life make our puny efforts at school to be smart look pretty cheap. Here we really get the hang of things: at school somehow we nearly always fail. It's partly competition and the ever-present fact that we have a reputation to keep up.

August 15, 1911

I have just had four days in town as an aftermath. The comparison between London and camp is extraordinary. I'd no idea my love for London was so deep-rooted. There hangs over London an ever-present air of success, of money-making and money-spending. The shops tempt you, the hotels tempt you, the theatres tempt you, everything tempts you. I fed well and met all sorts of interesting people, among them Chichester. He lives at Hampton Court and I had one great afternoon on the river with his sisters, himself and his mother. They appear to be very wealthy and at dinner, to which I stayed, there was such a variety of wines that I got nervous as to which wine to put in which glass. I believe I got them all wrong, except the liqueurs, but I don't think they noticed. How Chichester can bear the bleak savagery of Radchester after the rich comforts of his own home, I can't conceive.

Some day I am to go back and stay with him. He appears to spend his holidays boating, motoring, riding, playing billiards, going to theatres, reading and writing. I never met people who put one so quickly at one's ease. Although they are rich they don't seem to worry about Society: they do [148] none of the *right* things, for which Heaven be praised. They just enjoy life to the full and take each blessing as it comes. They have less of the snob in them than any people I have ever met. They appear to be unduly grateful to me for what I have done for Tony. My hat! The boot's on the other foot: what has Tony not done for me?

August 23, 1911

After a glorious week with my uncle in Dawlish, during which time I bathed and walked a good

deal, I am back in town again. I love Devon: the coast scenery fills me with ecstatic delight and I thank God every minute that I am alive and strong to enjoy the good things of life.

I got into conversation with heaps of strangers of both sexes, and heard views of life that I am sure never enter the heads of my colleagues: when I am asked, as I frequently am, what I do in life, they always think I am lying when I say I am a schoolmaster, and laugh good-humouredly as if I had said something supremely funny when I mention that Oxford was once my University: apparently all young men claim to be "college boys": it's part of the game. Their whole conversation is one vast lie. But it does no one any harm and gives them a sense of romance: they get right away from the humdrum existence of the shop-counter and the office, and for a fortnight imagine themselves to be dukes and duchesses. But they miss half the joy that Devon provides by not scouring the country. Their programme is to rise late, dress with lavish care in the most glaring and tasteless colours, and slowly promenade up and down the Front. It is all [149] very pretty and harmless and would delight the heart of O. Henry. They miss entirely the thousands of joyous little creeks with which the coast is studded: they never try to discover the secret charm of the moor. They prefer listening to the comic songs of the coons to the birds on the hillside, and the band on the Promenade to the rush of wind in the ears as one stands on the cliffs.

I wish I could write a novel. But I lack every faculty necessary for it. I can't observe properly: I can't describe the effect that scenery has on me. I am too nervous to probe into the inner history of sad-eyed women and dour-faced men. That they have their passionate loves and hates, of course I know, but these every man keeps in the secret places of the heart. Your Devonian is not the sort of man to wear his heart upon his sleeve for daws to peck at. I came back to London two nights ago, with my uncle, and he took me to several plays. When I am in town I'm never satisfied unless I can put in two theatres a day. I am just as excited at the rise of a curtain or the tuning up of the orchestra to-day as I used to be when I was a small kid. To be able to see in the flesh all these great actors, of whom we only hear dimly in our fastness of Radchester, is a delight not less than, if very different from, the sight of the red loam of Devon, or a great stag breaking from cover with the hounds close upon his heels.

September 26, 1911

I spent a week with the Chichesters at Hampton and had a joyful time in company with Tony. After leaving them I went home because my mother suddenly developed rheumatic fever and was [150] seriously ill. I read aloud to her for about three hours every day from Ford Madox Hueffer's "Ladies Whose Bright Eyes" and W. L. Courtney's "In Search of Egeria."

I have heard from the Head Master that Anstruther is to have Marshall's house. Anstruther! Ye Gods! He is two terms junior to me. I hear that the Begum of Bhopal wants me to coach her son in Constantinople. That would be fun. Think of the experience! I wanted to clinch with the offer at once, but my mother made me promise not to. Heaven knows what it would have led to. I should have seen the world, met all the best people, and perhaps found a good job at the end of it.

IX

October 13, 1911

Back again at Radchester. As usual there are a few rows on. Two of the parson members of the staff are quarrelling because Tomson (the High Church one) will call the Communion "Eucharist," and will talk about the "Catholic" instead of the Protestant Church. Mathews on the other hand calls the altar the communion-table. A battle royal is in progress. I believe Tomson will have to go. This is a very Low Church school and any one who crosses himself or indulges in any ritualistic practices is looked upon as inclined to papistry.

It seems a strange thing to make such a fuss about. Both Mathews and Tomson are good, conscientious workers, and the school will be the poorer if either of them leaves. Another row concerns me. It is commonly thought by some members of my form that Chichester has been "sneaking" to me about their methods of work, a pretty laughable idea when one thinks how little Chichester cares about any one in the school, much less in his form. We never talk about school matters at all. We talk books and philosophy. Anyway, I have lately been boycotted by my form, by Montague and Haye and most of the school.

I'm reading Stevenson's and Meredith's Letters. I've got rather a passion for letter-writers. The [152] Paston Letters, Dorothy Osborne's, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu's, Horace Walpole's, Gray's, Lamb's and Cowper's all gave me lasting pleasure. One feels at last as if one really was beginning to see the inner workings of the minds of great geniuses when you close a volume of their intimate correspondence—but I prefer Stevenson's and Meredith's to all the others. They show such wonderful cheeriness in the face of adversity, such love for their friends and wives, such an interest in literature and in life. They are so splendidly natural and speak from the heart. We hear the very voice of the man we have learnt to love in public talking intimately in his own home.

We have just had an amazing masters' meeting in which the following motions were carried:

(i) Masters are forbidden to see more of one boy than another!

(ii) Masters are forbidden to have any boys in their room except for "turned" work.

(iii) Masters are forbidden to hear "turned" work in their rooms except between 9 and 1.

(iv) Lower School boys are not to be allowed in any House other than their own without a written leave from their House-masters.

(v) Boys must never be given the run of a master's rooms.

(vi) In future every one will stand all through the offertory in the Communion service.

There were heaps more, but these were the funniest. Anything more priceless than the solemn conclave of old dears passing these resolutions one by one, with here and there an amendment (always rejected without discussion) I never saw. If they think that all this tomfoolery will prevent [153] me from seeing all I want to of Tony, they are mistaken. It wasn't altogether aimed at me. Apparently quite a number of the younger masters make friends with the boys. For the life of me I can't see why they shouldn't. Anyway these "rules" aren't going to make any difference to me. All through this ridiculous meeting I found myself repeating Edith Sichel's priceless aphorism: "There is nothing that cannot be imagined by people of no imagination." It ought to be inscribed over the mantelpiece of every Common Room.

December 19, 1911

We have had some good field-days lately, notably one where I was in command of a small force, which was told off to harass a large advancing troop by repeated ambushes. I nearly ran my people off their feet, but it was rare fun. We just appeared in the most unlikely places, forced the enemy to waste time by deploying, let them get quite close and then scattered and met again farther back along the line and repeated the manœuvre. The whole business was overwhelmingly successful for we delayed their advance until it ceased to be of any effect. I prefer this sort of tactical scheme to the usual one of merely putting out outposts or an advanced guard. The only way to interest boys in the Corps is to give them some one to fight against every time. I found this out when I started the night scouts. I have been allowed twenty minutes nightly in which to practise my specialist scouts in getting used to working in the dark. It was futile merely getting them accustomed to using their night eyes; unless we opposed one another and tried to track [154] each other down, the whole business failed of its object.

As soon as we had sides they all became ten times more enthusiastic: both their sight and hearing became more acute: there were some titanic struggles and much good resulted from these tactics. It is an eerie business, searching on a pitch-black night inch by inch, over a ploughed field, for an enemy that you expect to pounce upon you from behind if he gets the chance. Of course Hallows and Co. did their best to prevent my having these boys out, on the ground that they would catch cold—and then that they might get into mischief. For once I carried

my point and had my own way.

I notice that I'm leaving the school buildings far less frequently than I used to do when I first came here. I have very little temptation to go off to Scarborough for a "razzle" at the theatre or the Winter Gardens. About twice a term suffices now. I don't quite know why. Of course I'm reading much more and I sit up taking notes for books that I mean some day to write. I still refuse to play "bridge." I go to the "club" and sing, dance, eat and drink on rare occasions, but normally I don't go out of my rooms much at night.

I don't spend more time in Common Room than I can help. I just play my games, work out my schemes in form on the teaching of English and mathematics, write innumerable letters and try my hand occasionally on original topics for articles.

Of late the *Pioneer* has taken several sporting sketches of mine, which has put a new heart in me.

[155]

December 31, 1911

Last term ended very quietly. I saw a great deal of Tony in spite of all the silly new regulations.

It was grand to be back in London again: I spent five days with the Chichesters at Hampton and we feasted right royally and went to two shows a day. On Christmas Eve I went down to see my father and mother, who were staying in Bath for the waters. After the riotous orgies at the Chichesters I thought I should find Bath boring. I arrived late at night and was struck by the lights twinkling from hills on every side. My people had got "digs" close under the shadow of the Abbey. I was glad to come to a place which had such a wonderful eighteenth-century flavour, and expected to find out many new truths about Jane Austen, Fielding, Sheridan, Doctor Johnson, Beau Nash and all the other celebrities, but no one in Bath seemed to take any notice of the past. The present was gay enough for them.

So many Army men retire to Bath with a progeny of daughters all of marriageable age, but possessed of no dowry, that they almost wait in a queue outside the station to fasten on to any strange young man who appears. It took me some time to fathom this. I found every one exceedingly kind and hospitable. I could wish I were a better dancer. These Assembly Room shows are glorious, but they make me abominably nervous. I feel all the time gauche and awkward in the presence of these resplendent youngsters: they can all dance superbly, and in the first place I am afraid that the cheapness of my clothes militates against me, and then that no girl could possibly really want to dance with me when she could secure one of these subalterns or [156]
rich young squires. All the same once I got into the swing of the thing it was all right. I always found some partners who fitted my steps exactly: I endured agonies with some tall and unresponsive creatures, who obviously were only giving me a "duty" dance, but with small girls like Ruth Harding I got on famously. To enjoy a dance to the full one ought to know one's partner intimately and dance with her for the entire night. At the last two dances I got Ruth to dance with me most of the evening, which apparently scandalized some of the clique which I am supposed to have joined. There can be no place in the British Isles where tongues wag so unceasingly as in Bath. It is like sitting through a scene in "The School for Scandal" to hear the modern Lady Sneerwell and Mrs. Candour chattering about faithless wives. Not one in a hundred of their stories could possibly be true, or else we are living in a most depraved age. It is the first time in my life that I've heard people openly discuss these things. I can't say that I like it. Ruth is a good little soul. She knows nothing about eighteenth-century history but is quite keen to learn. We have explored Prior Park and Castle Combe, and have searched every street in order to find out where all the greater celebrities lived in the great days. In some ways the place has not changed at all since the age of Jane Austen. At one of the Assembly Room dances I met exact replicas of Catherine Morland, Emma, and Mr. Collins. They almost employed the same phraseology. Quaintly enough, not one of them had ever read a word of Jane Austen.

My father and mother love the life here. We take my mother out in a Bath chair into the gardens and she gazes at all the smartly dressed passers-by. My father has got to know all the local [157]
clergy: sometimes he takes duty at one of the churches. We have a great number of callers and there is never a lack of anything to do. It is a welcome change from the dullness of our village at home. One of the joys of life here for me is beagling. I go out three times a week with the Wick or the Trowbridge Beagles. I doubt whether there are a finer set of people living than the average beaglers.

They are usually poor (they can't afford to ride), they are passionately addicted to open-air life and are hence sound in mind and limb. Although one feels at times after a heavy run as if one would drop dead from fatigue before one got home, yet the sense of exhaustion is soon ousted by a sense of wild exhilaration in the hunt, the scenery, the people you meet, and the physical fitness of your body. It is so splendid just to turn up at some country house and there, among the sherry and the sandwiches, get into conversation with some flapper or schoolboy or old colonel, all of whom are full of tales of past historic runs and anticipations of the day's sport.

One day we ran from Trowbridge right on to Salisbury Plain, and lost the hounds in the dark by Edington Church—and had to scour the lonely hills for them until eight o'clock. This was on a night when I had promised to take Ruth and two other girls to hear the D'Oyley Carte Company. I got to the theatre at a quarter to ten.

[158]

January 19, 1912

I spent most of my days with Ruth for the rest of the holidays, doing all the correct things, having tea *tête-à-tête* at Fortt's, going to the theatre on Friday nights (the fashionable night in Bath), walking over Lansdown and down the Avon valley, beagling together (that was best of all: she is a superb athlete) and dancing together whenever possible. Her parents and mine have become firm friends and we are as thick as thieves. I am not in love with her, but she's about the best pal I ever had, which is saying a good deal.

I hear that Bath has been waiting anxiously to hear the announcement of our engagement. What a place! Why on earth can't a man have a girl friend without eternally being suspected of marriage? Ruth and I have never kissed or done anything except treat each other as bosom friends, which we certainly are and probably always shall be.

In spite of the insidious temptations of Bath, to crawl round looking at the shops all day, or to explore the highways and by-ways of Somerset, I have both read and written a good deal.

This seems to me the Golden Age of the novel. There are about thirty or forty people writing really great stuff, full of a philosophy of life, candid, human, extraordinarily real and interesting: their books do not sell in great numbers, but they occupy a place on one's bookshelf that one wants to refer to almost daily. All the other thousand or so novelists don't count at all. I hate the unreality and false glamour of these popular writers: they are like the halfpenny papers which cater for a low and vicious, ignorant taste, only to be compared with the shoddier melodramas [159] that we see on the cinema.

I often wonder how these old ladies get on who crowd daily into Smith's Library in Milsom Street and ask the girl behind the counter for an interesting book. She must have her work cut out to remember the million or so different connotations that the word "interesting" bears to the circulating library subscriber. I wonder how many of them would like to plunge into the inconsequent medley which constitutes my diary. When you see one old lady bearing off under her arm a copy of "The Revelations of a Duchess," Samuel Butler's "Life and Habit," Gertie de S. Wentworth-James's latest narcotic, and some of A. C. Benson's Essays, it almost frights you to think of the aggregate effect of such a mixture. Talk about mixing drinks! The reading habit seems to be ingrained in the British public, but I cannot help wondering how much of the best stuff is ever understood by people who commonly feed on garbage.

I should like to publish a sort of annual guide to be called "The Hundred Best Books of the Year," to be divided up into sections for Parsons, Doctors, Schoolmasters, Socialists, Capitalists, Politicians, Flappers, Nursemaids, Factory Hands, Maiden Aunts, Subalterns, and Young Matrons. I wonder how many would overlap. Not many, I fancy.

I don't think criticisms of books make any appreciable difference to their sale. I have seen heaps of novels, damned by all the papers, go into five or six large editions and others that have been acclaimed as sheer genius die at birth. I wonder, for instance, how many copies of E. C. Booth's "Cliff End" were sold during the first year after its appearance, yet I can't remember any novel [160] which made so deep an impression on me at the time. Yet on every bookstall you see copies of "Paul the Pauper," which every sane man would condemn as simply silly. It has sold over 200,000 copies in two years. It seems incredible: there isn't a single human character in the book, not a single natural sentence: everything is untrue to life in every respect. The passions are laid on with a trowel. There are Grandisonian heroes and double-dyed villains: coincidences of a kind which violate every natural law occur on every other page. The only thing that I can compare to this amazing book is a Lyceum tragedy and the wit of a music-hall comedian. I wonder if England will ever become educated.

From what I have seen of girls in Bath I should say that the system of education in girls' schools is no better than that of boys: they certainly know a little more about English literature, because their mistresses read aloud to them passages out of the novels of Charlotte and Emily Brontë, Jane Austen, Dickens and Thackeray. They also devote more time to poetry than we do, but they forget it all as soon as they leave school. They don't see that these books taken altogether form a complete introduction to life. The average girl I have danced with lately seems to have read nothing at all. Her conversation invariably runs on the same lines. Have I been in London lately? Don't I just adore Du Maurier and Martin Harvey? Do I rink? Do I hunt? Do I punish my boys very severely? Am I sorry that I am not in the Army? Do I like dancing? Do I like girls? Am I an outrageous flirt? Would I like to sit out somewhere more secluded than this rather open spot? Am [161] I certain that I had enough supper? Isn't the way Jim Dainton and Sophie Harrington are behaving "perfectly disgusting"? Don't I love Irene Fairhaven? Isn't Joyce, or Corelli Windyatt, or Moritz, or Stanislaus Würm, or whoever is playing on this particular evening, divine, topping, ducky, dinky, perfectly sweet, ripping—or whatever the word of the moment is? Shall I be at the Morrisons' on Tuesday or the Dohertys' on Thursday?

I get most infernally tired of all this claptrap. No one ever says anything that he or she means: it is all superficial. The girls think of nothing but their frocks and the effect they are making on their partners. I want to talk sense and instead have to rattle on with sheer nonsense. I suppose I am getting prosy and sedate, but I do just love talking about books and different views on life. I seem to have no ready change of small-talk. Of course one cannot expect to get to know all the people with whom one dances, but this constant chopping and changing is rotten. I want to keep to one girl, Ruth for preference, all through the night. Then one doesn't have to think of something polite to say: if we feel like silence we just keep silent, if we want to talk we talk, about anything that comes into our heads, serious or gay. We understand each other's moods without having to go through a long rigmarole of introductory icebreaking. One great advantage of Bath is the number of clubs and places where one can browse among the reviews and

periodicals of all sorts. How I manage to keep abreast of any modern work in a hole like Radchester, I can't think. Without the *Times Literary Supplement* and the book reviews in the *Telegraph* and *Morning Post* I should be entirely at sea. And yet with all these incentives to read, [162] the ignorance of these townspeople is extraordinary. They nearly all rely on their bookseller for everything they read. They leave the choice always to him.

X

February 23, 1912

It was appalling to have to leave the comforts of Bath for the wilds of Radchester. It has been the worst Easter term so far within the remembrance of man. We were snowed right up from the beginning and House-fights of snowballing soon ceased to amuse. We are simply shivering in our rooms. The whole place is one medley of germs. Every conceivable sort of contagious disease is raging. It is useless trying to teach anybody anything except individually, for there is no continuity, one boy drops one day, another the next, six more the day after.

I have three in one of my sets where I'm supposed to have twenty-six. I've spent every spare moment in my rooms writing to Ruth, reading and trying my hand at poetry. Thank Heaven, Tony is still immune. He waits for me every night after chapel and we stagger across the snow-bound square with the wind blowing the filthy stuff into our eyes and down our necks and almost into our skins. One misses games in a place like this. I hate letting a day go by without taking violent exercise. I suppose if I were in the City I should be content with Saturday afternoons, but as a schoolmaster I feel that I can't teach and keep healthy unless I need a hot bath in the afternoon. The cold bath in the morning makes me yell with agony these days, but I always keep it up. I [164] suppose it is good for me. At any rate it is refreshing.

Masefield had a new poem in the February number of the *English Review* called "The Widow in the Bye-Street." All my boys immediately proceeded to copy it. He is certainly virile and unlike anybody else. He makes an irresistible appeal to youth. Of course the outspokenness of his diction accounts for this, at least partially.

Of late I have been sleeping rottenly. I always like to keep my blind up, so that I can hear the waves more clearly and see the sea from my bed. I notice that when the moon is up I get appalling nightmares and wake to find it full on my face. I wonder if I am liable to moonstroke!

We have cleared the snow off some of the ponds and had some really good skating. The most ridiculous rules have been made about it, because two boys were once drowned, a hundred or so years ago. Each House has to take a ladder and a rope with it, and not more than twenty boys are allowed on the same pond at the same time. Considering that none of the ponds is more than two feet deep or ten yards across, such precautions seem rather unnecessary, but nothing can be done at Radchester without rules being framed by the dozen to meet all contingencies. Curiously enough, a tragedy *has* occurred. The head waiter in Common Room has drowned himself. We spent half of one bitter moonless night searching for his body. He leaves a widow and six children. I wonder why he did it. Was the conversation of the masters altogether too deadly for him? Was he underpaid? or was it just the depressing conditions? I never saw a place which so invited suicidal thoughts. The gloom of this coast at this time of the year is indescribable. All the [165] bungalows down the beach are deserted and so are the little tea-houses which look so jolly in the summer-time. The Head Master has played a low-down, dirty trick on a man called Turner, who only joined us last term. He was quite young, brilliantly clever, popular and successful with the boys: he had to rent a cottage about a quarter of a mile away because he was married and had one baby. His wife was pretty and did a good deal to make the place habitable. One remembered sometimes even the way to take one's hat off. Well, he has had to go. His sin was—being married. The Head Master told him that he had come under false pretences, that the school could not afford to keep men who did not "live in," and that a wife caused a man to neglect his work.

March 23, 1912

During the last month or so I have been seized with a panic lest I should die of appendicitis or some such quick and hidden complaint. I can't sleep at all and I lie awake with a curious numb sort of pain and think of death. I am all right in the daytime for the most part. At any rate I am playing hockey and footer with all my old vigour and I never feel bad in form. It's just at night; unfortunately it's every night that I get seized with a real horror lest I should die uncared for, unhonoured and unwept. I should have liked a little taste of love and laughter, of civilized comfort—I should have liked to have written some sort of book which would have helped mankind along the rough road of life. I should like to have had a wife, an heir ... but as it is Tony must be my heir. I have transmitted to him my passionate love of literature, my keenness for beauty, my [166] longing for a revolution in educational practice and theory.

I have worked off my spleen on a long centenary paper on Dickens for the *Radcastrian*, which will excite and annoy the lovers of that novelist a good deal.

I made all the boys in my form write centenary appreciations of Dickens, too. I got some queer stuff. He is not half as well known as he ought to be in spite of his great name. But I do wish he had resisted his tendency to caricature.

There have been the usual rows. By far the most disconcerting was the expulsion of Mather, who was a school prefect and a scholar of Magdalen, for stealing. It seems impossible to believe. It

appears that he was in a House where most of the boys have far too much pocket-money: the very fags own to having "fivers." Poor old Mather was one of eight sons of a penniless country parson: he never had a sou and consequently starved when all the rest of the House were revelling in delicacies.

More masters have been poisoning the boys' minds against me. Tony's House-master has been lecturing him about my pernicious influence. I wish I knew what was behind this dark conspiracy. I wish they would give me some facts to go on, and say that just here or just there I was doing harm, but all their accusations are nebulous. Whenever I go up to a man's rooms and beard him in his den, he nearly always denies that he ever said any of the things which were reported of him. It's very difficult to know what to do.

I've discovered another wheeze which I use to get original work out of my form. I give out a list of [167]
forty or fifty words, ostensibly for spelling, and by the side of these they write a list of synonyms, and then during their next prep. they weave a story round the words I have given them. I have had wonderful results from this simple device. Incidentally the boys love doing it. It stimulates them, especially when they have to read their own efforts aloud.

Now that the sports are looming ahead, I get up in the very early mornings and take people for training walks. In the afternoon I run with them across country or round the track. Before I came no one worried much about the sports. I have really got them keen this year, much to Hallows' indignation, because as games master he is responsible for the sports, and he thinks I'm taking too much upon myself in training them daily for weeks before the events.

About a dozen of us, Tony and other boys in this House, go off every Sunday to a nook we've found by an inland stream. We call it a training walk: it pans out at twelve miles. By so doing we get right outside the country we know and really begin to get a glimmering of beauty on these glorious warm spring days. It's impossible to imagine now that we were ever snow-bound. It is warm and sunny every day; so much so that "Rugger," and hockey seem indescribably silly games for this time of year. It feels "crickety" weather. I've been writing articles on Hymns and Cross-Country Running for the London Press and had both accepted, which is a bit of luck. Things are looking up. All the same it's a nerve-racking process, waiting to hear one's fate by every post. Editors are as stubborn as mules and without any sense of humanity.

We have had one great excitement lately. A schooner ran ashore just close to my bedroom [168]
window and we had to rush out in the middle of the night and rescue people. Poor devils, they were awfully cold and miserable by the time we got them to bed in the sanatorium, but luckily there were no lives lost, and most of the cargo has been salvaged.

Life at the end of the Easter term is fairly brisk. It's impossible to get hold of boys to do anything in the way of extra work owing to the innumerable House competitions. There is the Junior and Senior Hockey, the Singing Competition, the Boxing, the Gym., the Corps and Certificate "A," the Sports, and Heaven knows what besides—and every man on the staff thinks that his pet job is the only one that matters. The only thing about which we are all agreed is that school work does not matter. No one thinks of that. All the same I think these contests are good things, particularly in the Corps, though I object to the extraordinary number of prizes and pots that are lavished upon individual winners. There's a huge element of selfishness inspired by the very things which we hold to eradicate it. I took two days off by going down to Queen's Club to see the Oxford and Cambridge Sports. It was a rare treat to meet all one's best friends of the Oxford days and watch other people in the last stages of nervous funk as we were so few years ago. I went to the dinner afterwards: I wonder whether one will ever grow out of these orgies. They are very life and blood to me now at any rate. I expect our older guests get a trifle tired with the exuberance of our spirits before the end. It was very tame to have to come back to Radchester and the school sports [169]
after that grand struggle at Queen's Club.

April 13, 1912

Here I am back again in my beloved Bath.

The term ended well. Heatherington's won the sports and I was the recipient of a tremendous ovation at the House Supper. I don't think I ever felt so proud before. At the end of term I went down to Hampton Court with Tony until Good Friday, when I went on to see Ruth: we have spent all the rest of the time together.

It was at the Easter Ball that I saw a face which I shall never forget. I was ragging about with Ruth in the vestibule when I saw a girl at the far end of the room talking to young Conyngham, one of the "nuts" of Bath, whom I cordially dislike. They seemed very pleased with one another. I don't know what came over me but Walter Savage Landor's phrase came into my mind, "By Jove, I'm going to marry that girl," and before I knew what I was doing I had left Ruth and raced across to Conyngham and asked him to introduce me to his partner. He was really bored. She was not pleased. Apparently he realized that I meant to stay there till he did introduce me and so he gruffly mumbled, "Oh! This is Mr. Traherne—Miss Tetley," and walked away about two yards. "Don't go away, Philip," she said, in a voice that thrilled me to hear.

"May I——?" I began.

"I'm afraid I've only got number 17 left."

"May I have that—and any extras?"

"If you like—I'm afraid I didn't hear your name."

"Traherne. Patrick Traherne—let me write it for you." [170]

I did and received instant dismissal. Not a promising start, but I was pleased just to get so much out of her. All the evening, as I was gallivanting round with Ruth, I kept on looking at her, but she had no eyes for me. I asked Ruth about her, but she was not interested.

"Which girl? Oh, that one. I don't know her except by sight. Her name's Elspeth Tetley. Rather ugly, don't you think? Her name I mean. No: she's a pretty enough little thing in herself. She seems very fond of Mr. Conyngham."

Yes, she did—confound her. Incidentally, she cut my dance and there were no extras, so I did not see her again that night. I wasn't going to be defeated so easily, so I bowed to her when I passed her in the streets, but she never even saw me. I don't quite know what it is about her that so attracts me; she looks very quiet, she is amazingly sure of herself, extraordinarily pretty, with any amount of humour and energy I should think. I am still speaking without the book, for I know nothing about her, whatever, except that I love the look of her.

Ruth and I have spent all the holidays so far watching "Rugger" matches and picnicking and motoring and dancing. I have had Petre Mais down to stay with me. By a strange chance he knows the Tetleys: he thinks Elspeth, as he calls her (he has known her from childhood), the most adorable girl he has ever met. I have tried to get him to bring her along to see me, but something has always cropped up at the last moment to prevent our meeting.

[171]

May 3, 1912

I spent the whole of the Easter holidays in Bath, mainly in the company of Ruth. It was good to have Mais with me: we used to sit up to all hours arguing about education: we appear to be both of us bitten with the craze of reform, though we don't agree on points of detail. He is a curious mixture of the very grave and sedate and the irresponsibly gay. He gets on extraordinarily well with my father. While I am disporting myself in company with Ruth, he takes the Gov'nor for long walks and argues about Christian dogma and ethics. I am afraid that Ruth interferes with my reading and writing. Mais seems to get through a great deal and always "twits" me with being a lady-killer: he never seems to want the companionship of the other sex. There is Elspeth Tetley, with whom he might spend days—she is obviously very fond of him—and instead of going about with her he gives her up to Conyngham and buries himself in the Church Institute or the Bath and County Club, getting up notes for some article or book that he is at work upon. He is never happy unless he is working. As he very truly says, "his work is his mistress and he never wants a better." All the same a man needs some relaxation. I find mine in the company of Ruth, who grows more alluring with every passing day. She has taken me to Bradford-on-Avon, to Englishcombe, by motor to Badminton and over Salisbury Plain. I have been to three point-to-point meetings and at each of them caught a fleeting glance of Elspeth Tetley. She was always surrounded by young men, so I couldn't speak to her. I love these country meetings more almost [172] than any other form of sport. The hazardous steeplechases fill one with excitement: many men were riding whom I knew at Oxford, but they all appeared to belong to sets of the most exclusive kind. There is always a plentiful sprinkling of dukes and duchesses at these shows, as well as all the farmers in the country and the riff-raff of the town. The procession of bicycles and governess-cars and dog-carts and motors and pedestrians miles out in the country is a fine sight. I should like to have enough money to be able to go in for steeplechasing: it must be one of the finest sensations in the world to feel yourself rushing through the air, jumping these brooks and thickset hedges, always risking your neck, while all the youth and beauty of the country watch you, heart in mouth lest you should take a toss, transported beyond belief when you ride past the post a winner. Elspeth Tetley somehow fits a point-to-point meeting exactly. Some girls look the most preposterous idiots all togged up in the serviceable tweeds and brogues that girls wear for these shows, but she looks just as divine at a race meeting as she does in a ballroom. I hope to Heaven I get the chance of meeting her again some day.

June 10, 1912

I hated leaving Bath more than ever this time, partly because it meant leaving Elspeth in the clutches of young Conyngham, partly because of the summer weather and the flowers and the comfort of the south, partly because of parting with Ruth, but mainly because of the horrid contrast. Who, for instance, in Common Room ever rides to hounds, or cares about point-to-point meetings? Not one of my colleagues ever goes near a dance if he can get out of it. I wonder how [173] they all spend their holidays. As a consequence of my depression it took me longer than usual to settle down this term. I had a bad fit of restlessness, a feeling that I ought to be out in the world, risking something, trying to make money out of rubber in the Malay, or jute in India, experiencing the ups and downs of life in America, Spain, China, Russia, anywhere where men really lived. There is no denying that we do tend to stagnate here. This incessant round of cricket, bathing, maths., English, prep., chapel, and roll isn't fit work for an able-bodied man of active brain and ambition. The ideal schoolmaster has to put away ambition from the start. He can never set the Thames on fire or cause his name to ring out through the ages: it is enough for him if a score of men go through life blessing him for what he taught them, but a boy's memory is very short: he soon forgets his masters when he gets out into the real world and little wonder. I've been going into Scarborough lately and trying to find an interest in watching the trippers, but I hate the north-country people now. Bath has spoilt my taste for them for ever. I hate their raucous laughter, their dirty teeth, their loud ingurgitations over their food, their louder clothes

and ghastly sense of independence, though as a Socialist I ought, I suppose, to be thankful for the last.

I have had an offer to sub-edit a rather pleasant monthly called the *Scrutinator*. I nearly accepted it. I don't know what held me back unless it was Tony. I hate the thought of life without him, though of course he will leave just as other good fellows have left and I shall have to find some new friend and confidant.

We have had a wedding here, an unheard-of thing at Radchester. The Bursar is leaving, and so has decided to do what he wouldn't be allowed to do if he remained and that is to take a wife. [174]

We had a really gay time for two days. The bridesmaids had the time of their lives. I wonder that the Head didn't put up a list of rules about them but it was all over before he really discovered anything about it. It was a sight for the gods to see members of Common Room raking up old frock-coats and top hats and white waistcoats for the occasion. The ceremony made me very jealous and I went back to my rooms feeling terribly lonely. Sometimes it seems to me that a man is only half a man until he marries. It would be splendid to have some one to turn to in every mood, some one who would sympathize and always be there ready to console, comfort, and share your joys and griefs. Ah! But who is that some one to be, that perhaps not impossible She?

July 29, 1912

This has been a wonderful summer term from the point of view of weather. All our school matches came off, all our field-days passed without a hitch. The summer term makes an enormous difference to life here. Then the sea at last seems to take on some sort of colour, the country seems less drab, people are more cheerful and human: the long evenings on the shore are a pure joy—and then of course there are the early morning bathes, the lazy afternoons watching the cricket, or reading or trying to concoct an article. Every one seems to be in the best of health, there are fewer rows, and we are less antagonistic in Common Room.

We have started an illegitimate "rag" called the *Radchester Ram*, which gives me unalloyed pleasure. We got tired of the everlasting succession of accounts of matches in the *Radcastrian*, and so we have collected all the really original literary stuff we could get and now we bring this new periodical out once a month. There is nothing offensive in it, as there so often is in magazines of this sort. It is simply a medley of verse and sketches, short stories and articles of general interest. On our first number we made about a sovereign profit. It gives many of us something to think about and encourages boys to write. We pay for all the contributions we use. [175]

We have had two wonderful addresses given us here, one on Speech Day by Lord Dunnithorne, in which he implored the boys to keep up their ardour and energy not only in games, but in every side of life, in keeping an eye while still at school on public affairs, and developing a sense of proportion as to the relative values of the spiritual and the material, the other by a Fellow of All Souls from the pulpit on the hypocrisy that is so rampant in Public Schools. He asked us to think for ourselves, to set ourselves against any tradition, however strong, when and if we felt clear that it was against the principles of Christ and Liberty. He dwelt not on the greatness of the Public Schools, but their failure to produce the big men of the day. He brought out name after name of men who are now leading the world in politics, in science, in religion, in every department of life who owed nothing to the Public Schools. He accounted for this by telling us that we always tried to level up the many and so levelled down the few who really mattered, that our general level was far too low and meant a crushing of that Divine spark which alone could help us to do our duty. It was like a breath of inspiration from another world to hear this fine exponent of the best Oxford spirit trying to rouse us to a sense of our shortcomings. The Head was furious about the sermon, as were quite half the members of Common Room. I made it the text of pretty well all my discourses for the rest of term. Most of the boys of course didn't know what he was driving at; those who did were divided into two great camps: the upholders of tradition and those who agreed with him. I am afraid we who agreed with him were in a minority. Montague and Jimmy Haye refused to speak to me for weeks. Poor devils. Probably before very long they will come to understand what the preacher meant and metaphorically sit in sackcloth and ashes because they heeded not his warning. How the old men hate individuality: they fear it as Shakespeare feared and hated the mob. [176]

Individuality, like originality, is dangerous to custom: when people begin to think for themselves there is usually trouble somewhere, but unless people learn to think for themselves they will surround themselves with unimaginable horrors. How often in the train does one come across half-educated louts gesticulating and laying down the law on every conceivable point, their arguments, theories and principles all emanating from the halfpenny press. More harm has been done to the cause of progress and good sense in this country by cheap journalism than by any other agency. It is not drink, but the gutter press that gnaws at the very vitals of the commonwealth. It is an appalling thing to think that as a nation we prefer to take all our theories and principles at second hand from the sayings of unscrupulous ink-slingers of Grub Street who have never done an honest day's work in their lives, but have just earned their daily bread by obeying the dictates of some foul capitalist who thinks of nothing but filling his own pockets. Politics may be dirty, but there is nothing quite so foul in this country as journalism. Unless we can make boys rise above the pinchbeck claptrap of the cheaper writers we fail entirely to educate them. To pin one's faith to anything but one's own intellect is to fail to make anything of life. I've tried every means in my power of late to rouse my boys to take an interest in their work, to show them the continuity of history, the reason why we read good literature, the reason for [177]

exercising the faculties: we must send them out into the world with the critical spirit fully developed, not ready to be gulled by every shibboleth of party politics or mad cry in the market-place of people with axes to grind. We want them to mould other people's opinions, not to take everything ready made—as a sort of reach-me-down suit that they can wear without question. I want them to probe all difficulties and not to rest until they have planted the new Jerusalem in this green and pleasant land of England.

Of all missionary work, this is the most important, to get people to think for themselves, not to have minds like the rows of suburban villas in which they live, each one an exact replica of its neighbour's; dull, correct, unambitious, cramped and futile, but to launch out in experiments, to probe for some underlying purpose in life, to keep on searching for some Holy Grail, to work for the amelioration of mankind and the progress of humanity, not to sit down quietly under abuses [178] but sword in hand to set out to destroy the powers of evil. One gets easily worked up to preach the gospel of the nobility of work to boys: the hard part of the task is to rouse them from the appalling apathy and listlessness which characterize them. They are used to being shouted at and preached to—they don't take the trouble to listen to one quarter of what one says. They can understand punishment, but they have very little use for a mere appeal to their better nature, their reason or their emotion.

Every night at 6.30 I have a voluntary class for Shakespeare lovers. We run through play after play, and those who come on the whole gain a great deal. The difficulty is to get them to come. The great majority of them prefer to go over to the gym. or to laze about in their studies. They don't realize at all that I have to eat my dinner in five instead of thirty minutes in order to give them this time. They look on me as a sort of Shakespeare fanatic and come only when there is nothing else to do. They have no idea that Shakespeare has something very definite to say to them, some principle of life to disclose for their benefit, if only they will do their part. They all think that there is some royal road to learning by which all virtue can be achieved without ardour, energy or suffering. If they could only hear the complaints of Old Boys who come back and discuss over the fireside their wasted opportunities it would do them a world of good. I try every means I can think of to interest my forms. I lecture on a century of English literature and get each boy to select a subject and make it his own by reading up and writing a paper on his favourite author in that century. These papers are read aloud before the rest of the form, who [179] comment favourably or adversely, and debates are held to try the opinion of the House on the different verdicts formed by each member of the class.

I find my system of entertaining boys to tea a very expensive one. I gave a large party to my form *en bloc* at the end of term: it cost me £2 10s. I shouldn't mind if I were earning a living wage, but £40 a year out of my £150 is docked for a pension scheme in which I take no interest, and Oxford bills still come in and I can never meet them. The holidays, too, eat such a hole into one's salary. I am always "broke" and always in debt. I wish I could learn to save. Some men seem to have put by quite a lot for the inevitable rainy day. I have had one good excursion lately. Our team won the Rapid Firing Competition at Bisley and I was sent down with the team to claim the cast of the Winged Victory which it is our good fortune to have won. I have never seen a more motley crew than the different competitors who went up for prizes.

Tony has got into the Shooting VIII, so I had him with me during this tour, which gave me tremendous joy. I managed to read Edith Wharton's wonderful romance of "Ethan Frome" in the train on the way down and "The Innocence of Father Brown" coming back. I have read the latter book to my form since. They simply gloat over it. It makes admirable material for reproduction: another good idea is to read half of one of the stories and make them finish it in their own words —a sort of Edwin Drood idea. Thank God this term is over: the tiredness of my brain can be guessed by the virulent language of my reports. I had to write several of them over again because the Head objected to my candour.

XI

August 12, 1912

Camp at Tidworth was a splendid holiday. Of course the Plain is not so exciting as Aldershot: there are no baths and no towns to visit, but I like the bare wildness of it all, the undulating hills, the wide views on every side, the clumps of trees, the gorse and the bracken. They didn't work us very hard this year, owing to the fact that there had been some row about overdoing it at Aldershot last August. That didn't worry me. I don't come to camp to work. I come to mix with as many boys as possible, to get to know their little ways—I come to join in the "rags" at "sing-song," to see what sort of material the other schools produce, to laugh at the amazing scenes in the officers' mess, to get back some of the sleep I seem to have lost at school, to learn a little military work, to live an open-air rough-and-tumble life for a few days, and in short to enjoy myself. I had to leave early this year in order to take my M.A. It was the first time I had been back to Oxford since I came down. Of all pointless things in life the taking of an M.A. seems about the most prominent. Why should I be supposed to be a more responsible creature because I pay a few more guineas into the already overfull University chest for the privilege of exchanging my rabbit's-fur hood for a red and black silk one? Anyway I followed the convention and felt [181] inordinately important and wise for about two hours! Oxford in the Long Vac. might please Charles Lamb but I hurried away as soon as I could. I just glanced at a few shops, reminded some long-suffering tradesmen that I was still alive and then caught a train for Minehead, where Tony met me fresh from camp. He had never been in Devon before and I had invited him down in order that he should join me in the walk which I cannot repeat too often. We went to Cloutsham Ball to see a meet of the Devon and Somerset staghounds, and had the luck to see a kill at Porlock Weir: we slept two nights at the Ship Inn and talked to Carruthers Gould and several other celebrities we met there; then we tramped over the Deer Forest to Badgeworthy Water, in which I fell and had to waste an afternoon in a croftsman's cottage while my flannels were dried.

We slept that night at the Valley of Rocks Hotel at Lynton. I've never seen so many foreigners in Devon. Somehow I resent the presence of these strangers in my native land: I feel that I want to shut the gates and only permit such as can prove themselves worthy to gain access to the Garden of Eden. It is dreadful to hear polyglot noises at breakfast and condescending praises of Watersmeet and Woody Bay, Parracombe and Combe Martin from Germans. Luckily very few of these visitors go far afield. Most of them only come to eat and drink and lounge in the gardens and sleep. They don't really penetrate Devon at all: the secret of her charm still remains with her own children, and with those to whom her children divulge it. Tony was in rhapsodies over the cliff walk to Ilfracombe and delighted my aunts by praising all the scenery and giving detailed [182] reasons for his appreciation.

September 20, 1912

Tony only stayed in Ilfracombe for a week, but we made the most of our time. He got on famously with my grandfather and kept him thoroughly amused. We bathed twice a day and went to all the shows we could find, coons and concerts and plays in the Alexandra Hall. After he had gone I was left alone with my aunts and grandfather. I used to read Seton Merriman aloud to them at nights. My grandfather spends most of his time attempting to solve puzzles in *John Bull*, *Tit-Bits*, *Answers*, and so on. A strange craze to occupy a man of eighty. He is usually to be found at the County Club, of which he is the leading spirit.

My aunts and I go round district-visiting, picnicking at Woolacombe and Lee, getting up amusements for Bible Classes and Sunday School scholars, and calling on all the residents. Tiring of having no active occupation I started coaching an Anglo-Indian boy who was staying at Combe Martin, which I found interesting work. He was a delightful fellow, typical of all that is best in the Charterhouse type. I felt that I was paying my way by working with him, and thoroughly enjoyed it.

In my spare time, spurred on by my grandfather's efforts, I started going in for the weekly *Westminster* competitions, without meeting with any success. My main enjoyment was watching the Cardiff and Swansea trippers coming off the channel steamers and exploring the delights of Ilfracombe. It is for these people that the shops spread out their garish wares of cheap [183] meretricious novels, vulgar post cards, hideous china and other mementoes. I ate pounds and pounds of cream and was growing fat and lazy, when I suddenly found myself called away to Chesterfield to coach a boy for the London Matriculation at the rate of ten guineas for ten days. The contrast was too awful.

Chesterfield is one of the grimiest and most hideous of towns on the borders of Derbyshire and Yorkshire. My pupil was a slack, good-for-nothing, over-affluent, overgrown youth who had to pass in English, knowing none. His father, who was a colliery owner, happened also to be a Director of Education for the county, and was anxious to know what education really meant.

He had read Huxley, Spencer and Darwin, and no one else. I asked him to come along and join

his son and the three of us went through the history of English literature from Shakespeare to the present day. The father was really interested, the son frankly bored. In mathematics the boy knew far more than I did, but he could not frame an English sentence for any money. Neither could he see the use of poetry, drama, novel or essay.

I was taken to the Corporation Baths, I was motored all over the place, I encountered some of the rudest people I have ever met in my life, and I was thoroughly miserable for ten whole days in a house which "stank" of money and where everything was uncomfortable and wrong. Work was the only relief. The abjectness of the shops and the people's faces threatened to drive me mad, so great was the contrast between Chesterfield and my Devon home. How any one could live for choice in an ugly misbegotten place like this I can't think. It seemed to me to invite crime or at [184]
least criminal thoughts. The meals were one long unendurable agony: high tea of pine-apple, blancmange and tinned salmon at 5.45, 7.30 or 8.45, according as "the master" returned from work. I went hungry most days. After a day I found myself studying this new type closely: the father collects the most evil oil-paintings and the most exquisite old oak furniture. They have a pigsty in the front garden, which occupies their spare hours. The old man is deeply religious, very methodical, Liberal in politics, very quiet, very anxious not to spend money, as honest as the day, fond of power and passionately devoted to his son. He keeps a journal containing a list of all the books he reads and his opinions of them.

I went into barracks at Exeter for a few days before returning to Ilfracombe, to keep my hand in, but I was chafing all the time to get back to the sea and freedom. The convention of mess is only less nauseating than that of Common Room.

For the last fortnight of the holidays I went up home to stay with my people and had to submit to being shown to people as a sort of prize pig. A round of tea-fights and bridge-drives, walks and sleep. I don't seem to be able to get going with any original writing. I wonder why in the world they give us such long holidays. In eight weeks one ought to be able to achieve something, write a novel or at any rate perform something useful. Instead of which we travel up and down the country and waste the precious hours—I hate not being actively occupied every hour of every day —life is damned dull that way. There must be thousands of men who would give anything to get [185]
as much holiday as I do, whereas I chafe and long to be back at work again weeks before the time comes to return. It's pleasant to get a chance of seeing my father and mother, though they are never very communicative. My father is out visiting in the parish all and every day, and only gets back late at night, and my mother is usually very busy in the house or shopping. I accompany them in their walks as a general rule, but they are not interested in talk about Radchester—they like to discuss books, but my mother reads little but theological and philosophical treatises. My father lives for humour: he is amazingly witty in himself (his letters are a treasure-house of shrewd and excruciatingly funny character-sketches of his parishioners) and he is passionately fond of wit in others. I wish I inherited some of this gift. I find that I am too deadly serious. I get too excited over my schemes to reform mankind. He is too kindly and tolerant, too good-natured and easy-going to try to shock people out of their indifference. My mother looks on my educational ideals as a sort of mania out of which I shall grow when I come to years of discretion: she thinks all education nonsense and a mistake.

I find that I become pretty well the ideal lotus-eater at home. I sleep from 10 P.M. to 9 in the morning and then read whatever I can lay my hands on if it is wet, or go out in the parish if it is fine. If I write, which is seldom, I rarely give up more than a couple of hours a day to it. I ought to imitate A. C. Benson and write two or three hours regularly daily, year in, year out—but I never do anything regularly.

If I were ever to write a novel I should finish it in a fortnight or three weeks. I can't bear to have [186]
anything hanging over my head. I am always afraid lest I should die in the middle and then find all the good work go for nothing. I wish I could cultivate the calm patience of these men, who work steadily for fifty years to produce some little thesis. Would I had the calm assurance of Lord Acton or Lord Morley.

If I could only cultivate a sense of arrangement. Here am I a strenuous and not altogether unsuccessful teacher of English, and I can't even string paragraphs together properly. That's why I like writing up my diary. I don't have to worry about arrangement. I can just write down things as they occur to me, matters of infinite moment cheek by jowl with ephemeral topics of the hour. I have been reading Montaigne's "Essays" of late and derived considerable comfort therefrom. I always carry a book about in my pocket wherever I go, one of the "World's Classics" for preference: it effectually prevents me from getting peevish if I have to wait for a train or in a shop to be attended to.

These holidays I have read very thoroughly John Stuart Mill "On Liberty" and Hobbes's "Leviathan" in this way. Oh for a lucid pen like Mill's or an orderly mind like Hobbes'. Such books are best read quietly and in small quantities at a time. When I read a novel I tear the heart out of it, just as Doctor Johnson did. There are very few novels I can't get through in a day. I usually sit up to finish them if I can't manage it otherwise. My mother says that I can't possibly remember what I read and that it's pure waste of time to read in this way, but I think I generally manage to squeeze the best out of a book in this way.

Anyway I was born to hurry: I think it's a vice, but impetuosity and turbulence are two [187]
characteristics that I must have been endowed with by my fairy godmother.

It is this same idiosyncrasy which prevents me from being a good letter-writer. I write to dozens and dozens of boys and friends like Ruth, but I never express myself adequately, simply because I don't take enough trouble.

If genius really means the taking of infinite pains I must be the least of a genius that ever lived, for I only write when it is easy to me, and on subjects that don't require that I should refer to handbooks all the time. On the other hand, Samuel Butler has some comforting light to shed on that topic.

October 5, 1912

Eight weeks is too long a holiday. One gets out of touch with all things pertaining to discipline and rules. As time goes on one begins to chafe less at what seem ridiculous restrictions; they become part of the day's work, just as I suppose if I were in the Army the red tape of the orderly room would not worry me after a year or two.

I have just had young Pollock staying with me. He is now a gunner of two years' standing. It seems only yesterday I was training him for Woolwich. He can't understand why I stay in so heathen an atmosphere as a school. The rules he simply ignores. I find him smoking on his way across the square to breakfast, turning on my gramophone while the boys are at work, sitting in my window-seat in full gaze of the school, glass in hand, drinking whisky. He has no sort of [188] respect for my seniors, but swears genially in Common Room, seizes the best chairs, takes up the whole of the fireplace and the only copy of the *Times*, while Hallows and Co. gnash their teeth, purple with rage in the background. The best of it is that he is quite unaware that he is giving offence. He is extraordinarily genial, if somewhat condescending in his manner towards them. It is a pure joy to watch him with them: he so exactly represents the world's attitude towards the whole race of ushers. "They are poor, ignorant, down-at-heel devils, but it's as well to be kind to them." That is the sort of feeling that Pollock has, I know: you can see it in his every action. I suppose the difference between Common Room and a gunner mess is fairly wide.

I have just been reading F. R. G. Duckworth's "Leaves from a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book." I wish I had his gift for writing. I could a tale unfold of life at a Public School which would dispel a few hundred of the fatuous superstitions that have grown, I know not how, round our ancient homes of learning. But if I did even so much as reveal this diary I should be out of a job in a week.

We are in the middle of one of the more delectable sorts of row. A few days ago a field-day was fixed against Blowborough, but it had to be scratched owing to disease on their part. A House match was hastily substituted and duly posted at 12.45 on the day. One of the Houses refused to turn out because they were not given longer warning. Hallows is in a fine state of frenzy. What will happen to the captain of the offending House I can't think. Games "bloods" do occasionally get obstreperous, but do not often care to risk Hallows' wrath. I shall be interested to see the [189] *dénouement*.

I have been into Scarborough with Pollock to see *Passers-By* and *Hindle Wakes*. Houghton's play seems to me to be epoch-making. Quite apart from its merits as a play the subject was (to me) so novel. It expresses so much of the new spirit, the spirit that refuses to be limited by the narrow conventions of its fathers and carves out a new line for itself regardless of public opinion. It seems to me that Fanny Hawthorn was quite justified in refusing to marry the man she went off with. He was just an amusement, an adventure. Two wrongs can never make a right. She wanted a week-end of liberty, excitement—call it what you will, and took it, ready to pay her part of the damage.... The evil certainly does not lie in her refusal to marry the man, but, if there is any (which I take leave to doubt), in going off with him in the first place. There are people who have to learn what life means by getting burnt: she was lucky enough only to get singed and not ruined for life. Her sort does not go on the streets. She probably settled down to married life with a man after her own heart very soon. But does the quiet humdrum pleasure of safe marriage ever give the golden ecstatic moments that come from dangerous romantic passionate episodes of a day? The audience made me acutely sick. They shivered with delight at the "daring" of it—though what there is "daring" in it I don't know. It is more like a sermon than a play.

We are acting *The Great Adventure* at Radchester: just half a dozen of us in Common Room suddenly hit upon the idea. We have the new Bursar for stage manager, a fellow called Harding. He has been all sorts of things, including music-hall proprietor, actor and stage manager of a [190] suburban theatre. He does not find it easy to fall into line with our rigid conventions. Outwardly he conforms rather well, being a born actor, but he manages to live two quite distinct lives, one which pleases the heart of the Head Master, energetic at his work, asking no questions and simply doing his duty, the other, lighthearted and gay away in the town where he spends a great deal of his time. In conjunction with one of the music masters he is writing a musical comedy: they practise scenes every night. It is most ludicrously silly, but certainly not worse than 90 per cent. of the musical comedies I have seen. Harding has a distinct turn for witty lyrical writing, built on a lifelong devotion to W. S. Gilbert.

The "club" has improved since I first joined it: we all now try to improvise something to earn our cake and whisky. Harding writes songs, Benson puts them to music, Jimson and I dance or tell stories, some one plays a banjo or a violin, and we rouse the night air with a catch. I don't altogether like even all the members of the club, but when I get very lonely or depressed in my own rooms I go there, in order to forget myself awhile. I don't seem able to make any close friend on the staff. There is no one there, for instance, who matters to me half so much as Tony, and at times I doubt whether I ought to take up so much of his attention. After all, a boy at school comes to play and work among his equals, not to mix with grown-ups. Tony has too many advanced ideas, owing, I suppose, to the books I lend him and the talks we have so frequently together. I must try to deny myself the pleasure of his society more than I do. Of late I have been [191]

extraordinarily pleased at some of the work which several boys have shown up. Really quite a number of the short stories and verses I get are worthy of publication in some magazines. I try to encourage boys to submit their best stuff after I have sub-edited it to various editors with whom I have dealings. Tony has already had one poem accepted by the *Monthly Magazine*.

I find that the average boy drinks in Swinburne, Morris and Henley with extraordinary relish when he won't look at Keats and Shelley. The first business is to get him really interested in anything: the decadent phase will soon pass. I tried "The Dynasts" on them and failed miserably. The really good stuff is utterly beyond them—perhaps they'll remember later on and come back to it with proper understanding. I must share my own great joys and discoveries in literature: I can't keep a really fine thing like "The Dynasts" to myself. Common Room won't listen: they think I'm crazy on the moderns for whom they have no use—not that they read the ancients, but they do allow them a place in education. The moderns they abuse as mere wasters of time. I have been trying for various Head Masterships and been offered that of Chipping Campden. I was particularly tempted to accept it at first, because of the beauty of the place. Mais, Stapleton, and I used to walk out there from Oxford on Sundays: it is one of the most perfect mediæval towns I know, but it is probably too remote from the bustle of life for a man like myself. Anyway I refused it.

[192]

December 20, 1912

We have had some good sermons this term from visitors. One man on the Beauty of Holiness tried to make us see what there was of beauty in even this arid wilderness: he succeeded rather well—but then, of course, he doesn't have to live here. He vainly imagines that we consider the sea to be the real sea instead of a waste of grey water, ugly and cruel. Then we had a most famous man, who tried to make all the school go and confess their vices to him: his mistake was to imagine that there was but one vice and that one practised by 90 per cent. of the school. You can't do much with a man who has got a bee in his bonnet to that extent. Although he was sincere and obviously affected many of the boys, he rather irritated me. I wish I could settle in my mind what is the sort of sermon boys ought to have. The one we had last term on keeping the Divine spark alive was certainly the best I have ever heard, but that may be because I agreed with every word about the necessity of cultivating individuality and imagination. In some ways it would be good for us to hear more about Church doctrine: we are really rather vague about our beliefs.

I am afraid the "ragging" of Koenig is not confined to the boys: he has lately been elected to the "club," and we do our level best to make him drunk: we tell him the tallest of yarns about impossible old customs which we celebrate for his benefit. He must think us—oh, I don't know what he makes of us. In my heart I am really sorry for him. Of late I have taken to going to see him by myself. Of course by now he sees that he has been hopelessly "ragged" ever since he [193]
came, but he has a wonderful belief that in the end he will settle down. When this generation has passed on, he will be stricter and the younger boys will reverence him. Poor devil, he doesn't realize that his name is already a byword and that it will become a standing tradition to "rag" him for all time. There is the case of old "Parsnips" Askew: he has been here for thirty years and not a day passes without some silly trick being passed upon him. Sometimes his form will come clad as if for amateur theatricals with the excuse that they hadn't time to change, and they will go on with their (imagined) rehearsal while he tries in vain to teach. On other occasions they come in in uniform and drill; there are endless variants: four or five will faint and the rest of the form rush about in all directions for water or carry the "bodies" out and never return.

I don't envy Askew his life at all. Boys are merciless devils when they find they have a master in their power. It is all very well to say that a man must have the whip-hand of his class. Once he has lost it he stands precious little chance of ever regaining it. Koenig is pathetically anxious to make good. For some obscure reason he loves the life here and dreads every day lest he should receive notice to quit. I suppose this love of "ragging" is ingrained. Although I sympathize with and quite like the poor old ass, yet I am as bad as anybody at pulling his leg. About three weeks ago four of us all pretended to be as drunk as man can be and we knocked him about in a most shameful manner and kicked up the devil of a row in his rooms, half wrecking the place. In the end he had to put each of us to bed.

After *The Great Adventure*, in which I was too nervous to be much good, I got bitten with the [194]
craze of acting, and made my Saturday evening juniors prepare two short plays for the last night of term. That has taken up every hour of my spare time lately and most of my hard-earned salary, for I have to feed the whole cast at every rehearsal.

We've got a wonderful new parson master this term who has any amount of originality and cares for no authority. He preached the other day on the text of "a *man* bearing a pitcher of water," emphasizing the need for *men* to take upon themselves the duty of bearing religion into the home and not leaving it to the women. I rather think that he fulfils my ideal of a school preacher. He never has any notes, but simply talks in a most personal way about the difficulties that beset him, problems of public interest, even controversial topics. He, at any rate, tries to rouse the intellectual and æsthetic faculties and he is inordinately cheerful always in spite of wretched health.

Boys crowd to his rooms for spiritual advice. He is almost the perfect mediator that a priest should be: his own devotion to God irradiates from him at all times and in all places. He is ever gay and sunny, and refuses resolutely ever to be drawn into the thousand little petty quarrels in which the rest of us indulge: his own forms worship him.

I have made friends with several outcasts this term, boys who don't fit into the scheme of things and are as a consequence morose, irritable and unhappy. I try my best to make them see the point of school rules and all the rest of the red tape against which they rebel, but I do so in such an unconvincing, lukewarm way that I might just as well keep silence. At any rate they have a [195] refuge in my rooms and thank God they take it. I have had a very good offer made me by the Head Master of Welborough. He wants me at once. When I went to see the Head Master about it he refused to let me go.

"Of course," said he, "if you choose to pay the school a term's salary for breach of contract, I cannot prevent you from leaving but——"

I can't see myself able to forfeit a whole term's salary at any period of my career.

So that's that! Of course I am not anxious to leave because of my innumerable friends among the boys: I am rather like a cat in some ways. If I had any sense I should take no notice of the Head, who really loathes me, and go.

Three members of the staff are leaving. No one stays here long, and really I don't wonder. There seems very little point in cutting oneself right off from human life, or the chance of ever making any money or any good thing out of life.

And yet I stay ... I am very like a cat.

XII

December 31, 1912

My form play was a great success on the last night of term: boys really are far better actors than grown-up people as a rule. They enter into the spirit of the part more quickly.

I spent Christmas quietly at home, reading, overeating myself, writing letters, dispatching Christmas cards, attending a vast number of church services, visiting the cottagers, dancing in the village schoolroom, and gossiping with my father and mother. On the 27th I came down to Bath for the Christmas dances. That night, at the first one, I found to my intense disappointment that Ruth was unable at the last minute to come. That young ass Conyngham arrived just after me. I therefore dashed into the vestibule as quickly as I could to see if Elspeth Tetley was there. To my great joy she was, and alone, and (woman-like) as different as possible in her behaviour from last year. She smiled cordially as I bore down upon her.

"H'lo, Mr. Traherne; it's a long time since we last saw you in Bath."

"Yes, and the last time I saw you you cut me: you cut my dances, you cut me in the street—you ——"

"All right, don't get peevish: how many do you want to-night?"

"None, if you're going to cut them all." [197]

"Come now, let's bury the hatchet; you'll have to hurry. I see half the earth waiting to wring your neck because you won't say what dances you want."

"Well, how many are booked?"

"I've only just come."

"Yes, but that means nothing."

"Well, tell me how many you want."

"As many as you can jolly well let me have."

"Here's my card, fill it up as you like."

"Do you really mean that?"

"I do: for goodness' sake hurry up. How many have you taken? Oh! stop, stop, you can't have them all."

"Well, I've only taken eleven as yet."

"Eleven! we shall set the whole of Bath talking."

"Who cares?"

"Oh! it's all jolly fine for you, but what about me, the poor defenceless maiden? Where's the little girl you usually dance with all night?"

"Ruth? She's not coming."

"Oh, that's why—— You must go—here's Mr. Conyngham and all the gang."

"You'll really keep those eleven?"

"Wait and see. Yes, yes, of course I will. Go away!"

So I have got to know Elspeth after all. I never spent such a night in my life. She beats every girl I have ever met in every possible way—she's prettier, more talkative, more seductive, more lovable, more—more everything. She wanted to know all about me and told me all her life history: we fixed up all sorts of meetings and grew more and more pleased with each other as the evening went on. She is the best dancer I ever struck and likes my style of dancing better than the more [198] fantastic and modern methods of Conyngham, against whom she seems to harbour a pretty active dislike, to my great astonishment. I wonder what's happened. They were as thick as thieves all last year.

The next day I met her again for a few minutes. I tramped up and down Milsom Street until I saw her. I took Ruth to the pantomime at Bristol in the afternoon and to *Gypsy Love* in Bath at night. Elspeth was also there. Yesterday I went to the rink with Ruth and saw Elspeth again, and this afternoon I managed to get away from all my crowd and have tea with Elspeth at the rink: so ends the year 1912.

I seem to be getting fonder of the other sex and not to be quite so nervous and hoydenish in their presence as I used to be a year ago. Bath has educated me a good deal. I am much more the normal man of society than I ever thought I was going to be.

January 1, 1913

Life has moved since yesterday. To-night was the Lansdown Cricket Club Ball. I divided my programme equally between Ruth and Elspeth. Elspeth was looking wonderful in a filmy sort of pink strawberry frock. Everything went quite normally and gaily until number fifteen, after which Elspeth and I found a sitting-out room in inky darkness. Suddenly she leant over, my arms were about her neck, we kissed ... and now I live in a different world. Even now I can't believe it. It seems impossible that she should love me. Yet she has promised to marry me.

I never dreamt such luck could be mine. She seemed so far above me, so obviously a match for [199]
the best of men and not for a poor drudge of a schoolmaster. She says that for a whole year she has been thinking about me and meant to marry me all along, only she was afraid I was already engaged or about to be. We sat out all the rest of the dances. I am living on air. I am much too cheerful and can't sleep at all. I want to go out and shout my good fortune to the skies. What are we going to live on I wonder? What will my people or hers say about it? I only know that nothing will induce me to give her up. I seem to be a quite different person from what I was this time yesterday. I know that then I never thought that I should have the ghost of a chance of even knowing Elspeth well, and now she is willing and anxious to live with me for the rest of my life.

January 23, 1913

The day after I was engaged I took Elspeth up to London with the idea of going to see the South Africans play footer at Richmond. When we got to Paddington we decided to "do" two theatres instead, so we lunched in the Haymarket and went to see *The Dancing Mistress*, which was rotten, and *Doormats* at night. We didn't get back till half-past three the next morning.

It was on that day that I was formally introduced to her people, who were most kind and asked me to stay, which invitation I naturally accepted. So I moved my belongings up to the Crescent where they live, and in two or three days I began to receive telegrams and letters by the hundred congratulating me.

Every day we took the dogs for walks, played billiards or went out with the beagles. Old General [200]
Tetley, Elspeth's father, is a dear, very kind to me and quite willing to allow us to be engaged and even talked of our being married in a year if I could get a better job than my present one at Radchester. Mrs. Tetley gave us the run of the house and we were left pretty well to our own devices. Elspeth's brothers and sisters (she has two of each) all appeared to congratulate us at one time or another: they are an extremely cheery family and I love them all. After a week of bliss at the Tetley's I took Elspeth up to see my father and mother, in order to let her see our part of the country. She took to them at once as they did to her. The rest of the holidays passed like lightning: so long as Elspeth was with me I was perfectly happy, doing nothing at all but listening to her play and sing or talk—the thought of having to separate, however, went near to driving me mad.

When the time came for me to return here, I simply could not face it. That last morning we walked over the moor and talked about anything to keep our minds off the afternoon and then at 1.48 I took her south as far as Derby, where she caught the Bath express and left me standing, absolutely lifeless, waiting for the train to take me back to Scarborough and Radchester. The pain of parting is the most excruciating agony that I have ever undergone in my life. I had often imagined that it must be awful for lovers to have to part, but I had no idea it meant all this. I wanted to throw myself under the train rather than put any more miles between us. I tried to read: I had bought every kind of interesting magazine: it was all no use. I tried to talk to people [201]
in the train: they bored me to distraction. By the time I got to Leeds I was joined by a crowd of boys whom normally I am only too glad to see. I couldn't find a word to say to them. "Elspeth—Elspeth—Elspeth"—the one word throbbed through my head the whole way back. I kept on wondering what she was doing at each moment of the journey. I started to pour out my soul on paper. I want to go on writing to her all day. Nothing else interests me. I can't work. I take no interest in anything. I can't possibly face a year of this cruel agony. I'd far rather die.

February 2, 1913

I have tried in every sort of direction to find another job. I can't possibly torture Elspeth by bringing her here even if I could afford to keep her, which I can't. I answer advertisements of every kind. I think I must have approached every Head Master in the kingdom.

One business firm wrote from the City and asked me to go down to see their directors, and I did, but all they could offer me was a sort of glorified commercial traveller's job, my income to be solely on commission, which isn't good enough.

I saw *The Younger Generation* while I was in London, which pleased me a good deal, but London without Elspeth is as hopeless as anywhere else. My pangs are just as acute. I'm working like the devil and playing games every day, but at night I'm so homesick or rather so sick with longing for Elspeth that I don't know what to do. If only I'd got some long-suffering friend in whom to confide, but even Tony can't fill her place!

[202]

March 2, 1913

I've applied for educational posts in Egypt, India, Bangkok, all over the world. I've been collecting testimonials from my colleagues. I suppose all testimonials are the same, but I'd no idea I was

such a wonderfully gifted teacher as all my Dons and Senior Colleagues make me out to be. It's good of them to lie on my behalf like this when I've behaved so rottenly to them. I was getting on well with my continued bombardment at every door of employment and working like a nigger, when suddenly I got a really bad bout of "flu": it left me a complete wreck. I had to get up before I was really fit in order to go to interview the Colonial Office about a job in Nigeria. I felt properly seedy, but I kept the appointment, and then suddenly lost all control of myself. I couldn't face the prospect of going back to Radchester, so I just took a train for Bath, telegraphed to Elspeth and arrived. She was a good deal surprised and upset. I was put straight to bed for ten days and now I'm recovering from bronchitis. I never enjoyed a disease before, but it was sheer Heaven to have Elspeth nursing me. I felt serenely contented and didn't care what happened to me.

Of late I have been very carefully considering whether or not I ought to be ordained. Periodically I get what seems to me a clear call. Elspeth is against it. I don't quite know why.... She came to see me off at Bristol when I was convalescent. Again the agony of parting was almost unendurable. I clung to her like a small baby until the very last moment, utterly regardless of the other passengers. All the way up in the North Express I suffered horrors of nightmares. The hills [203]
and towns looked for the first time in my life cold and hostile. It was all I could do to keep myself from jumping out and taking the next train back. I know Elspeth does not suffer quite so acutely as I do. I'm glad. It's too terrible a strain on the nervous system.

April 3, 1913

It was all I could do to keep going to the end of this term, but I managed it somehow. I've thrown myself into my work as never before: when I am actually in form, teaching, or in the afternoons playing games I am more or less sane, but I am perilously near madness when the night draws on and the hours creep past and I am left alone with nothing to console me but her photographs, her letters and my letters to her. She is my whole aim and end of living: I've tried going to theatres in Scarborough, I've tried to coach all the boys for the sports, I've played "Rugger" and hockey with greater venom than ever before, with the rather humorous result that I now have spoilt my upper lip for ever. I got it cut all to pieces: it was very cleverly sewn up, but I guess it's going to be awry for the rest of my life. I have had a fearful, nightly fear of dying before I can taste the bliss of married life. I wish I could rid myself of this fear: it's the same sort of funk that makes me rush ahead with anything that I am writing, lest I should die before it is finished: it's a most unreasoning, foolish obsession, but one that I am totally unable to eradicate. I owe more than I can ever repay to Maurice Hewlett. I have found it increasingly hard to concentrate my attention on to any book or author since I became engaged: now I've found "The Forest Lovers," "Mrs. [204]
Launcelot," "Half-Way House," and others of his novels, and I have been really engrossed, and literally forgotten all about my gnawing agonies while reading him.

Poor old "Parsnips" Askew has been sacked after thirty years' service, for incompetence. I never in my life heard such a blackguardly action. Many mean things have been done since I came here, taking evidence against boys in confession before Confirmation, putting the blame for wrong judgments on to shoulders less well able to bear them, for example, but this beats all. Askew has devoted the best years of his life to Radchester and in spite of being persistently ragged by every boy in the place for two or three generations, he has certainly done a tremendous amount of good in his own honest, simple way.

April 8, 1913

As soon as ever the term was over I rushed back to Bath to stay with Elspeth. There was an Easter Dance the very first night. Elspeth and I had every one of them together. It was like returning to Heaven straight out of Hell. I had been holding myself in leash so severely for the past few weeks that I was perilously near to a severe breakdown.

Elspeth and I went to all the point-to-point meetings together and I recalled my envious longings of the year before. Now I am as content and as happy as it is possible for man to be. There isn't a shadow on the horizon. We wander about Bath arm-in-arm, have tea at Fortt's *tête-à-tête*, go to the theatre together, shop, and in the evening Elspeth and her mother make things for her "bottom drawer," while I pretend to read or write.

[205]

May 3, 1913

I took Elspeth down to Ilfracombe for a fortnight in April in order to introduce her to my grandfather and aunts. I have never known Devon more glorious even in the spring. Just to take her to all my favourite nooks and creeks and hear her eulogies on them is worth Heaven in itself. She is almost as true a lover of the West Country as I am. We motored to Clovelly and Hartland, we went on the sea a good deal; she is a far better sailor than I am.

I keep on applying for every sort of likely vacancy that I hear of. The thought of the long summer term frightens me. I can confide in my people: they understand. They say, "Get married: you won't be happy till you do—never mind about the money, that'll come."

The Tetleys, on the other hand, can't understand what they call my foolish impetuosity. What's the hurry? say they. We are both very young. Elspeth is devoted to her parents, and so we are at a deadlock.

After three months of being engaged I have tried to find out what are the peculiar attractions of Elspeth. I can't write them down. I don't know. She is amazingly shrewd and self-possessed: she very rarely shows her hand; as an observer of human nature I've never come across any one to parallel her—she never misses anything. She is a quite unusually capable musician, a peerless dancer and intellectual—oh, I can't catalogue her like this: all I know is that I love her so passionately that life without her is inconceivable....

We have so far compromised that Elspeth and I are to be married in August if I can get a job of £300 a year by then. [206]

May 20, 1913

It was worse than ever coming back to Radchester this time. The long holiday all alone with Elspeth makes life without her more unbearable than ever. I don't suppose people in our position usually feel like this. Most of the engaged couples whom I know are delightfully placid. Men are quite glad to get away from their fiancées and have a "fling" with their old acquaintances before the gates of the prison-house of marriage finally close on them. I seem to have changed entirely since I met her. I am now simply a bundle of nerves enduring agonies of apprehension daily. I am afraid of everything, afraid lest she should be ill, afraid lest she should find some one she likes better than me. I have as yet really no claim on her.

I suppose a passion of this sort comes to most men never, to a few just once and never leaves them. I haven't written a sensible word in an article since that eventful night in January, which now seems twenty or thirty years ago. Five minutes after I have left Elspeth I feel as if I had been separated from her for months and were never likely to see her again. I write the most pitiable, unmanly, mawkish letters to her: she bears with me wonderfully. I wonder if it would have been better for her if she married Conyngham. He has money and certainly would not be in danger of going off his head unless he was constantly with her. I had always been led to believe that the time of one's engagement was full of ecstatic joys. I wish I found it so. All I crave is marriage and [207] never having to separate from Elspeth as long as I live. Every day this term, instead of playing cricket, I wander for miles alone, looking at all the cottages and bungalows along the shore to find a cheap enough place for us to live in.

Even Tony, though he does his best, cannot soothe me in my present paroxysms. It really is sheer cruelty to think of transplanting Elspeth from a place like Bath, away from society and shops and friends and games and amusements to a dead-alive hole like this, where she won't meet more than two girls of her own station in life in the year. I just spend my time in praying for the days to pass more quickly.

I had no idea that twenty-four hours could possibly take so long in the passing. Nothing contents me. I really try to plunge into my work but I have lost all interest for the moment, even in English. The only thing that consoles me is the fact that we have fixed the sixth of August for the wedding. I am like some Lower School fag: every day I cross off the date from five or six calendars, which I keep to show that so many days have gone, so many have still to go.

I have interviewed the Head Master about my staying and he wants me even as a married man. He has gone so far as to ask Elspeth to come up this term and stay with him.

Elspeth has all her time filled up making preparations for the wedding; she doesn't seem to miss me as I do her, which is after all not strange. I seem to be the girl in this affair and she the man. Every day I suffer more and more. Now the boys have nearly all got measles and I am picturing myself as getting them too just when she arrives. I have every sort of foreboding and dread on me all day and all night. I haven't slept since I came back this term. I wish I knew what was the [208] matter with me. Day after day I watch for the post, waiting for the offer of some job to arrive. From the morning till the evening post seems a lifetime—but in the end I have been rewarded for my vigilant and arduous search. I have just heard from the Head Master of Marlton that he would like to see me on Wednesday with a view to my taking a post on his staff in September. I have written to Elspeth to meet me in London and come the rest of the way with me. I also mean to bring her back with me to Radchester: I can't stand the strain of this any longer.

June 11, 1913

I went to see Marlton and Elspeth joined me in London. It is as about as different from Radchester as Heaven from Hell. It is about the most beautiful old town I have ever seen. The country round is densely wooded, with undulating hills of no very great height, but extraordinarily picturesque. After leaving Lewes—it's in Sussex—one seems to lose all touch with the hurry of modern life: only the slowest of slow trains stops at Marlton. We were met at the old-world station, at which no one seems ever to alight, by a courteous old butler, who led us up past the castle and the kennels to the Priory, a huge Gothic church most beautifully proportioned, with flying buttresses on the north and south. The school is an adjunct of the Priory and is exactly like an Oxford College: it has the same perfectly kept lawns, the same remoteness from actuality, the same quaint old cloisters and tiny courts and quadrangles. All the buildings are hoary with age and ivy-covered. The Head Master's house is set right in the middle of the school buildings: [209] the boys live in more modern houses scattered here and there about the town. The Head Master and his wife were exceedingly pleasant both to Elspeth and myself. They showed us over the buildings, which are indescribably beautiful; the boys are all quieter and far more gentlemanly than the northerners and looked attractive and friendly. We went down to the playing fields and

watched them at cricket. They have none of our absurd rules here: there are no bounds and boys are given as much personal liberty as if they were at home. It will be splendid to teach in such a place. Both Elspeth and I were enchanted with it. After a titanic battle, I managed to get her to agree to come back to Radchester to stay for a few days with the Head Master of the Preparatory School, who has always been good to me. Poor Elspeth! When she saw the bleak desolate plain of Radchester she nearly wept. Thank God we are not going to live here. She stayed at the Prep. for ten days and I spent every spare second with her. Every morning I used to go down to fetch her and she used to come up the shore to meet me, looking just lovely. She would sit and sew in my rooms all day so that I could get to her at once after school and I abandoned all games so that I could be with her. After ten days she could stay no longer at the Prep. and the Head Master had not asked her for another month, so I had to try all sorts of people to see if they would entertain her. No one would! So she had to go home. I couldn't do without her: I thought I should go mad.

One morning the doctor came round and told me that I ought to give myself a rest, that my nerves were giving way, that he would fix up leave for me—that I was simply to go away at once. [210] So without saying good-bye to any of my four-years' friends I packed a suit-case and left.

It seems impossible to believe, now that I am back in Bath with Elspeth, that I can ever have suffered as I did: it is all like the dim recollection of some horrible nightmare. I miss my boys, I miss my form, I hate to think of another man usurping my rooms, my place in chapel, taking my work—but the break is final. This morning I received all my books, my pictures, my clothes, everything that I had collected in my four years and Radchester and I part company for ever.

[211]

XIII

July 9, 1913

As soon as we got back to Bath I was sent to a doctor, who told me that I was suffering from a very severe nervous breakdown, and that I must do literally nothing till September but laze. So I have parted from Radchester for ever. Once I was married he said I should probably become normal again. Elspeth and I spent our days shopping and making arrangements for the wedding. We went down to Marlton to find a suitable house to live in and found one about a mile from the school, right on the outskirts of the town, a semi-detached "villa," rather like the house in Stratford-on-Avon in which Shakespeare was born: it has a tiny stretch of garden and a superb view from the dining-room and bedroom windows of the park and the wooded hills of the south away towards the sea. £35 a year is the rent. We measured every nook of it for carpets and stairs and hall furniture, and made an inventory of everything that we should want. We spend many happy hours searching through catalogues for all that we shall require in the house. I have insured my life for £1000, so that Elspeth will not be left quite penniless if I die suddenly. We play tennis a good deal and I read a fair amount, but I haven't the heart to write very much. I don't quite know why.

[212]

July 30, 1913

Elspeth and I have had one or two minor tiffs over matters of judgment. She has a decided will of her own. It is going to take me a little time to learn the much-needed lesson that marriages to be successful must be largely a matter of give and take. We are both rather obstinate. I must learn to give in to her more readily.

August 30, 1913

As the time drew nearer to the day fixed for the wedding, people began to arrive from all over the country. A good many Radchester boys and masters, all my relatives, and friends of all sorts began to arrive in Bath. We had an amazing number of presents, but those which touched me most were from Heatherington's House and my form. So I'm not forgotten even yet at Radchester. They had a lively time after I left. In my place as a temporary substitute they got a parson who drank heavily and had to be carried out of chapel twice. Because I am so poor and because our house at Marlton is so small I was prevailed upon to sell all my books, which I now see was one of the grossest mistakes I ever committed in my life. At the time I thought of it as a piece of heroism and great self-sacrifice. The episode reminds me of Charles Lamb and the cake. As a matter of fact it was a piece of unmitigated foolishness. I only got £50 for the lot, and the notes that I had made in them might be worth that if I had kept and used them.

We were married with a great show of pomp and splendour on the sixth of August. I didn't at all like the gorgeous ceremony: there were too many people. It was too much of an orgie: far too [213] much fuss was made of us. As I look back it appears now as a medley of changing clothes, cutting cake, drinking champagne, uttering platitudes to visitors, complying with endless superstitions, and never seeing Elspeth. I had no idea that there were so many million omens attached to weddings. They must be very unlucky things. It began to mean something when the day was nearly over and we found ourselves locked in a first-class carriage bound for Porlock.

We had a room in the Ship Inn looking over the bay, and met some of the most entertaining people it has ever been my fortune to come across. No one suspected that we were a honeymoon couple: we were purposely callous about each other's welfare in the presence of others and joined with every party that was got up for any purpose. Most of the time we spent in attending meets of the staghounds.

Every one in the hotel was there for the hunting, and the conversation was a refreshing change after that of Common Room at Radchester. One man in particular, called Monteith, who was up at Oxford with me, was very struck with Elspeth and used to bring her great bunches of white heather every night. I like to see her admired: it shows me that I chose circumspectly.

We bathed every day and explored the combes and rivers and villages in every direction. I know no more beautiful country than this for a honeymoon: you can get quiet when you want it. We lunched nearly every day among the whortleberries on the moor, far away from the sight of any living creature: when we wanted to mix with society we only had to drop down into Porlock, and [214] there were always forty or fifty people in the hotel willing and eager to be friendly. It was the most consummately perfect setting for a wedding tour imaginable. There was not a speck or flaw cast upon our complete happiness once during the entire time. It was all too short: three weeks fled past like three days and we got to know each other's little foibles and idiosyncrasies and to make allowance for them.

We went as far afield as Ilfracombe, Lynton, Minehead and Exford: we went on foot, by steamer,

in dog-carts and coaches, and we were as merry as crickets all the time. After it was over we went up home to see my people and to introduce ourselves in the married state to the villagers, who have known me since I was a boy. All this month I seem to have been walking on air. I've forgotten there ever was such a place as Radchester or that I ever nearly went mad because I had not Elspeth by me. What I should do without her now God only knows. I only hope and pray that we may live together to a ripe old age and die within a few hours of each other. Then our lives will have been rounded off completely, for as it is we are only happy in the possession of each other. Nothing else contents us.

We went on to London after this in order to buy the requisite furniture for our cottage. We accomplished this in a single day, spending about £150 in all in equipping ourselves with a complete outfit from "cellar to attic." We are now back again in Bath.

[215]

September 6, 1913

I don't like wasting all my days in this house in the Crescent. I seem to have lost all my wild ideals on education: I have no boys now to give my life for: all my hopes are centred upon one object, Elspeth, and if she fails me I am undone indeed.

I spend my energies on writing silly letters to the daily papers on the subject of the Olympic Games, of all footling things. Elspeth now cries through half the night because she says I have changed and no longer love her with that same passion that I once had for her. This is quite untrue, but I can't make her see it. I seem to be a mass of contradictions.

Bath seems to have lost its attraction for me now that I have nothing to do except wait for the opening of term at Marlton. I find myself pining for Radchester, the club, the cross-county runs, "Rugger," camp, bathing, boys to tea—and all the savage, healthy years of apprenticeship while I was learning my job. I've read very little except a novel called "Sinister Street," by Compton Mackenzie, which seems to me to be at once very good and very bad. I don't like it so much as "Carnival," but his pictures of his old Public School masters are extraordinarily vivid and probably true. I wish I could write such a book. I want to settle down to some serious writing, but I haven't the patience to begin on a book, partly because I should immediately begin to fear lest I should die before it was finished. I wish I could rid myself of this silliness.

[216]

September 11, 1913

I have just been up to the Board of Education to be interviewed for a lucrative post in India. I should dearly like to go and I have the job definitely offered me, £600 a year to inspect the teaching of English in Ceylon, but Elspeth is against it, so I shall have to refuse. I was also offered £7 a week to sub-edit the Daily Tatler, but I could not of course break my contract at Marlton, and they would not keep it open, so that's off. I should like to be a journalist. The work would suit me admirably.

I read "The Story of Louie," by Oliver Onions on my way south at night, and arrived at Marlton at nine o'clock and walked up the hill through the pretty narrow streets to my new home, which Elspeth and her mother had prepared against my coming. It certainly is a great change after Radchester. The only unfortunate thing is that I am no longer my own master. I now shall have to be careful about dirty boots. Elspeth has the last word as to where everything is to go. She and her mother went to bed early and I went round the house on a tour of inspection. The hall is really something to be proud of, with its bookcases and oak chest and grandfather clock. The drawing-room is small but dainty; most of the pictures are ordinary and cheap: we bought them at Boots' for very little. The silver that we had for wedding presents is all put out on mahogany tables, and there are photographs of Elspeth's friends but none of mine, which irritated me momentarily. I loathe the nondescript china ornaments on the mantelpiece. The dining-room closely resembles my own rooms at Radchester. All my old Oxford signed proofs of Blair Leighton [217] and Dicksee take up the wall space and there are two bookshelves. The study contains my bureau and all my special treasures. In this room at least, I hope, that I shall be able to do as I like. Our bedroom is large and yet very cosy. I think I am going to love this house. At any rate I feel very proud at being a householder.

September 19, 1913

I have spent a week on my bicycle exploring the surrounding country before term begins. It is glorious to live where people hunt, and there are large houses, and cars passing the door (we are right on the main London-Hastings road) and the villages are all snug and picturesque, and there are heaps of ripping neighbours who call and look as if they were going to entertain us lavishly. It is possible, too, to get down to a real sea, how different from the so-called sea at Radchester, a sea of blue and green flanked by great white Sussex cliffs. I feel most extraordinarily at home and yet I funk the coming term: I don't know how these boys will take to me. They are sure to be very different from the Radchester boys. I doubt whether they'll be as boisterous or as healthy. Time will show.

XIV

October 4, 1913

I HAVE now had my first taste of life as a master at Marlton. The air here is sluggish, warm and unhealthy. I never want to go out and I always feel tired. There is none of the energy which one associated with Radchester. The place is altogether different. In the first place there is practically no Common Room life, which is perhaps a good thing. We only gather in Common Room from 11 to 11.15 every morning for "break." The masters live all over the town. There are eight houses and each one is quite distinct from any other: the boys never mix. Most of the staff are quite young. Of the elder ones I have come across the officer commanding the Corps who is elderly (he has a son older than I am), a parson, very good-natured and easy-going, but with an insatiable desire for talking. He is the most gossipy man I ever met. His wife is one of the sweetest women I ever met. We have dined there once, but it was a dull meal. He monopolized the entire conversation. There is another House-master parson, also old, who is very literary and runs a select society, which meets every Sunday afternoon to read and listen to papers on literary topics. I should like to belong to that. Some day I hope to be elected. We have also dined there. Ponsonby is a wonderful raconteur but rather eccentric in his habits: I should think that he takes [219] some knowing. The other House masters are all young and all married. Every one here seems very well off as compared with the Radchester masters. They all have private means. They ride, though not often, to hounds, they own cars and motor-bicycles, and don't appear to do very much work. Most of them live solely for games. I find that I am getting more and more agitated at the games fetish. Although they live under the shadow of the most inspiring church in the country, and though the school buildings themselves are exceedingly beautiful, the boys and masters alike seem to distrust beauty just as much as the Radchester people did. There is one man with whom I have formed a strong alliance. He, like myself, is a new-comer. He is unmarried, very clever, and deserted the Foreign Office, where he held a good billet, to come down to teach the Sixth. He is in the eyes of the school quite mad. He is careless as to his clothes, wearing next to nothing on a very cold day and arctically clad when it is warm and sunny. He has a knack of forgetting what time it is and sets out for a walk when he ought to be going into school. He is a real poet and a fine classic. His name is Wriothesley and is already known as "the Rotter." On Sundays he wears a top hat and immaculate morning clothes with a white slip, white spats and patent-leather boots. Added to this he stammers and is acutely nervous. The rest of the staff are not inspiring. There are several "beefy Blues," a few slack men who take no interest in anything that occurs in the school outside their form work, and one man who ought to be a country squire, who presides over the local District Council and spends all his energies on running the town. The boys are all [220] gentlemen, very slack, very quiet, care nothing for work and a very great deal too much for "Rugger."

Unfortunately I have begun badly. Two articles that I wrote long ago on Public School Reform have just found their way into print. Every one here has read them and they all look on me as a dangerous innovator, unpatriotic and disloyal. It is in vain that I point out that I said these things of another school and under the stress of nerves. I am a marked man. Whatever I do I shall be looked upon with suspicion. They all think I am on the look-out for "copy." Elspeth does not much care for the school people and I don't altogether blame her. The wives are very cliquey, and think that they have a right to dictate to the wives of the younger masters exactly as to how they should dress, how they should behave, who they shall know and who they shall not know.

The society of Marlton is very snobbish and divided up into a myriad different sets. At the top there is the Castle clique, who hunt and play polo. Some of these are quite amusing. Then come the school people, who keep to themselves. After them come the professional clique. There are vast numbers of retired Indian military and civilian people, who play bridge and walk about the country doing nothing in particular: to these are attached the doctors, bankers, solicitors, and clergy. Next come the wealthier tradespeople and the other school people. Marlton boasts half a dozen different schools to meet the demands of people of widely differing ideas, Roman Catholic, Secondary, Girls' Colleges, Board, Grammar and National Schools: the place is overrun with [221] educational establishments. There is consequently no dearth of people, though the total population is certainly not more than ten thousand.

My work is not very arduous and gives me time to write in my spare hours. I only hope that I shall have the sense to avail myself of it. I take mathematical sets all through the school: the boys seem to know even less than they did at Radchester. Certainly they know no English. I find to my intense disgust that I am and have been for the past ten years suffering from chronic appendicitis. There is no need as yet for an operation, but I have to be dieted very carefully and avoid games. A much more insidious disease is attacking my brain. I am beginning to get restive. I haven't the least idea why. I want to get up and run away. It is all too comfortable. I am afraid of acquiescing and becoming as my colleagues, happy as sheep are happy basking in the sun. I never had this before: it's a new development. I go for miles on my bicycle and sit on stiles or hedges and read or gaze out over the landscape and wish—I scarcely know for what. I have lately been rereading all Thomas Hardy's novels. I seem to be a sort of second Jude the Obscure.

The hours are very different from those at Radchester. We have breakfast at 8.30. Chapel (which we only have to attend once a day) is at 9.15, and then school goes on from 9.30 to 12.45. At one o'clock we lunch and Elspeth and I walk down to the town to shop or change a library book at the station, getting back for tea at four. School continues from 4.15 to 6. Then work is over for the day. There is no preparation invigilation for masters, thank God. In the evening after dinner I do a little correcting, not more than is necessary, write if I feel like it, read a chapter or two of a [222] novel, and so to bed at ten. The days pass very quickly and I don't seem to do anything. I am achieving nothing. Most of the day seems to be spent in riding to and from school. I've been reading D. H. Lawrence's novel, "Sons and Lovers." It's about as perfect a picture of Midland life as could well be imagined. Thank Heaven that I'm back in a county among people who hunt and talk the King's English. I have a great deal to be thankful for. It seems a very Elysium of quiet content and happiness, and yet there is underlying tragedy.

The first Monday in October is made an occasion for an annual orgie which rouses the town out of sleep. I have just come from partaking of all the fun of the fair. It starts on the Sunday night, when all the riff-raff of the place march through the streets making a fearful din with drums and kettles and tin cans and whistles, to celebrate the completion of the building of the Priory. The day after is given up to revelry of a rather gross kind. Booths are erected in the main narrow street and all sorts of useless things are bought and sold. On the fair ground there are roundabouts and swings, cinema shows and helter-skelters, houp-las and side shows, rifle ranges and coco-nut shies. It is all very tawdry and shallow and noisy and cheap, but it gives one a glimpse of Hodge at play which is instructive.

Compared with the north-countryman he is feckless, very subservient, slow and deliberate in his movements, content with his potato-patch and fourteen shillings a week as wages, afraid of his superiors (the north-countryman has no superiors) and in all things seems to be a relic of the [223] feudal system. He takes his pleasures very sadly and is frequently drunk; he finds life monotonous but he is not ambitious enough to cast off his slough; in Marlton he was born and in Marlton he will be buried and that is his life history. There are as a consequence a great number of workhouse inmates, semi-lunatic boys and girls who loiter about the streets all day: the shops are very poor and the attendants slow beyond belief. No one here seems to have any conception of the value of time.

The boys at the school have the same lazy habits in a lesser degree: they rarely run, they amble along through life very happily. They are genial but by no means effusive. The lack of wild enthusiasms, frequent riots, strenuous friendships and enmities is one of the glaring points about Marlton when I come to compare it with Radchester. After a few weeks Elspeth and I felt so bedraggled and worn out owing to the enervating climate that we took a few half-holidays down by the sea.

What a joy it is to be working in so exquisite a country. The drive over the downs, through the pine-woods, down to the rocky coast puts fresh blood into one. I want to sing for the very joy of being able to appreciate it. Nature is beginning to mean very much more to me than she ever used to. I go up sometimes (when I am fretful and inclined to chafe at the prison bars) to the golf-course, and then gaze over the northern vale, and the Kentish Weald, the white cottages nestling under the hills, the spires of many churches, and a great peace descends on me. I begin to realize the meaning of that word "England" and all that it connotes. If I hadn't been in the wilderness for four years I should probably never have felt quite such a thrill of thankfulness at the beauty of it. [224] These south-country people as a rule take it all as a matter of course: they have lived here always: they have never seen Halifax or Huddersfield or Leeds or Radchester. They don't know the ghastly depression that sinks into one's soul after a month of gloomy, sunless days in a foggy, poisonous, manufacturing town.

One of the quaintest changes in my life is that now I find that I want to write. I keep getting fresh ideas daily. At present I am engaged in editing an "Anthology of Verse and Prose for Schools," which isn't anything like so dull as it sounds.

December 16, 1913

I have had Tony down here for a few days. It was like entertaining a hurricane. He says that I'm in danger of becoming as invertebrate as a limpet. "Where are," he asked, "the wild diatribes against abuses, the physical fitness, the madness about games, the frenzy for intellectual improvement?" I shook my head sadly and murmured something about the air. The boys he looked at in "break" one morning and snorted audibly like a war-horse. "These lads have got the 'guts' of an Ague-cheek, the blood of sardines," he said. "Why don't they get a move on? Do they always slop about like this? You want the Radchester sergeant here for a few days, some one to open their windpipes. What do you do all day?" I told him. "I said '*do*,'" he replied.

Perhaps my appendicitis may have something to do with it, but certainly it is a change to find myself confining myself to a slow walk into the town with Elspeth in place of the seven miles' [225] strenuous run or the gory game of "Rugger" that usually occupied my afternoons. I go out with the beagles a good deal, but for the first time in my life, instead of trying to follow the hounds wherever they go, I sit on the tops of gates and wait for them to come back and don't worry if I lose them altogether. There is no fighting against the temptation to slack.

Elspeth has had a school-friend staying with her who infuriated me by her vacuous behaviour. Her only aim in life is to attract men. I don't know what is the matter with me, but married life is rubbing me up the wrong way. I am becoming fidgety about my rights in the house. It sounds

childish: in fact it is childish. This settling down business is going to be a lengthier job than I thought. I seem to have lost all my old freedom of action or thought. I certainly love Elspeth no less in my heart of hearts, but I hate being managed by a pack of women. First there is the servant, then Elspeth, then Elspeth's school-friend. I never seem to see a man. I can no longer have crowds of boys about me and entertain them as I used to, because it's so expensive and we can't afford it. Besides it makes so much extra work. But the real trouble is, I fancy, that I love Elspeth far more than she loves me. I scent the elements of a tragedy here already.

One custom here pleases me a good deal. All the senior boys have us in turn to their studies to tea. They are much more men of the world than the Radchester "bloods." Their airs and moustaches, their evident wealth and perfect ease of manner all frighten me. I feel very much more like a "fag" being patronized than a master.

I have already had two or three dire conflicts in Common Room over the articles I have lately published. Several of my colleagues won't speak to me: others say that I am trying to head a revolt against games and all the age-old traditions that made Marlton famous: "whippersnapper" is the phrase most commonly employed about me I think. I see myself classed with Tipham of "The Lanchester Tradition." One of the greatest pleasures I get in life is on alternate Saturday evenings, when I attend the School Debating Society and let loose some of my "wild" theories. These do not tend to make me more popular, but they certainly rouse people to speak who normally would keep silence either through nervousness or indifference. [226]

My work I should like if only there were more of it. I get so little to do that life hangs very heavily on my hands. I am become further domesticated by the possession of a dog and a cat. We quarrel over the animals. I loathe the cat: I hate all sleepy things and Elspeth hates the dog in the house. Consequently I go off with "Sludge" (a wild rough-haired terrier with no respect for anything in the world) and tramp the country for miles and talk to him: he can understand my frets and worries. He is very like me, never happy unless he is out and about chasing something frenziedly. Elspeth stays at home and consoles herself with the cat. It's a bad existence. Lately I have succumbed to a new disease. I have an overmastering desire to hear the roar and bustle of London: I believe if we lived there we should be happy, there is such heaps to do.

Most husbands in the city only see their wives at night, in the early morning and evening. Consequently they are glad to meet, whereas Elspeth and I can see one another nearly every moment of the day. I am in to all meals and invariably about the place when rooms are being cleaned out, which seems to me to be happening all and every day. The only way I have kept going is by keeping the house full of visitors, mainly old Radcastrians, who come to see what sort of a married man I make. [227]

One curious incident that has just happened will give the clue to my state of mind.

My people have been staying in Cheltenham and as Elspeth and I had been bickering freely and I had been feeling rotten, we decided that it would be a good thing for both of us if I went to see them for the week-end. I have always been irresolute, but I cannot remember ever weighing anything so carefully as I did the pros and cons of this ridiculously small matter. In the end I went. I was intensely miserable and lonely in the train. All sorts of horrors crossed my mind, accidents to Elspeth while I was away, accidents to the train. By the time I got to Cheltenham I was in an abject state. I just embraced my parents and then stated that I was going straight back home. They did their best to prevail upon me at least to stay for one night, but I was adamant. I walked with them, arguing all the way, to their hotel and then straight back to the station, where I caught the last train of the night for London. I arrived at Marlton at two in the morning and had to rouse Elspeth by throwing stones at her window. Sobbing and half-demented I was put to bed. She was in a terrible state: she thought I had gone out of my mind. I am not certain that I wasn't. All I know is that though I quarrel with her in this absurd way, I cannot bear to leave her for more than a few hours at most. It is a most extraordinary state of mind to have got into. I wish I could explain it. No one could have been saner than I was up to the time of my engagement: now I seem to be more nearly approaching insanity with every passing hour. I cannot believe that every newly married man suffers as I am suffering. All this tells on Elspeth too. Such behaviour as mine only lessens her love for me. She does not really sympathize at all. She is becoming cold. My God! please show me the way to keep her love. [228]

So ends my first term at Marlton.

I have read a good deal and bought a few books. I have made a start at writing. My health is becoming very bad. I have not learnt how to control myself or my wife. I want happiness and, straining after it, only attain misery. I like the boys but they are slack and don't really want to learn anything. I have joined the Corps, but it is not so smart or popular here as it was at Radchester. I have enjoyed most of all watching the school "Rugger" matches. It is considered part of every one's duty to go down to the fields to watch all matches, which irritates me. I don't want to watch because I'm expected to, but because I want to. Neither Elspeth nor I are very popular: we have made enemies by accepting an invitation to a House supper and then not turning up because we left a day before the end of term. We had no idea that these House suppers were only annual events and that invitations to them are considered the highest honour possible when extended to masters who don't own a House. It would be useless to explain.

The boys are far more civilized than they were at Radchester owing to the fact that their House-masters are married and that quite frequently they meet members of the other sex. They are more urbane and polished: they acquire a kind of *savoir faire* in their demeanour, a smartness in their dress which was noticeably lacking at Radchester. There is not so great a cleavage between home and school; they spend quite a number of afternoons in drawing-rooms; they entertain the [229]

small sons and daughters of the staff, they come into contact to a certain extent with the life of the streets, they are allowed to buy whatever they like in any shops, they are encouraged to explore the beauties of the countryside on bicycles. Some of the prefects have motor-bicycles. They are allowed to play golf and to go out to tea at the houses of private residents in the town. Altogether they are made as happy as it is possible for boys to be. In a word, I could not imagine any boy committing suicide at Marlton, whereas they might at Radchester. Nevertheless there are several things that are wrong about the place. The lack of energy is by far the most noticeable. The lack of reading is perhaps the next and may follow from it. The school library is very old and well stocked with mediæval books of all sorts, being peculiarly rich in archæological, historical and theological works, but it seems to have stopped stocking new books about 1890. The amount of modern stuff in it is composed entirely of books of little value which have been presented to it. There is no system on which books are bought at all: I looked in vain for Meredith, Swift, Hazlitt, Stevenson, or Conrad, to mention a few names at random. There are but few purely literary works and boys are certainly not encouraged to keep up with the newest [230] thought in philosophy, poetry, drama, essays and so on. Only the senior boys are allowed to take books out; the bulk of the school use the building on Sundays and then only when it is wet. They rarely read anything except contemporary magazines. One thing that has pleased me about my work is that I have been put on to teach history. This seems to me one of the vitally important subjects. Domestic politics rather than long descriptions of foreign wars, however, seem to me to be the first essential. I have tried to make my forms realize the continuity of history, its applicability to modern life, so that they may not be led astray by any illogical sophistries in unscrupulous newspapers. I find that they become really interested in the history of the Home Rule question, the beginnings of the war between capital and labour, electoral reform, the decentralization of government, the power of the Cabinet, the Crown, the House of Lords and the Commons. I want to equip them so that they will be able really to form their own judgments when they grow up and not accept party shibboleths and be at the mercy of any witty scoundrel.

Side by side with the history we read the famous literary works of the time. Each boy (I did this at Radchester) selects one author or book and writes descriptive criticism on him and it, which he afterwards reads aloud, and comments are made by the rest. Boys are astonishingly poor debaters, they cannot articulate clearly: even when they read aloud they stammer over all except the simplest words.

Every night of the term I hold a voluntary class for Shakespeare and drama-lovers in general: these readings of plays would go down infinitely better if only boys knew how to pronounce [231] words, how to get up the meanings of passages, or even the meaning and use of stops. One would think that an educated boy of sixteen or seventeen would really know how to read, but only in the very rarest cases can he do so with intelligence. Nowhere is this more clearly shown than in chapel, where the prefects of the week read the lesson: they mumble over and spoil some of the most dramatic and poetic passages in the Bible. It isn't through lack of reverence or care but simply because they have never been taught. Incidentally they have never been taught how to read to themselves: they cannot concentrate on anything that requires thought or hard work. A short story in a magazine they appreciate, and good literature they can tolerate when it is read aloud to them by their form masters; but they cannot tackle anything solid by themselves. They distrust all standard authors as likely to be dull. Their surprise when they are introduced to such a book as "Wuthering Heights" is indescribably comic. In mathematics I still seem to have the horrid trick of going so fast that no one learns anything. At any rate I interest them: I wish I could get the stuff to stick in their minds.

XV

January 13, 1914

ELSPETH is now with me at my father's home and in bed with "flu." While we were there I got an invitation from Gregson's to write a book for them on education, so Elspeth and I went straight down to Bath, and I shut myself and wrote "Reform in Education" in ten days. It amounts to 50,000 words. I find that I simply cannot write slowly. I start to plan a thing out, then my brain refuses to take in anything except matter for the book. I look on meals as a needless interruption. I want to write all day and all night. The MSS. is now being typed for me, and I am resting, by reading novels and magazines, playing bridge and billiards with my father-in-law, and alternately quarrelling and making it up with Elspeth.

March 3, 1914

There have been endless rows in the school this term and wholesale expulsions. House-masters are told all about them, and the rest of us kept in ignorance. What the whole body of the school knows is hidden from us poor juniors. On what principle I wonder? Elspeth and I fight daily over books. She dislikes any papers, magazines or books in the drawing-room, and I hate to see the [233] best room in the house given over to nothing but clothes in the making. Having sold under compulsion all the books that I so much valued I am now trying to build up another library. This naturally costs money, but, as I frequently tell Elspeth, I can't get ideas to write about unless I read a good deal.

My neurasthenia has been so acute lately that I have had to see the school doctor: he wants me to go into a sort of retreat for the Easter holidays alone. I'd far rather die. Because I attended every debate and dramatic reading at the School Debating Society last term I have been elected president. We have had debates on conscription, Lloyd George, and classical and modern subjects. I have brought up the average attendance from forty to about a hundred. I shall not be content until we get the majority of the school to attend. These debates, etc., take place in Big School on alternate Saturday evenings from 7 till 8.45. That means dinner at 6.30, which precludes the possibility of many members of Common Room attending. When I first began to go the meetings were rather disorderly and riotous, and no one cared much about the subject. There were long and awkward pauses, but now we have managed to rouse a good deal of opposition, and people come with very carefully prepared speeches, and there are less irrelevancies. I have had one severe attack of appendicitis, but it passed off after a few hours. Of course the school has had the usual diseases, mumps and diphtheria. The whole town is down with the latter: it is said that the water is bad, the milk is bad, and the sanitary arrangements mediæval. It is really the most backward, sleepy place I ever came across. The District Council fight among [234] themselves, but never do anything for the public weal. Most of the members are drapers, butchers, and bakers, and consider nothing but their own interests.

I have been elected to the Sunday Afternoon Literary Society. There are eight boy members and eight masters. We meet at 3.15 on alternate Sunday afternoons, and a paper is read for an hour, and afterwards there is tea. This society has been in existence for fifty years. There is never any discussion, which is a great pity. At the end of term a Shakespeare play is read.

The first papers I heard were on "The Schoolmaster in Literature," Francis Thompson and Kipling, and they were all extremely interesting. Elspeth and I have dined with various members of the staff. They give good dinners, but the conversation is not very thrilling; they dislike anything out of the ordinary; they "never get the time to read," and consequently won't talk "book-shop," which I am beginning to fear is my only subject. They disapprove of my beagling because it takes me away from the games; they don't know, of course, that I've been forbidden to play games. As a matter of fact, I frequently referee the "kids'" games, which are really amusing. They have a quaint habit here of playing all their school matches in the Christmas term, and all their House matches this term. Ingleby, who runs the games, is a passionate devotee of "Rugger," and puts the fear of God into every boy who comes near him. He is altogether delightful, and has a most charming wife, but he cannot brook being "crossed." He dislikes and distrusts me because I said somewhere that I thought games were overdone at the Public Schools. His belief is that [235] games have been, and are, the saving of England, the one outstanding glory of our national life. To this idea he clings through thick and thin, and opposition to it only rouses him to fury. He has a strong face, and is one of the giants here. His influence is enormous. He is an ideal schoolmaster of the old swashbuckling type; he rules by fear and the rod; all his boys love him almost as much as they dread him; he always looks as if he were going to knock any man down who ventured to disagree with him. I like him, but the devil that is in me always prompts me to get up against him; he is a great stickler for convention; the first time we crossed swords was on a very minute point of etiquette. A boy in his House, who is taking the Army exam., wanted special coaching in English, and so, not being able to find any classroom vacant in which to take him I agreed to visit him in his study. Of course I ought to have asked Ingleby's leave. I forgot,

and he got furiously angry. "Young upstarts disregarding rules of a thousand years' growth," and so on.

I like my Army class work. The English required for Sandhurst and Woolwich is of a very low standard, but it is amusing. These general questions, précis, reproductions, and so on, give me a chance of introducing favourite passages from great authors, and I try my hardest to make them read for themselves by running a sort of library in my classroom. I fill up all my vacant shelves with "likely" books, and just let them help themselves. The worst of it is that they nearly always forget to bring them back. I find this as expensive a hobby as having boys continually to tea at Radchester used to be.

My other English form are preparing for the London Matriculation, which, as things stand, is the best examination in English that I know. I concentrate all my powers on literature. I try to build up a coherent idea of the history of English literature all through, and most of the boys respond to the idea splendidly. The worst of it is that they come to me, for the most part, desperately ignorant; three or four plays of Shakespeare, and Sheridan and Goldsmith comprise their whole stock of knowledge. On the other hand, there is a handsome prize awarded annually (£20 worth of books), called the "Carfax," for the boy who shows the best knowledge on Shakespeare, three set authors, and a general paper on all the best authors from 1800 to the present time. This stimulates the senior boys, and in this, the Lent term, every year, some twenty or thirty boys really try to make up for the lamentable deficiency in this branch of their education. [236]

May 5, 1914

I find that I am getting slack in writing up my diary. I don't quite know the reason unless it is that "happy is the nation that has no history" applies equally to individuals. Elspeth and I are getting on much better, by fits and starts. We still quarrel, but more rarely, and only when I forget to show her some of those "little, unremembered acts of kindness and of love" which make so great a difference to life. We had one wonderful day at the Oxford and Cambridge Sports, when I introduced her to all the old Oxford gang. She was thoroughly in her element there. She was not born to be a schoolmaster's wife. She needs gaiety, amusement, heaps of friends, and an incessant round of youthful pleasures. I wish I could get a job in London if only for her sake. She gets very tired of the everlasting topics of conversation at Marlton, bulbs and babies. All true Marltonians are keen gardeners, and they all have large families. I suppose four years of Radchester made me forget the joys of a garden ... because really the gardens of Marlton are a joy for ever; apparently the very rarest and most delicate flowers will bloom in Marlton when they would die in any other soil in England. [237]

As soon as the holidays started Elspeth and I went to London in order that I might continue to bombard the editors and publishers with copy. There wasn't much doing, but we saw numbers of quite excellent plays. I received a commission from Goddard's to edit a dozen plays of Shakespeare and other dramatists for use in schools, for which they promised me £50. I didn't spend as much time over them as I could have wished. My old disease of hurry made me write Introductions which I ought to have done much better, but my object was to say as little as possible and not to overburden the juvenile mind with a million unnecessary notes. It was an easily earned £50. I finished my anthology, which I called "A Cluster of Grapes," and started to produce a School Mathematical Course, which I eventually gave up because it bored me.

Elspeth and I went as usual to the point-to-point meetings this year, and the Bath dances, and thoroughly enjoyed ourselves. There are still the same old cliques to be seen parading up and down Milsom Street, weaving petty scandals over the tea-table at Fortt's, girls becoming engaged and breaking it off, strange, unaccountable weddings and stranger divorces. We are now looked upon as an old married couple and no longer interesting. [238]

July 14, 1914

This has been a good summer term; it was pleasant to come farther south at the beginning of May instead of having to cut oneself off from all the joys of summer by going to Radchester. Marlton in the summer is exquisite: the town is just one blaze of colour: it is much too hot, but luckily Elspeth loves the heat, and I don't mind it much. Besides there is splendid bathing in the open-air school swimming-bath. Financial affairs have been a constant thorn in my flesh. Here I get £200, and on that I have to keep Elspeth, and a servant at £18 a year, a house the rent of which is £35 and the taxes £15. I give her £2 a week on which to keep house, and we spend money like water by travelling in the holidays. Worst of all I am still paying off old Oxford debts, which drag us down still further, and my books and tobacco bill average about £3 a term. All the other masters have private means and live like princes. I suppose we ought to economize by having no people to stay with us, but it would be deadly for Elspeth while I was in school if she was always alone, and I, too, like old friends to talk to at night. Consequently we are never free from visitors. Her father and mother and brothers and sisters have all been down, and several old Radcastrians, including Jimmy Haye and Montague, both of whom love it.

I have had the luck to get Tony's first forty poems, that he showed up to me for work at Radchester, printed in a monthly review. I am now waiting to be operated on for appendicitis. I am going into the nursing home on the 27th, as soon as ever I have finished correcting all my exams. I am funking it horribly. It would be dreadful if this were to be the end before I've really come to understand Elspeth and treat her as she ought to be treated. I do so want also to write [239]

something worth writing before I die. It's no good being morbid over it. I only hope that the taking out of this offending member will mean the eradication of all uncleanness and offence in me. It ought to make me better tempered, more long-suffering, more loving and lovable, and altogether more Christian and chivalrous. I read a paper to the Sunday Afternoon Society on "The Predecessors of Shakespeare"; as usual I prepared it too hastily. I had far too much to say to get through it in an hour. Before I knew about my operation I had accepted an invitation to lecture at Stratford-on-Avon on the teaching of English. These summer conferences are extraordinarily good things, and one learns heaps of "tips" about how to tackle a subject in the proper way. I still go on experimenting with my form. I have no reason to be displeased with their progress in literature. I have had quite a number of original pieces of work shown up. I have got to know two boys in particular very well. Every week they read papers to me on any subject, and we sit round a schoolhouse study table and argue. They are as different as possible from each other. One is a brusque, quite clever, very athletic lover of sensuous poetry; he pins his faith to Byron, Swinburne, Rossetti, William Morris, Edward Dowson, and Arthur Symons; his name is O'Dowd. The other, Raynes, is a quiet, demure scholar, who does not get on very well in his House; his [240]
passion is Meredith. I get more pleasure out of these two than out of any other boys in the school. By far the rottenest thing I have to do is private tuition. This means taking two or three very backward boys, usually in mathematics, for an hour three times a week. For this we get extra pay, £2 2s. for each boy! That is six guineas for thirty-nine hours' work. Whereas I have before now got six guineas for an article which hasn't taken me more than thirty-nine minutes. I grudge the time I have to devote to these boys more than I can say; they know nothing, they never will know anything, they don't want to know anything. And yet one can't refuse to take them because every penny is important.

We have one great function here in the summer term before which everything else fades, and that is Speech Day. This consists of a wonderful service in the Priory, then we go to Big School, where prizewinners read their papers, prizes are awarded, and speeches are made and large luncheon-parties are given in each House-master's house. The vast concourse then wanders slowly down to the fields to watch the old boys' cricket match, and at night there is a school concert. The music here is world-famous. The school concerts are magnificently done. We have a large album of school songs, and selections are taken from these, and there is usually some oratorio or cantata. The festivities leave one slightly limp, and there is not much work done during the rest of the term. The most surprising feature about it all to me was the comparison between the Radchester Speech Day and the Marlton Speech Day. The Radchester parent was a sight for the gods; he was always wealthy, nearly always possessed of a distinct accent, and wore [241]
clothes to match; he was hearty, bluff, and a good fellow; his womenfolk gave me no pleasure. At Marlton the parents seemed to be the salt of the earth; they were all aristocrats in name if not in money. The majority of them are parsons and soldiers, and practically to a man old Marltonians. Loyalty to his school is the one shining characteristic of the Marltonian; to them there is simply no other Public School in England. I don't wonder; the boys are perfectly happy. They live secluded from the rotten side of the world in a valley which takes the breath away for sheer loveliness. They have a great tradition extending from the dark ages. There is a saying that no matter where he is or in what circumstances an old Marltonian can be detected at once by his geniality, his good-breeding, his entire absence of "side," and soft, slow, lazy way of speaking. Quietly and insidiously the place is beginning to take hold of me. There is no doubt whatever that I enjoy life much more than I used to; I am beginning to observe beautiful things, nature particularly. I find myself standing stock-still looking at the clouds racing past the moon on a clear night behind the Priory; the lilac and laburnum thrill me like an exquisite melody; the green of the fields, the thickly leaved trees, flowers in a garden, all sorts of things that didn't seem to me to matter much are now becoming ineffably precious. The lights in the schoolhouse studies late at night, seen as one crosses the court on the way home from school and chapel, are amazingly beautiful and peaceful.

[242]

July 24, 1914

Here I am on the eve of being operated on. I wish it could be postponed for a bit. There seems to be the chance of civil war in Ireland, and the row in the Balkans looks like spreading. Elspeth and I are thinking of going to Scotland when I am convalescent, but I should like to cross over to Ireland and see really what is happening. We really have treated Ireland throughout the ages damnably. I wonder what will come of it all. I have finished correcting all my examination papers, and done my reports, added up my marks, and now all is over. Elspeth has been kindness itself to me lately; there is no doubt of the depth of our love for each other. I have been making a will, which seems silly because I don't leave much; about £150 worth of debts, and £1000 to pay them with from my insurance. Of course there'll be the furniture, but that's not much of an heirloom. I have had several horrible qualms about death, but, good heavens! it's no good worrying. I wonder whether Elspeth will marry again. After all, it won't matter to me when I'm gone. This is a silly way to talk. This has been a rotten day. I have said good-bye to a few boys, packed up what I shall want for the nursing home, a volume of Chesterton and a volume of Stevenson. I bicycled up to the golf links to say good-bye to the country that I have now so learnt to love; and after tea, in a bowler hat and "going-away" suit and suit-case, I walked up to the nursing home. It's a rotten game doing all this in cold blood. Elspeth stayed with me in my room, which is clean, comfortable, and faces south, until the nurse turned her out. I am now left alone, and Elspeth [243]
isn't to be allowed to see me until after the operation. It was agonizing parting from her, and I dread the night. I haven't slept for a very long time decently, and I certainly don't expect to to-night. I've been allowed as a special concession to finish writing up my diary to date. It seems all

very futile now. I've made jolly little of my life. I've loved a few boys, taught a few of them something, taught a great many nothing. I have irritated some very good people by giving publicity to ill-considered judgments, and I have given of my all to one girl; I live in and for and by Elspeth alone. She is the whole of life to me. God grant that we may be spared to one another and learn to be truly and always happy together.

XVI

September 17, 1914

EVEN now I can't realize it: I went into that nursing home on a beautiful peaceful evening in July with nothing more important to worry about than my silly old appendix, and somehow while I was lying low and not worrying the entire world seems to have changed. I came in thinking that it might be exciting to go to Ireland, because there was a chance of a slight "scrap," and I come out and find the whole world in a death-struggle. It is like some hideous nightmare. I suppose war must have come upon most people as a surprise, a bomb-shell, but for me it has come as all part of another existence. My life is now divided into two parts, before I went into the nursing home, and after.

I was operated on quite successfully, though the doctor took two hours to cut out my appendix and I recovered fairly quickly, though I quite made up my mind that I was at the point of death hourly. My father and mother came down to see me and were awfully good, but Elspeth after a few days took a holiday because she was so "run down." I felt miserable without her, but she was quite right to go. I must have been getting on her nerves badly. The first news I got about the war was on a certain morning when I looked out of my window and saw in the place where I [245] expected to see the summer circus a whole troop of yeomanry and their horses. Then my doctor went away to join up.

I had to lie in bed and hear the most amazing stories. First the banks all closed down and everybody thought that there was going to be no money, then people began to fill their cellars with foodstuffs, then day after day came more horrible news of disasters, of Germany breaking through Mons and overrunning Belgium, of the wonderful defence put up by the handful of English troops; gradually it seemed as if the war was already over, that Paris would fall and England be invaded. Horrible stories of atrocities in Belgium I can't understand. All the Germans I've known were dear old Koenig at Radchester, fat old bald-headed tourists at Lynton, sweating horribly as they climbed the hills behind the coach, and three ripping flappers at Oxford years ago. Somehow I had never imagined such a war as this to be possible. I remember now that night at Radchester three years ago when that War Office man came down and implored us to make the O.T.C. as smart as we could because we should be needed in a few years. I had plenty of time lying on my back for three weeks in that nursing home to think it all out. I had heaps of visitors bringing flowers and fruit and papers, but I was restless and miserable none the less.

As soon as I was able I went up to Bath and took Elspeth to Ilfracombe: there I heard Hemmerde calling for recruits—it was just like Amyas Leigh asking for another generation of Devon lads to help to beat the Spaniards. All the same it's different now. All the glamour and glory of war seem to have gone for ever: this is simply horrible, a massacre by machinery. Perhaps my mind is not [246] attuned to it. I am still very weak, but the whole business seems preposterous.

We went down to Portsmouth to see some friends who had just joined up and we saw the troopships, the searchlights at night, the coast defences, the trains full of cheering soldiers, the streets full of raw recruits. We went on to London and there were posters like advertisements for soap imploring every man to join up and save his country. Girls presented white feathers to any one in mufti, people in trains invariably asked each other fiercely why they weren't in khaki. By far the most violent of these interrogators were peaceful-looking old ladies and young, healthy parsons. I went down to Hampton Court to stay with Tony, who, of course, has gone into the Army. All Radchester was in camp at Aldershot when war broke out and the entire school went *en bloc* to try to enlist. Those who were refused are crying with anger at the thought that they will have to go back to Radchester next term. There was some talk of the schools all being closed down. All the young masters on the staff at Marlton have gone, and every boy of eighteen and over and many a good deal younger. They needn't complain that the Public Schools aren't doing their part. Every single fit man in them joined at once. I wish I hadn't had my appendix out: then I could have gone. Elspeth says I couldn't, because of my incipient madness. I bet I would, though it would have been Hell to have left her. How I should have gloried in this war before I became engaged. All the Radcastrians are greatly "bucked" about it. At last adventure has come to them [247] with arms full.

November 10, 1914

Just when I ought to keep up my diary more accurately than ever I leave it for weeks. It's no good putting in all the news about the war: that is all seared into my soul. These three months have seen the deaths of all the men who seemed to me to matter when I was at Oxford. All the men of my age were killed off at once: they got out at the beginning. From the other side they tell me it's just an endless line of blood and mud, periods of intense boredom relieved by moments of fearful fright. Every one thought in August that it would be all over by Christmas. Kitchener gives it three years. My God! there'd be no England left after three years. I went up to London to lecture on the teaching of English and found the streets all darkened, which makes the town incredibly

beautiful and eerie. I suppose the idea is to bring the war home to us more closely.

This term has been altogether strange. We are chastened and quite different. Young boys are now prefects, heads of Houses, captains of games: the Corps has ousted athletics. It seems wrong to be chasing up and down a "Rugger" field while our brothers and dearest friends are being killed within a few hundred miles. We have done an amazing amount of Corps work this term: everybody is as keen as mustard to make himself really fit. Boys are reading their Stonewall Jackson, and Haking, and John Buchan, and everything that they can lay their hands on to inform themselves of what is going on across the Channel and how they shall best occupy their time here [248] in preparation. By a very quaint irony, for the first time in my life I have noticed that boys are becoming really anxious to learn. Somehow intellectual pursuits seem to be worth striving after: there is a perceptible wish in every boy's mind to explore the garner-house of wisdom.

Never have I felt that the schoolmaster's job was so important as I do now. Many of these boys will, please God, not have to fight, but they will all have to take an active part in the reconstruction of England. Every hour of every day we shall have to keep before them the ideals which we mean to see put into practice by the next generation. Last year we were in danger of getting sloppy: we were too rich, we were chasing after every kind of new pleasure, not a thought was given to the myriad problems of capital and labour, of poverty, of housing, of health, of education. We are all trying our best at last to see which of us can do the most for the sake of England: the name didn't mean much to us so long as she was safe; now that she is in deadly peril we are beginning to realize all that she is to us. Our new activity in the Corps is a beginning: we are drilling, digging, scouting, signalling, lecturing, bombing, bridge-building, range-finding, entrenching—learning up tactics and strategy. So far as actual military skill is concerned we are doing our best, but there is an enormous amount of leeway to be made up in other departments of life. For one thing, I believe the school is far more devout than it was. Suffering has sent us back to the Cross. We have weekly Intercession Services for our old boys. These are voluntary, but very few boys absent themselves. Our preachers seem almost inspired. It must be much [249] easier to preach now than it used to be: we are all only too anxious to know what to do: "Here am I, send me" is the cry of every one in chapel. Our religion is a much more vital thing than it ever used to be. We are all working at top speed all the time. I only hope we don't break down as the newspapers have. Every one of the papers except the *Daily Telegraph* has lost its head not once nor twice since war broke out. It is almost painful to read the leading articles at present. They blame everybody in authority for failure to cope with the present situation. How the German Press must gloat.

In the place of the young men who have left us we have had to employ very old men, who are for the most part extraordinarily genial and take to the work as a trout to water. Not all of them, alas, have been successful. Boys still "rag" a man who is incompetent, and they have little respect for age, but on the whole these old men have fallen into line far better than any one would have dreamt possible.

December 13, 1914

Our first term of war is nearly over. It has been a strange, unreal sort of life. Every day some fresh disaster befalls us in the shape of casualties. Every week some boys come back, healthy, handsome and extraordinarily grown-up in their officers' uniforms: we at school seem to be settling down to play our part. The officers of the O.T.C. have been told to carry on where they are, that the work they are doing is invaluable: so we content ourselves with that, though it seems very little. We have had a naval victory at the Heligoland Bight, and a defeat and a victory [250] off the coast of South America. The Germans advance no more in France, the whole world seems to be preparing to rise in arms on the slightest provocation. Every week Horatio Bottomley and Belloc explain to us that the end is in sight and the Northcliffe Press tells us that we can never win but shall wage an age-long war. We hope the one and fear the other—and carry on.

It is a strange thing, but the beginning of war which I expected would quash all chance of writing has seen the beginning of my success. *Blackwood's*, the *Contemporary* and the *National Review* have all printed articles of mine, and I am writing as much as I can, spurred on by this undreamt-of piece of luck.

Although it is a time of war and full of horrors the term passed very quickly indeed. Elspeth and I are now absolutely united. Her father has gone out to Egypt with a staff appointment, her mother is still in Bath, both her brothers are out in France. All entertainments at Marlton have suddenly ceased. There are no more dinner-parties, no more House suppers, school matches were all "scratched" this term, and the people in the town no longer play "bridge." We are rapidly becoming a soberer people and our efforts are directed to one object only, the winning of the war. Yet the strange thing is that so many things go on just as usual. People seem to have any amount of money, the shops advertise the same old extravagant useless things; dances, theatres, horse-racing, football matches still continue—there is no lack of these things any more than there was during the Boer War.

Perhaps we are learning to "do without" gradually. It must be different in France and Belgium. I [251] shall never forget my first sight of Belgian refugees and wounded soldiers arriving at Marlton station. Somehow we don't, we can't realize the horror of it in this peaceful valley, but the tragic faces of these tortured, homeless women penetrates at one flash into the very heart. All the gay, irresponsible women who last July spent their days on the polo ground now vie with one another in providing homes for the Belgians and hospitals for the wounded. Girls who were accustomed

to do nothing more arduous than hunt or take the spaniels for a walk now nurse through the night, scrub floors, act as kitchenmaids, drive motor-vans and generally carry on the work that is left for them to do. So many of them have husbands or brothers fighting that they would go mad with brooding too much if they were not working every hour of every day. There may be a few who are still untouched by the war, but there are certainly none in Marlton. Boys who left at the end of last term have already come back decorated with the Military Cross. Letters reach me from all parts of the globe from old boys of Radchester who are sailing to fight in some region I never heard of before the war. And all the time we try to preserve the spirit that has made England great here at home in Marlton. It used to seem something of a backwater before the war —how much more is it one now: the milkmen and the farm labourers, the shop assistants, and the railway porters who had never been farther afield than Exeter are now in Egypt, Malta, India, France, all over the globe. What a widening of experience, what books will be written when it is all over. For the last year we have thought of nothing but the wonderful adventures of Captain [252] Scott and his fellow-adventurers in their quest for the South Pole. Commander Evans came to Marlton and lectured to us about the heroic death of Captain Oates: we were all swept off our feet with enthusiasm but no one in the hall ever dreamt that he would be called upon to emulate such a deed, and yet now daily, hourly, that feat is being rivalled. So long as there are any men left in this country there is no need to fear that we shall lack for heroes. Boys, who when they were at school were looked upon as feckless funks, have performed valorous exploits, which any one remembering their school days would have regarded as absolutely beyond the bounds of belief.

January 20, 1915

I get heartily sick of the holidays these days because there is so little to do, and I hate to see all my pals training while I am doing nothing at all. Schoolmastering seems so dull, but there is no doubt where one's duty lies.

April 15, 1915

I have now finished a second term at Marlton under war conditions. I find that the war has brought us closer together, masters and boys alike. We have had lectures from wounded soldiers on the campaign in different parts of the globe. The Corps is more flourishing than ever. Our favourite amusement now is the night-attack, which is nearer the real thing than anything else we do. I went down to a depot the other day to get some "tips" and saw some first-rate signalling, the Lewis gun, and some bombing practice.

Poor Elspeth about half-way through the term complained to me one day that she felt too rotten [253] to keep some engagement that she was due for and I fetched the doctor much against her will, and to my horror he told me that she had appendicitis and must be operated on immediately. We took her over to Lewes and put her into a nursing home, and I left her there late one night after a last passionate embrace and was taken over by Leary the next day in his side-car to hear the result of the operation and was told that she had come through it all right. I shall never forget the agony of waiting to hear the verdict. I made Leary motor me at terrific speed half across Sussex to keep my mind from dwelling too insistently on it. Her heart is weak and she nearly went under, but thank God she pulled through in the end, although she was very weak for a long time after. My life alone during her illness I can't dwell upon: it was altogether too horrible. I roamed about the countryside absolutely disconsolate. I have no use for life at all without her. Every day as soon as work was over I "push-biked" the eight miles into Lewes to see her and talk for a little, then cycled home again to my lonely cottage. I was nearer dementia then than I have ever been. I have got to know more of the boys in the school this last term. They are a wonderfully fine lot, particularly O'Dowd and Raynes, who still write weekly essays for me and discuss literary problems.

I tried to act *The Younger Generation* in my Debating Society, but the idea was quashed by the Censor. I have altered the old system of reading round a table and substituted a much more effective plan. We now read in Big School from the platform standing up, with action and dresses [254] complete. Instead of each individual member having to buy copies of the play I have now bought numbers of copies and formed a library upon which any member of the school may draw just as he likes.

We have had one or two strange temporary masters. One, an elderly scholar, had an eccentric habit of always searching the bottoms of one's trousers for matches: he had once heard of a man being burnt alive that way and was in a continual fright lest it should happen to some one whom he knew. We have got a new Sixth Form tutor, a fellow of Queen's, Oxford, who has become a firm friend of mine. He is, like most of my colleagues, very well off and has furnished himself with a splendid library which he allows me to use. I have done a good deal of writing and much reading: my books are costing me less because I am doing a good deal of reviewing for the London papers. One of the strangest effects of the war up to now has been its result upon the world of papers and books. Paper is very expensive and there is great difficulty in getting MSS. printed and bound, but people are all buying books in great numbers, particularly poetry and fiction.

Owing to my own smaller successes I have received invitations to meet and to stay with some of the leading writers of the day, which needless to say I have accepted, though if I go I shall have to go without Elspeth, for as soon as it was possible we took her by car from the nursing home in

Lewes all the way to her home at Bath, where the doctor says she must stay for some months.

I can't face next term without her: I don't know what I shall do and yet I cannot conscientiously expect her to come back to me until she is quite fit to look after the house again. At present she is recovering very slowly and looks dreadfully weak and thin. [255]

May 4, 1915

When the term was over I did go round to the various houses to which I had been invited and met the queerest people. I was nervous and irritable without Elspeth and never stayed more than a night or two in any one house and kept on rushing back to see how Elspeth was getting on.

These Easter holidays have been rather nightmarish because of Elspeth's illness. I could not settle down to anything, and of course we could not go out much because she could not walk. On the other hand, for some reason I was unable to concentrate my attention on writing. Everything was in a state of blur owing to the shock I sustained at her operation. In some degree last term was like the same term two years ago when I was engaged. I tried to hurl myself into my work: I refereed on and coached the junior games, I devised all sorts of schemes to interest my boys in English, I had boys up to tea to remove some of my loneliness, but I was gradually going out of my mind because I had no Elspeth by me to soothe me. And all the time the war has been weighing very heavily upon me. The waste of the flower of this country is frightful. On April 23 young Rupert Brooke died, and we have lost the premier poet of the age before he had had the chance to transmit a quarter of the splendid things that were burning inside him. Somehow I feel his loss more than that of any one I have known.

XVII

July 31, 1915

This term has been the worst in my recollection. Elspeth was not allowed to come back at the beginning of term because she was not able to cope with the housework, so I thought to compromise by going up to Bath every week-end to see her. I did this, but the five days between each visit became so ghastly that I could not face them. I begged her to come back at all costs to save my brain. She did so for a few weeks, to her mother's intense indignation and her own no little wrath. Both of them thought it merely gross selfishness on my part to demand such a thing, as of course in a sense it was. But I really was ill. The local doctor could do nothing and sent me up to a specialist in Harley Street, who told me to go to the Highlands for the whole of the summer holidays and take a complete rest. I'm suffering from an over-active brain. So to-morrow we are to set off for the north of Scotland.

This term has passed uneventfully enough so far as the school is concerned. I went to see the Bishop about being ordained and he welcomed the suggestion, but I am still not clear in my mind about it. I have always had a hankering after the church, but I wonder if it is simply that I may find an excuse to preach. I know I am always preaching in form. I spend the whole week [257] preparing subjects for my Sunday's divinity lesson, which is really a hotch-potch of the week's events with a moral tag appended.

I have watched a few cricket matches and tried to rid myself of my nervous behaviour in front of senior masters. I always behave in Common Room as if I were a small boy: I have never been able to eradicate the idea that these are *my* masters whenever I meet them.

In my writings I am becoming too critical, but it is all rather superficial. I know that there are grave abuses in the Public School system, though the war swept away at least half of them; I also know that I have a reputation here of indulging quite indiscriminately in wholesale destructive diatribes: "the zeal of thine house hath eaten me up" as they say of me. I have not tempered my enthusiasm with reticence or bridled my tongue severely enough. The result is that I have divided the school into two great factions, the loyalists and the seceders. This is what my enemies lay to my charge. I cannot believe that my influence carries any weight at all. I am only a junior master and I don't mix with the boys here as I used to at Radchester for the simple reason that I live too far away from the school and that I have a wife. The only people who see much of the boys are the House-masters and the House tutors. The rest of us take a few sets, control, say, a debating or natural history society or choir, perhaps are responsible for a form, and there's an end of our influence. By bowling at the nets one meets a few others, in the Corps one comes across two Houses, and of course the school prefects are known to all the staff. But there is very little intimacy between boy and master, though such relations are as much encouraged here as they [258] were discouraged at Radchester. A few of my closer friends come up to borrow books and stay and talk sometimes, others again come to hear the gramophone or to play the piano to me, but I have all too few friends among the boys. There have been one or two colossal rows this term, in spite of the fact that we are at war. Boy-nature seems to remain the same in spite of all—and not only boy-nature but adult nature, for even here members of Common Room fight one against the other like tigers when one man infringes on another man's rights. All these disputes have quite petty beginnings, but they assume alarming proportions in a very short space of time. I have been preaching about the dangers of over-athleticism. The consequence is that there is a blood-feud between those who worship at the shrine of games and those who think that games should be played merely as recreation. This has now become a question of Houses. There are Houses where everything is put second to games and others where games are put last. It is all rather comic because it really means nothing at all. The whole matter is always just personal. There are Houses with a tradition against taking the Corps seriously: there are others where they think of nothing else. One good sign I have noticed of late is the resuscitation of House Debating and Literary Societies. Boys debate among themselves on all sorts of school topics, internal politics; the spirit of criticism is abroad: boys are beginning to think, there is hope for them. There are, however, many masters who tell me that boys ought not to think: they ought to accept and not question, that to inculcate the carping spirit is a malicious practice. I wonder how much this is [259] true. I stand and everyone knows it, for the cultivation of the æsthetic and the intellectual first, just because in the past they have been so despised. I am myself neither æsthetic nor intellectual but I have a craving after each. Athletics in themselves cannot satisfy the inner cravings of man: he wants more nourishment than that. I like to see the school magazine filled with good sound articles of general interest and poetry, as well as accounts of the term's doings.

I cannot see why the latter should oust the former any more than the former should supplant the latter. I want fair dealing. At present there is no fair dealing. Consequently some of the brighter spirits have produced magazines of their own, satirical, comic, serious, any and every sort as a counterblast to the school magazine. These illegitimate productions have a short life but a quite merry one. They create endless diversion owing to the fact that the satire is too carefully veiled for any but the very few to understand it; people are set guessing as to the possible authors, and there is always a rumour that the paper is about to be suppressed. They show a spark of humour,

whereas the legitimate magazine is always deadly serious: when it aims at humour, as in its correspondence, it only succeeds in being ineffably tedious and dull.

September 20, 1915

We had a wonderful holiday in Scotland. We went via Edinburgh to Kingussie, which is in Strathspey, in full view of the Cairngorms; the scenery between Blair Atholl and Kingussie is magnificently rugged and grand. Kingussie itself is a fair-sized village of white-washed houses [260] with two quite excellent hotels, both under the same management. We chose the cheaper and had the luck to have the run of the other. From the very first we made friends. By a strange chance two of the cheeriest and most typical of the best sort of Marltonians happened to be up there and we went for many excursions together, bathing in lochs and burns and climbing cairns.

Acting on my specialist's advice I began to take up golf and became immediately seized with a mania. Before we left I was playing thirty-six holes a day. The golf-course at Kingussie is right up the mountainside and is truly hazardous and sporting. There were crowds of visitors, all of them as merry as could be. Except for a few men in kilts and trains full of sailors passing through, one would never have believed that we were a nation at war. Every sort of person came and stayed at our hotel during the eight weeks that we were there, from Mr. Asquith and Mr. McKenna to the most astoundingly vulgar shopkeepers from Dundee and Glasgow. The wonderful fresh air soon brought colour to Elspeth's cheeks and she began to take exercise and climb some of the peaks near by with me: she also bathed with me in the Spey and sat and painted the blue hills while I wrote.

We made friends with the English chaplain and his wife, with the hotel proprietor who had amassed a wonderful collection of curios, with a peerless Marlborough boy whom I am never likely to forget, with a few convalescent officers and most of the residents. Never a day passed that was not full of enjoyment. The weeks passed all too quickly but I rapidly grew better and my nerves became quieter and my outlook on life less turbulent and queer. I owe my cure mainly to [261] golf, which kept my thoughts off writing or the war.

I have had articles in most of the important reviews and in several of the weeklies. I find that I am being hailed as an educational expert and a literary critic, whereas in reality I am neither. I am a poor, rather demented creature with very high ideals and in my anxiety to see some of my ideas carried out I offend many good men, put myself into a false position and ruin myself in other people's estimation. I am over-enthusiastic. If I could only learn to go more slowly. It is the same old story about my mathematical teaching. I can't understand why a boy should not acquire the rudiments of mathematics quickly. I know that he could if he would only bestir himself. So if only the schools as a whole would bestir themselves, we should get boys interested in something more important than games. I go the wrong way to work. I haven't got the tact of a flea. As my first publisher said when I sent him the draft of my first novel, "This is too damned honest." That has been my failure through life. Instead of turning things over in my mind I just blurt out what I am thinking at the moment and get angry because every one doesn't straightway agree.

Elspeth and I spent a few days at Nairn in order to taste the sea breezes and I played golf with a Cambridge billiard Blue, who has now a post in the British Museum. Nairn is full of interesting people, but it is a strange anomaly of a place. In parts it is as hideous as Radchester, in others, as in the view across to Cromarty, it is exquisitely beautiful: the colours are soft and of every hue. I found this part of Scotland interesting from a literary point of view. There is certainly a touch of [262] *Macbeth* in Forres: and "Ossian" could only have been written by a man who knew Kingussie. I hope before I die that we shall once again have the chance to see Loch Laggan: I have never been more taken with a piece of scenery in my life. Laggan is like a miniature sea, set in between two beautifully shaped hills, ideally quiet, perfect for bathing and for rambling about on the moors. But it is too far out of the world for a man situated as I am now, who cannot bear to be out of touch with the latest movements. Laggan would be the place to go to worry out some new philosophy or to compose some wonderful new piece of music. I think I could write a novel there. But there must be no rumours of wars over the other side of the hill. In these days the heart pines for London and friends: it sounds ungrateful to say this, for Scotland did a great deal for me, and Elspeth and I both benefited enormously from our stay and were loath to go.

December 31, 1915

We determined to take in a paying guest this term: our Scottish tour cost us £100. Luckily we got an exceedingly interesting man, just down from Oxford, who has come here to take temporary work. He is a great historian and exceedingly keen on political economy. He began by being badly "ragged" by the boys and detested by his colleagues because of his rather new ideas and revolutionary principles: I came to like him very much. He entertained Elspeth and me a good deal. When he first arrived he was deadly serious, but we soon laughed him into a more equable [263] state of mind: unfortunately for us he was conscripted although he was nearly blind, and so he had to go.

I have three times been up to the War Office to try to get out to the Front, but it is no good thinking of it till I am sane again. The last War Office official whom I saw sent me to the greatest brain specialist in London, and I now go up every week to be quietened down. He won't let me write more than is essential for my well-being, he tries to put me into an easy state of mind where I cease from troubling about anything. The idea is to get the nervous tissues to work

evenly, not to get frayed and harassed by the millions of perplexing doubts and obsessions which flit across my mind. I am doing my best to act on his advice. It is all a question of whether my will is strong enough to impose a brake upon my mind, which is always showing signs of breaking loose from the necessary restraint that sanity demands. He tells me to enjoy life, not to take myself so seriously, to let things slide and adjust themselves.

In my frenzy to get things done, I overreach myself. I attack the deadly dullness of the countryside, I attack the abuses in a school curriculum. I even oppose the current morality of the age and instead of doing good I do active harm. I don't stop to think how my opinions will be construed.

I wish some of those who look on me as a dangerous innovator could see me in form. I am sure that no one could take exception to my statements there. My whole gospel is all of a piece. "Lukewarmness" is the unforgivable sin: one must be an active agent and ally oneself on the side of God or mammon. There is no halting between two opinions: if we accept (as we must) one or [264] the other so must we fight for that side tooth and nail. The Holy Ghost, the Divine Spark, conscience, call it what you will that inspires men on to courageous, unselfish, heroic acts and thoughts, dies unless it is nurtured and carefully looked after. That is the lesson I impress on my boys in all the lessons where I get a chance of talking. On Sunday and Monday mornings I comment on all the books I have read during the week, drawing some lesson of life for their guidance. He only is the true teacher who is not afraid to teach, to explain the difficulties of life, his own shortcomings and attempts to find the light. One must be honest to deal fairly with boys.

I spend my time now in bicycling down to school after breakfast, teaching all the morning, writing articles all the afternoon with an occasional variant by walking down to the town with Elspeth, teaching from 4.15 to 6, and then coming home and writing until 10 and so to bed. In this way the days slip past at incredible speed. We seem to be in another world from the war: our only reminders are gigantic catastrophes, big successes, old boys returning scarred and maimed; telephonic communications plastered in the local bookseller's window, wounded soldiers, Belgian refugees, and occasional lectures. Common Room conversation has changed. The talk now during "break" is nearly always on the news of the day and very gloomy are the predictions made, especially by our older men, who are very hard hit by the horror of it and age perceptibly between one term and another. The debating societies flourish as they never did before, boys seem to be working harder, games are relegated to a secondary place in the estimation of the [265] school and we seem to have settled down with grim determination to see it through.

I have lately been lecturing to the Girls' School and in London on Rupert Brooke. He is a poet exactly after my own heart. He is clever, witty, honest, and tries to find a meaning in life. He strains after Beauty but is not afraid of Ugliness: he is in love with the material, the tangible joys of life, but is not afraid of probing into the unseen world and guessing at what lies behind the darkness.

I have had the great good fortune to have two books published this autumn, one a school textbook, the other a series of sketches of English country life reprinted from the magazines. The sense of authorship gives me tremendous pleasure and the letters I get of adverse and commendatory criticism do me good. I would rather write a real book that mattered, something to inspire and cheer people up and show them a path through the labyrinth of life than anything else in the world. Pray God I may live long enough to do that.

The days of quarrels and struggles for supremacy between Elspeth and myself are over. She is extraordinarily patient with me and I do my level best not to give her cause for offence. When either of us shows signs of a relapse, the other immediately climbs down and gives in at once. I am as happy as it is possible for man to be. Some half-dozen boys come up to my house regularly and talk "bookish shop" and show up literary compositions of wonderful insight and value. I am making more and more friends in the school.

Coningsby is perhaps my closest friend: he is the Tony of Marlton: he chafes at the routine and rules and finds an avenue of escape in literature: he is also a born poet. He has a true sense of [266] beauty and is learning to discipline himself by imitating the metres of all the older poets. I am trying to teach him the necessity of discipline, reticence and restraint in writing as in life, but I find it very hard owing to my own inability to conform in one or the other.

I take him with me to the University Extension Lectures on the modern poets and to the frequent concerts given in the town by Plunket Greene, Gervase Elwes, the London String Quartette, the Westminster Glee Singers and other celebrities that come down here.

One thing which has brought out the latent talent and interesting side of a number of boys has been a performance of *Twelfth Night*, which one of the House-masters got up in aid of charity. Boys love acting and to meet them day after day at rehearsals brought us all into much closer contact than we were before.

Boys think far more deeply than they used to. They grow much more quickly to maturity than they were wont. In one way one misses the careless irresponsibility: it kept one eternally young to be always with youth, but now, partly owing to the fact that all the senior boys work in the holidays in munition factories or on farms, the whole school is much more "grown up" in spite of the fact that the average age is much lower.

January 17, 1916

Elspeth and I spent Christmas in Bath and I tried to write without much success, so we decided

to go to Bournemouth, where we stayed for three weeks and enjoyed every minute of it. By a strange chance we met at least half a dozen people who were with us in Scotland in the summer. [267]

We walked about the cliffs trying to get strong and went to many entertainments and read a great many novels. We joined in at nights with the hotel people in their amusements, which did us both good and went a long way to remove the depression of the times.

I still go up to London every week to see my specialist. I am gradually getting quieter, though there are moments when my restlessness drives me to do crazy things. There are hardly any old Radcastrians of my time left. Two masters are back maimed for life, one armless, and the other without a right leg. The other young ones are all killed. Stapleton has given up his living and is working on a farm: Montague and Jimmy Haye keep on coming and going from and to France. Both have been wounded once, but they seem to bear charmed lives. They always spent some part of their leave with us at Marlton. They live for getting somewhere where it is really quiet and there is no reminder of the war.

April 3, 1916

It is strange to walk through the streets of Marlton and hear working-men talking of Salonika, Gallipoli, Mesopotamia, and India in the most casual way as if they were all villages within easy walking distances. The postmen, porters, and farm labourers are beginning to come back, having been invalided out of the services. All of them are full of wonderful exploits and make us poor stay-at-homes feel out of it and useless. The term has passed quietly. I have been told by the [268] Head Master that my writings do not altogether please my colleagues, that I do not temper my enthusiasm with sufficient discretion or think long enough before I commit myself to a judgment. I have been too much obsessed with my theory that the intellectual and æsthetic faculties should be cultivated before the others to see the dangerous side of my tenets. I hate upsetting the masters here because some of them have been very long-suffering with my madness. I am certainly extremely unpopular because, like Feste, "I am comptible, even to the least sinister usage." Under my mask I am abnormally sensitive. I hate making enemies. I want to be every man's friend. I almost deceive myself into thinking that I am, then in an unguarded moment I flaunt an opinion which disgusts the conventional; in my horror of ignorance and dullness I make sweeping generalizations about people who live in the country and I somewhat naturally have the whole hive about my ears. Who am I, forsooth, to talk of ignorance and dullness? Why should I set myself up as a pinnacle of light? I don't: it's just because I am striving so hard to escape from the slough that I seek to drag out others with me, a foolish, quixotic act.

Elspeth and I have been amusing ourselves looking at all the vacant houses in the town to find somewhere larger: it is rather a good game going over other people's houses and comparing them with one's own.

We had a fortnight of deep snow and spent the time in tobogganing, which took me right back to boyhood's days. For that fortnight I was quite easy in my mind and irresponsible again, forgetful of the myriad worries that beset me. We find it very hard to keep going. I get agonies of [269] apprehension just before each post comes in, wondering what manuscripts are going to be returned, hoping against hope that at last something will be accepted. If only I could get a series commissioned, I should be happy. It's a fiendish business thinking out subjects to amuse people, only to be turned down by one editor after another. I spend a small fortune in stamps alone. All the same I ought not to grumble: I make on an average about £100 a year by writing. When editors do pay, they pay handsomely, quite out of proportion to the trouble of writing the one article that finds acceptance. What stupefies me is the enormous drawer full of writings all sent back too often to submit again, or else topical and hence dead. I find that I can't write on the war. I want to be definitely literary or definitely educational. My colleagues dislike my doing the latter, and there is very little market for the former.

XVIII

May 4, 1916

We spent the Easter holidays near a munitions works in Essex and had our first taste of Zeppelins. I was acting in some amateur theatricals to amuse the workers in the factories, and while we were driving home afterwards immediately above us sailed gracefully along the grey cigar-shaped beautiful engine of destruction. The noise of the bursting shells and the bombs she dropped was terrific: but none of the people who live here seemed to worry at all. I was frightened considerably, but there was nothing to be done except go to bed, so we did. I don't care about seeing any more Zeppelins: it would take a considerable time for me to take them all as part of the day's work. I went over the factories and saw the whole business, from danger buildings to the most elementary innocuous part of the concern. It is a colossal undertaking and one that gives a man some slight inkling of the gigantic conflict in which we are engaged. The workers seemed all very cheery and were of all types, from parsons to bricklayers, domestic servants to duchesses.

We were staying with some extremely pleasant people. The daughter of the house, Sybil Grant, is to live with us for a term because she is unhappy at school. Her mother likes my system of education: the household is one of the best I have ever stayed in. They are all interested in [271] modern movements, in poetry, science, ethics, everything pertaining to the intellect, and at the same time they are athletic. Like the people in "Mr. Britling" they play strenuous and humorous games of hockey every Sunday afternoon, recruiting from local Belgian refugees, service men at home on leave, nurses, and all the local girls for their sides. I have rarely enjoyed a holiday more. Yet even here the bad side of my character came out at times. I grew restless and morose some days and dashed off to London for no purpose except that I wanted to keep moving. The suburbs of London on the north-east side depress me frightfully. Coming back from Liverpool Street through Hackney Downs and Enfield is like going through the Inferno.

June 25, 1916

It is rather jolly having Sybil Grant in the house: she gives me a special human interest. It is the first time I have come into contact with an absolutely "slack" person. She disliked school because she could not get on with her work. I don't wonder. She is incapable of tackling any subject unless she loves it. She reads a great deal of poetry and likes writing it. But her art is quite formless. Like the boy Coningsby she always writes of sea-gulls and desolate cliffs. All her topics are as morbid as youthful topics always are: she delights in death-bed scenes and lonely suicides, deserted lovers, and murderers. In her way she is something of a mystic. She rather thinks that she is gifted with "second sight," which spoils her a good deal, because it leads her to imagine [272] herself as a sort of divine prophetess. She makes many friends among the boys, which is good both for them and for herself.

I spend most of my time in being exceedingly rude to her and putting her down to work out mathematical problems, which she loathes. In spite of this, however, we understand one another pretty well and get on admirably. We have to-day had a great lunch at the Castle Hotel, two Sixth Form boys and two young but thoroughly intellectual masters. For two hours we sat and discussed educational ideals. Maltby is all for the many being sacrificed to the few: brains alone matter: he would have all games "bloods" disregarded entirely unless they were in the Sixth, but all members of the top forms privileged in every possible sort of way in order to act as an incentive to others to emulate them; intellectual and not athletic prowess is his creed, and of course I agree to a large extent. Our object is to show boys that nothing matters in comparison with the growth of the brain, that hard work leads to competence, honour, and a full understanding of life, and that nothing but hard work will bring out the best and most laudable faculties in man. In order to achieve this we should have to destroy the whole existing system, for the love of beef and muscle is at present ingrained in boys from their earliest years and hero-worship is apparently as rampant as ever it was. In my own small way I always try to instil into my boys the necessity to open and use all the brain-cells instead of just ten or twenty per cent, of them, but my influence alone doesn't count for much. We try to teach the lesson that games are only a recreation and not the serious business of life. I believe the attitude which boys adopt [273] towards the Corps is the right one. They work hard enough at the book work, they try to become as efficient as possible on parade, but they revel in field-days. We have had two splendid ones this term. One day last week we marched down to Welham Heights and fought a great fight across the heather against heavy odds. It is a wonderful place. It was a very clear day and in the intervals of fighting we got a chance of taking in the beauties that lay before us, the winding valleys, the furze-clad downs, the distant white cliffs and the green of the open sea. Few of those who took part in this manœuvre will quickly forget the impression which this superb view of Sussex made on their minds. Such a day fills us all with renewed energies for our work: we fill our lungs with fresh air and our minds with fresh and invigorating thoughts: we go back to work revivified and full of determination. Incidentally we seem to get to know each other better. On

the way home in the train we discuss all sorts of subjects nearest to our hearts, which we do not normally give voice to.

We have very much more chastened Speech Days in war time than we used to have. There is no cricket match, no prize-giving, no luncheon, only the Priory service is retained and to that is added the ever-lengthening list of Old Boys who have given their lives for England.

July 12, 1916

A red-letter day in the history of the family of Traherne. Elspeth gave birth to a daughter this afternoon at half-past one. For months past I have been trying to look after her in view of this great event, for the last weeks I have myself been in a state of frenzy lest anything should go [274] wrong and I should lose her. To-day has been a ghastly ordeal. I had to spend most of it in school, which was a good thing, because it kept my mind from brooding. From nine to one I taught, speaking all the time, trying my hardest to concentrate on quadratic equations and Army English. I went up at lunch-time and was told to disappear till four o'clock. I went for miles on my bicycle seeing nothing, my mind a blank, except for one ever-recurring sentence: "O God! grant that it may be all right." I couldn't face the thought of her going under. Elspeth is the whole world to me. She has gradually weaned me from my love of schoolmastering and now I think of nothing at all but her. I went back at four and was told that everything was all right and that I was the father of a daughter. I thought of nothing but Elspeth's health and I was taken up to see her: she looked dreadfully frail and ill. I forgot the baby: I didn't even want to see her until I had seen Elspeth—then I was shown the wee morsel of humanity in its cot. Its cry sounded to me quite uncanny. It seemed so hard to realize that another life had entered the world since I was last in the house. Every one at the school has been up to congratulate me: hundreds of telegrams had to be dispatched, flowers and presents of all sorts began to arrive. I begin to feel really important, but the fact that I am a father will take a long time to realize. I had no idea how strung up I had been all the term before: the presence of a nurse in the house for the last week had worried me and kept me in a state of continual torture. The courage of a girl having to face such an ordeal in [275] cold blood is positively wonderful. I only hope that she will quickly recover.

August 1, 1916

It has been a fortnight of great trial. Elspeth was left very weak and ill and is by no means well yet. She has had a very hard time. The infant is as good as gold and amazingly healthy. She cries very seldom. I had always imagined that children cried through the entire night, but this kid never cries at all: she is one big smile by day and contentedly sleepy at night. She is beautifully proportioned and has large blue eyes and regular features. I had always thought men rather fools who raved about their children's looks: all babies used to look alike to me. Now I know that there never was such a baby as mine: I look anxiously into "prams" along the road and compare the babies whom I see there with mine. I have managed to hide my affection for her from all the people who ask me silly questions. I'm not going to be classed with all the other fathers there ever were as a blind worshipper of my own child. Her hands and feet give me undiluted pleasure. It is amazing to watch her moving them about: her suppleness ought to be a sign of healthy activity in the future. Her head is small and splendidly proportioned. I hope she does not grow up a fool. She gives Elspeth a wonderful, never-ending interest in life: she thinks of nothing else. It is the best thing that could possibly have happened to her: we ought to have had a child at the very beginning. I am more proud of her than I dare acknowledge to any one except myself. I should like to write a book just jotting down her daily growth, her recognition of her mother, of [276] the nurse, of me, of strangers, of things in a room. At present she loves looking at her hands and she keeps her thumb in her mouth most of the day and night. She has an extraordinary amount of individuality: unluckily, she is terribly frightened of any sudden noise. This must be inherited. I hope to Heaven that she does not inherit her father's dementia as well. At present she has got, I am told, exactly the expression of my eyes, the far-away, detached look varied by a piercing, questioning, quizzical gaze that so disconcerts strangers. Elspeth's mother is extraordinarily attached to her and would give her life for her: it is a joy to see the delight which the infant takes in her grandmother and vice versa.

We have christened her Prunella after my mother. I had the luck to get Tony down to the christening to be her godfather. Elspeth is going to spend the first part of the holidays in Bath while I take Tony for a walking tour in Devon and Cornwall during his convalescence. He has been wounded in both arms. He, like everybody else, thinks her perfect. I only hope that she will grow up loving us and finding us worthy of her love. We must try to make life easier for her than it has been for us.

September 20, 1916

Tony and I had a wonderful holiday together. Now that Elspeth has Prunella and her mother she is happy and I, for some strange reason, feel that I am leaving some part of myself behind with her in the person of the kid, so I did not feel the separation so acutely as I should otherwise have done.

I always return from a holiday in the West Country a different man. On this occasion as the result [277] Tony wrote some wonderfully descriptive verses and three short stories, and I was inspired to begin my first novel. I am not satisfied with it, because as usual I have hurried through it far too

quickly, my characterization is not sound, my protagonists have simply run away with me. I start off by meaning to say one thing and then end up by saying something quite different. I cannot visualize scenes accurately: I give a hazy, vague impression like a man who never keeps his eye on the object. I have often, for instance, tried since I have been at Marlton to describe the school, the Priory, or the town, but I have never succeeded in pleasing myself with the result. The town to me is just a cluster of beautiful old houses set in a picturesque valley flanked with wooded hills; the Priory which stands in the midst defies description. I know that when I get inside I gaze at the thin perpendicular pillars, the ornate ceiling, the many coloured stained-glass windows, the slender beauty of the whole, but I cannot get the impression it makes upon me into words: the school is simply an Oxford College with lime-trees in the quadrangle and latticed windows to its studies and no more. I can't paint what it looks like on a clear moonlight night, or when the lights shine through the rain on to the puddles in the main courts.... So it is with Devon and Cornwall: their very names ring in my ears like some magic phrase, but I can't explain the fascination these counties have for me.

It is all rather a tragedy for me, for a man who cannot see or describe accurately can scarcely expect to become a writer, and I am almost as keen to bring out a great book as I am to be a great schoolmaster. The tragedy lies even deeper, for I fail even in my calling. I want to be able [278] to plant my finger on abuses and rid the world of them, and I find I am simply in my hurry destroying the wheat with the tares and bringing the whole edifice of education about my ears with no definite constructive theory about the rebuilding. I love boys but I don't attract many but the outcasts. During the time that I have been at Marlton I have only got to know at the outside a dozen intimately, and I don't know that my influence on these has been wholly good. I rouse in them a spirit of criticism and get them to refuse to believe anything until they have proved it for themselves. I have made enemies of practically all the staff, all of whom are better fellows than I am and do more good with less effort. I seem to be the Martha of my profession, cumbered about with too much serving, always thinking that I am the only one who is really working because I kick up such a fuss about it.

I seem to have been like this in everything that I have undertaken. When I was married, I considered that I was the only man who had ever had to learn by experience the laws that govern marriage, when Prunella was born I imagined myself to be the only father in the world. I suppose I do feel joys and miseries more acutely than most people. The smallest kindness shown me makes me almost worship the doer of it; the least hint of inimical criticism and I am up in arms in a moment and consider myself the most badly treated man on the face of the earth. It is awful to have to face oneself and write oneself down as self-centred, narrow, anarchical, selfish, and all the rest of it. At any rate those friends I have, have clung to me through thick and thin, and [279] Elspeth has been a brick to stick to me as she has. I made her come up to town to see Tony before he went back to France and to buy some new clothes. I am so proud of her these days that I want to dress her smartly, give her none but the best things to wear, entertain her to all the amusements that are going. She loves London; the shops and restaurants and theatres all provide her with a never-failing source of interest. Besides which it is necessary to have a fling in the big world before we retire to our backwater at Marlton: it is all very well for me, but there is nothing for her to do there but tend Prunella.

December 19, 1916

This Christmas term has passed all too quickly. Elspeth has been wrapped up in Prunella and watches her growth with ever-increasing delight. I see the infant in the early morning and talk to her while I am shaving: she is now cutting teeth and doing her level best to talk. Her remarks at present consist of "Gug-gug-Da-da," and incomprehensible noises pitched high and low in the scale: she laughs like a grown-up person: she only cries when the piano is being played or the gramophone put on. She lies and kicks in her cot, her pram or arm-chair by the hour: she is quite contented crooning and laughing to herself. She wriggles her hands and toes about incessantly and is as bad as any animal about her bottle: her eyes dilate with fury if it is delayed, and with pleasure when it appears. Her interest in everything that goes on is positively comic: she is afraid of nothing except sudden noises and allows herself to be handled by any stranger. All the [280] masters' wives love her: she must be really a beauty because every one is agreed about it. I think her eyes are lovely and her contentment is a thing to marvel at. The patience required for lying for months trying to learn to talk, with teeth slowly coming, hair slowly growing, strength gradually being built up, must be immense. Her intuition is perhaps the most noticeable thing about her: she knows when she is being "ragged," she knows somehow exactly what it is that people are trying to convey to her, and she answers any one's smile with a beautiful grin which is entirely her own. She is, however, a complete deterrent to work. I always want to be with her, to have her on my lap and pet her, but I curb my desires strictly. After all, I've got my writing to attend to, Sybil to teach, the boys' work to correct and games to referee. My novel appeared in the autumn and to my intense surprise went into a second edition almost at once: the critics were unanimous and loud in their praise, which astonished me, for it seemed to me to lack any kind of pretensions to style, clarity, cohesion, or even sense. None the less the writing of books is not a paying game. An article brings in quick returns, costs very little energy, and is not at all wearing to the nervous system. After finishing my first book I was a wreck.

Spurred on by the success of this I have already written another in imitation of the younger novelists of the day, in which I have portrayed a horrible character obsessed by sex: I don't quite know why: the writing of it affected me greatly and I am as limp as a rag now it is done, and want to burn it, but my publisher is delighted with it and wants to bring it out in the spring. For the [281]

sake of the money I suppose I must let it go. Fortune seems to be smiling on me. Another publisher has already made me sign contracts for two novels and a volume of my collected poems, so I have my work cut out in the near future to cope with the demand. Added to this, the best-known literary agent in the country has now approached me and asked me to let him place all my work. All the agents I have tried hitherto have failed me hopelessly, but it is an honour to have Harrod for an agent, I am told, so I have signed his agreement too. The only fly in the ointment is that there is a great scarcity of paper and trouble in the printing trade; still, people are reading books more than ever. I shall never forget the day when I first saw a book of mine in the window of a London book-shop. Fame (of a sort) I felt had at last reached me. Three years ago I should never have dreamt such a thing possible, and my little notoriety has already brought me great friends.

When the Christmas term is over we are to spend some days with quite a number of leading literary lights, to whose conversation I am looking forward. Common Room were incensed at my book because they thought that they detected pictures of themselves. I can't for the life of me think where, for the characters were all weaved entirely out of my own brain. Apparently some of the opinions I put into the mouths of my worst characters have been taken literally as my own, which is pernicious nonsense. I should have thought after all this time that most people here would know what ideals I stand for. As a matter of fact no one has lately taken much trouble to cultivate the acquaintance either of Elspeth or myself. They look on me as eccentric, they have [282]
not worried to sympathize with me over my troubles and I am afraid that they think that Elspeth does not want to know them because she goes out so seldom. We live very much to ourselves. It is hard to see how we could do otherwise when one realizes how we spend each day. I have to go on writing most of the time to earn our daily bread: we haven't a penny private means. We are not very economical, though we try hard to be so, and prices are steadily rising.

I have had one bit of luck, however. I have been appointed Examiner for the Oxford and Cambridge Locals in Mathematics and English, and though the work entails a good deal of drudgery, it also makes an appreciable difference to our income. Incidentally I very much like going through English essay and literature questions. I like to compare all the different methods of teaching English that obtain throughout the country.

The term has passed without incident: Sybil has learnt a good deal of history and written some excellent short stories. Boys come up to borrow books and to discuss problems that worry them. I have had no occasion to punish any boy for some time. Old Boys come back frequently and keep us reminded that after all there is a war on, which we are apt to forget when we have a petty feud of our own raging. I have refereed a good deal of "footer," and struggled hard to keep my platoon up to the mark. The only complaint I have about life is that the days are too short and I want to do far more than I can.

[283]

January 19, 1917

We spent a splendid holiday in London going from house to house of new friends and seeing for the first time how the artistic and literary section of London live. They are very different from the Marlton people: their codes are much less stringent, they are far more tolerant, they seem to get much more out of life. They are intensely interested in art, painting, sculpture, music, the drama, and all æsthetic delights. Elspeth was taken up at once by them: she has the sort of uncommon beauty that passes more or less without comment in Marlton but in London is looked upon with admiration. She seems much healthier and more vivacious in town: the life agrees with her. I spent some days with her at Bath and some quietly in St. John's Wood, writing for dear life at one of my new novels for Manson. The worst of novel-writing is that it gives one no time at all for articles and the money one derives from it does not come in for so long a time after. I am told that the book writer achieves a kudos which the mere short-story and article writer never gets. I doubt it, but it may be so. Anyway I doubt whether I shall write many books, the wastage of nervous tissue is too great. While I am at work on a subject I want to go on and on at lightning speed until I have finished, and when I have finished I am perilously near lunacy.

February 10, 1917

A frightful blow has befallen us. I have been turned out of Marlton for writing my second novel. I am to leave at the end of the term. So after eight years I am thrown out of my profession: a [284]
quaint finish for the overkeen enthusiast. I quite see that I was a fool to write it. It was all owing to my unreasonable haste. I spoke out too plainly: I didn't condemn my villain enough or show the hatred I bear to vice. It is useless to explain now: all the pent-up fury of those who imagine themselves injured by me has broken out and I am overwhelmed. I was supposed to be taking part in a play that the school and town were getting up in aid of the hospital and I was requested to resign my part because no one would act in it if I persisted in going on. I have been lectured by heaps of my junior colleagues here as if I had committed a most heinous crime. I don't quite know what to make of it all. That the book is a bad one I can scarcely doubt, for the critics have been as unanimous in their condemnation of it as they were unanimous in praising my first. I must be much madder than I thought I was, because I still fail to see why my influence, which was generally allowed to be on the side of the angels, should suddenly become malign and foul because I create foul characters in a book.

I could wish that some of my enemies could have seen my further work, for I have now two more novels written, which can scarcely appear for a year at least. It is all horrible. I can't bear to

contemplate cutting myself off from the society of boys. Before I married they meant everything in the world to me and now they come after Elspeth and Prunella.

I have passed through troublous years of late which have tainted my brain: I might have become sane again in time, but now all is darkness and I have nothing further to look forward to. Each hour of class brings me nearer to my last one and it is all I can do to keep from crying aloud. At [285] least I will spend my remaining days in trying to keep the beacon bright in my boys' eyes. I have always regarded the schoolmaster's as the most responsible position in the kingdom: these boys sitting under me to-day will help to control the Empire to-morrow. Am I leading them to see that corruption, vice, intolerance and bigotry are deadly sins and that disinterestedness, virtue, tolerance and active sympathy are the weapons they must learn to use in their fight to build the New Jerusalem in England? I have to rouse them from their lethargy, to make them wild crusaders, caring for nothing but the future prosperity of their country. I have so little time left to do it and so much to do. The days pass with frightful rapidity. Elspeth has been up to London searching for a flat for us to live in, and after an arduous and protracted journeying she has eventually discovered a small but comfortable ground-floor apartment in Maida Vale.

So now nothing remains but to finish the term out, pack up and go. I have been searching for work but there does not seem anything vacant just at present. It is no light thing at my age suddenly to throw up the profession one has adopted and to begin again. Education was my one great passion in life. I can never hope to be a great writer. The future is black: I dare not contemplate it. There are still, however, thank God, some weeks to go.

[286]

April 3, 1917

My last term as a Public School master is over. How I managed to get through the last few hours in school without breaking down I don't know. Luckily no one knows the agony I feel. Several, the majority of people, think that I am leaving of my own free will in order to be at liberty to write: the irony of that is laughable. I would give my whole soul to continue to my life's end as a teacher of youth: I have loved my work with a passion I could never transfer to anything else. I have made endless mistakes. I have gone too fast: I have treated growing boys as if they were grown up: I have not always given my colleagues their due in my intolerance of lukewarmness. I have always worshipped energy, and energy has been my ruin. I have never been able to curb my tongue or my enthusiasm nor to stifle my opinion. The grass has grown over the grave of my ambitions at Radchester and I am by now forgotten as a breath of wind that once passed over, so will it be at Marlton in a term or so. All my ardour gone for nothing, my strenuous ideals broken, my office another man will take and Marlton will be at peace again.

Regrets I know to be vain, tears wasteful. The decree has gone forth against me and I must abide by it.

But after all, "There is a world elsewhere!" Marlton is somewhat of a backwater, the waters here run very sluggishly. I want more scope; once I am in the great world again I shall quickly recover my sense of perspective and come to regard this place in its true light. My four years' experience here has been most valuable, but the secret of success in life is to keep moving. A rolling stone [287] may gather no moss, but it does "see life." At any rate I am saved from sinking into a groove. To-morrow to fresh woods and pastures new.

The meaning of life, as Tchekov says, is to be found only in one thing—fighting. To get one's heel on the vile head of the serpent and to crush it.... If one has made a mistake and lost faith in one idea, one may find another.

I have still got what I would not barter for anything in heaven or earth, and that is the love of Elspeth.

So long as she remains mine I can defy the world, I am happy. Pray God she will never desert me and turn me out as Marlton has, for without her I have no sun, no moon, no reason for being. She possesses me heart and soul. I only wish she could ever realize a millionth part of what she means to me.

APPENDIX

I have thought it good, for the sake of those who have somehow missed Patrick Traherne's published work, which he produced under a variety of pseudonyms and initials (G. K., J. B., A. C. B., and K. R., being his favourites), to append a fragment here of a book which he never finished.

It was to be called "The Future of the Boy," but I have been unable to find more than the Prologue and Epilogue: he wrote to me on several occasions asking advice on technical points, and I had gathered from these letters that he was well under way with the book (which was obviously to be his "magnum opus") when all writing had to cease. I fear that he must have destroyed the manuscript in a moment of depression, probably on the day when he received his dismissal from Marlton. I guess, however, that he could not bring himself to burn his Prologue and Epilogue even though he became too inert to try to publish them. I am the more pleased, therefore, to be allowed the privilege of giving publicity for the first time to two of the most remarkable papers on education I have ever read. That they are immature and in many respects false is at once obvious; they only touch, too, on the intellectual side of school life, the importance of which he always overemphasized; but they are stimulating, controversial, and interesting.

I shall be amply repaid if the result of my labours is to send such readers back to his earlier work, where they may discover for themselves some of the myriad problems that vex the practical educationalist, and at the same time learn more of his theories for reforming the abuses which block up the path to progress.

PROLOGUE

Why do not English boys care for learning?

LORD BRYCE (January 3, 1914).

MODERN SHELL: TO-DAY

THE boy's first intimation that a new day of miserable waste has begun is received by the clanging in his ears of a discordant bell by a man servant, whose sole claim to attention in these pages is that he also acts as the senior boys' bookmaker's agent, and supplier of cigarettes, tobacco, matches and pipes at a rate highly profitable to himself. The compulsory bath over (no boy would wash unless he was compelled, that is an idea that you who live on adages and saws which are one tissue of lies will find it hard to believe, but it is true), after the compulsory bath, I say, he hurries into his clothes, dashes downstairs and just gets to the chapel as the doors close behind him. The service need not be given in detail: it is merely a roll-call with a little music thrown in; the boys are ardently urged to join in the responses or psalms, sometimes with threats, but except on Sundays no part whatever is taken by the congregation in the service. They mark with satisfaction that their form master has noted their presence and then proceed with their disturbed slumbers, unless the youth on their right or left has some racy story or spicy bit of news to impart, or there is some friend across the gangway of the aisle at whom they wish to gaze, not being permitted by law to speak owing to disparity of age. The fascination of the loved face grows and the service becomes interesting until the Head Master's eye, ever roving, [294] searching for evil, lights on these two: they blush, hide their faces under a pretence of praying, and march out; the service is over. A scamper ensues towards the classrooms for the most hated and slackest school of the day: that on an empty stomach before breakfast.

The scene is an ill-lighted, cobweb-ridden, white-wash-walled, low-ceilinged room, fitted with old oak desks, on which are carved many thousands of initials and into which several obscene remarks are deeply inked; long low benches without backs incite the boys to lounge forward with bent shoulders; there is no relief on any of the walls to hide the hideous plaster except a map of Palestine dated 1871.

The blackboard is rough and cracked, and whatever writing is inscribed on it is indiscernible when the lights are on.

The door has just been unlocked, a grey-haired portly man in an M.A. gown lets the flood of sombrely-clad louts of seventeen and eighteen rush past the Eton-collared, more brilliant youngsters of fourteen, so that they may secure the place nearest to the pipes, or sit in remote corners with their backs against the wall, covered by the form in front from any possible detection.

The master makes his way to his desk, sits down and raps out suddenly:

"Stop talking there; how many times have I told you to stop talking as soon as you come into the room? Harrison minor, are you *still* conversing? Thank you, thank you for your momentary attention. If you will be so good as to bring me the last three hundred lines of the Fourth Æneid on Thursday, second school, we shall be, I think, at one again. Shut your books. Write out the [295] Rep." Silence then follows, except for the scraping of pens, the dropping of books and mathematical instruments, and the whispered monotone of one boy who is copying it straight from the book on to the paper. Several others after a time, at a loss how to continue, peer gently over their neighbours' shoulders and, enlightened, proceed.

One of the bigger boys, more muscular but even less intellectual than the rest, produces a paper-covered novel of Mr. Nat Gould from his pocket and proceeds to read with some fervour when he has copied his repetition: two others are engaged in an acrimonious conversation, "You ——young swine, I'll damned well lick you after for that. Blast you, take your arm away, I can't see a word you've written."

"I say, your crowd were a lot of stumors yesterday; so you thought you were the House for the 'pot.' My God! Talk about swank!"... And so on, until the master who has hurriedly been correcting some analysis, which the form wished to have back (this is an English lesson, by the way) suddenly raises his head, apparently having heard and seen nothing, and says, "Anybody finished yet? Ah! you have, Dixon. Now hurry up, the rest of you; I've a lot to do to-day," and then breathlessly he turns to his corrections again, until he has done, then calling the nearest boy to him tells him to give out the corrected papers. "By the way, we'll correct that Rep. you've just done. I'll read it out to you. Four marks a line and one off for every word wrong—"

"*Anon the great San Philip she bethought* ..."

He wheezes the noble poem out in lines like so many rashers of bacon, gives the form a moment's [296] respite in which to add (which they do very generously to themselves) the number of marks. He then proceeds to give a long disquisition on adjectival adjuncts and subordinate clauses. "Surely, Morgan, your knowledge of the Latin tongue should have shown you that——"

A school messenger interrupts.

"The Head Master to see Haxton at once, sir." Subdued murmurs and a casual whistle emanate as a fair-haired, good-looking boy goes off, blushing. In an undertone one of the biggest fellows at the back says to his neighbour, "There'll be Hell to pay, my son, if that little fool starts confessing

his and our past, he's gone for confirmagger-pi-jaw, he won't stick much of that Devil's talk; he'll let on at once, and—Hell! Yes, sir? No, sir, I wasn't talking. Oh, sorry sir, I thought you meant now, sir, I was just asking how many marks Jaques had got, sir."

While the monotonous teaching of analysis goes on, several of the boys at the back might be noticed by any one not quite blind to be writing notes which are hurriedly passed along the form surreptitiously, others again are feverishly learning Greek irregular verbs for their next hour, when they go to a man who canes for every failure to answer a question; more still might be seen writing lines under cover or pretence of taking notes, for the master has now finished his analysis and is carefully reading out notes from a "Verity" edition of *Twelfth Night*, which play the form are supposed to be enjoying, notes which each boy has carefully to take down and learn, notes in which he learns for the thousandth time that moe = more, nief = hand, and some interesting but [297] watered-down details about the lives of Penthesilea, Ariadne, and other classical favourites. In the intervals of taking down whatever portion of this rubbish that various members of the form think fit, the idiot of the form (there is always one) is being quietly tortured in many ways, gentlemen behind kick him violently forward, the quiet youth on his left has been silently pinching his ears and pulling his hair, with a calculating brutality that exists scarcely anywhere except in the Public Schools and the South Sea Islands.

An air of supreme boredom and lassitude is evident on every face in the room; the very atmosphere and clothing seem to be pervaded with it and invite it.

Suddenly Haxton, now quite pale and obviously shaking, returns: he writes a note quickly. The recipient begs for permission to be excused for a little; he must go to the sanatorium. After carefully burning a lot of incriminating documents in his study he makes his way to the sick-room and feeling really quite unwell is able to induce the nurse (in the absence of the doctor) to admit him.

Meanwhile the class pursues unruffled the even tenor of its way. A bell rings, it is 8.15; early school is over and the pangs of hunger prevail over all other feelings. Breakfast is supervised by unfortunate junior masters, who are supposed to use their eyes to count the 300 boys and to see that they do not cut their loaves on the cloth. Soon afterwards Second School begins, a classical hour; for this there has been half an hour's special preparation after breakfast—a grammar grind —the man to whom they go now being renowned for his strong arm and often stretched-out hand.

The classroom is much the same (they all are) as the one to which I introduced you before [298] breakfast. The master, younger, square-jawed, not intellectual but grim, rather sour: the face is more remarkable for an absence of any virtue than for any special presence of vice. He gives the boys three minutes in which to make sure of their work: then they are all marched out into the middle of the room, asked questions rapidly on the Greek irregular verbs; a boy goes down a place; another supplants him; the whole system is apparently to keep the body moving so that the brain may perhaps capture some motion and become alert; rather does it seem to any rational, unprejudiced bystander a method to involve wasting a maximum amount of time for a minimum amount of actual good. These boys are most certainly no more alert than they were in early school: they do not crib here, or write notes to each other or read Mr. Nat Gould, they are far too frightened for that; they are terrorized like a rabbit in front of a gigantic snake, fascinated, almost loving, certainly admiring the strength of a man who has such power. He is not inhuman either, this master, he has a stock of jokes, each of which is carefully stowed into a particular compartment of his brain, brought out in a particular order and calling for the same amount of quiet laughter every time.

He is very popular among the boys and in existing conditions perhaps deserves to be. When you are being slave-driven, you at least like your driver to be simple, honest and modelled on a plan you can understand: he has to beat you, he is paid for it; if he can afford to throw you a joke, however old and threadbare, yet like a bone thrown to a pariah dog in the street, you relish it all [299] the more, for you know it is more than your due.

This man achieves very excellent results in all examinations: he is known as the best teacher of grammar in the school. He is the "thorough" man who will make his way and become a leading Head Master in the end. He has no sympathy, no intellectual insight, he has been bred on the same plan that he is now inculcating and thinks it the finest system ever devised for the education of boys: in fact the only system. He knows that several ignorant authors, journalists and politicians occasionally decry the results of his teaching, but he is aloof, superior to all these "common cries of curs"; more aristocratic even than Coriolanus, his downfall in the next decade will be as it was with the aristocrats in the French Revolution, really terrible to witness.

It is with a sigh of relief that the Modern Shell hear the bell that rings the close of this hour. Immediately following on this, the form splits up into sets for mathematics, a subject in which they never make much progress for several reasons.

In the first place the set master is a queer man with ideas; he took a low degree in mathematics himself and never knew much about them, but it worries him to find that no boy ever seems to know when to divide, multiply, add or subtract by pure reason.

All the set seem accustomed to see a type on the top of an exercise or on the blackboard and to copy this type feverishly a hundred times, thereby to gain many marks and think they have accomplished something. For the fetish of marks is what makes Modern Shell do any work at all. They have a perfect passion for gaining them and this master panders to it by giving them [300] thousands a day: consequently the set works at lightning speed, but never achieves anything, for none of its members seems capable of reason. Even though geometry is substituted for Euclid

they still contrive to learn propositions as a species of very difficult prose repetition: they still believe in and treat algebra and arithmetic as two vastly different subjects which can have no connexion with each other, the mere presence of an "*x*" in an arithmetic paper frightens them out of their senses. They dabble in stocks and shares, compound proportion, approximation in decimals, quadratic equations, logarithms and progressions, and yet immediately they get out of form and into the tuck-shop they are unable even to count the change they get out of half a crown without a mistake, they cannot measure the simplest article accurately and have no more power of logical reasoning than they had as babies. Consequently when they come to examination time they fail. Given a type they will work out a hundred examples with scarcely a mistake. Asked for the answer of an original sum and they are nonplussed at once and multiply when they should divide, add when they should subtract and vice versa, entirely without method, principle or reason. Yet these fellows work hard enough, not from fear of the master in this case, he scarcely ever punishes, but in order to gain some of the thousand marks over which he is so generous.

The last school of the morning is spent to-day in history. Geography is also supposed to be taught but is gently allowed to slide except for the drawing of a few maps. The history master is a dear good man, a thorough "slacker," well beloved of the whole school and staff. [301]

The preparation is as usual "to read a chapter of Oman." Some notes are read out from the master's "undergraduate" notebook very slowly and listlessly and as slowly and listlessly taken down by most of the form unless they have anything else to do such as drawing "Old Clothes-horse" (the nickname of the master), a proceeding sometimes fraught with danger for "Old Clothes-horse" has an uncomfortable habit of suddenly remembering his vocation, of saying to himself, "I must be stern." On such days he will demand of such a one the drawing, and bawl out at the top of his voice: "You disgraceful scoundrel, you son of a plough-boy—you—you—disgusting hound—you will write out the whole of the last hundred pages of the history"—a punishment naturally enough afterwards remitted to one-half, one-third, one-tenth, but even then fairly severe. His method of imparting history runs too much on the lines of doing the minimum of correcting work (which though he does not know it, is a step in the right direction, but done in his case from the wrong motive) and of placing implicit confidence in the reading of the work of one man.

Dates and comparisons of characters, knowledge of laws and deft little paragraphs about things like Habeas Corpus, Barebones, and so on, with neat compartments at the end of each period containing the great names in literature of that period (as if it ever did a boy any good just to know the name of Dryden, Pope, Burke, and Johnson without having read a word of their works), these combine to form his stock in trade. His boys turn out fairly well in stereotyped [302] examinations, but they leave school knowing no real history at all, worse still with a positive distaste for a subject with which they have really not even a nodding acquaintance.

Morning school is now over and an hour is to pass before the midday dinner. You think perhaps these boys now are going to have complete rest, a chance of being by themselves, time for reading—not a bit of it. There will now be compulsory net practice or shooting on the range, recruit drill, a racquets or a fives tie to play off, an imposition, probably several, in arrears to be polished off, book-keeping, shorthand, typewriting or music classes to attend, or, worst of all, private tuition. Dinner comes as a temporary relief in which discussion runs rife on the latest scandal, scores at cricket, the news in the *Sportsman*, the newest catch-word, how So-and-So was ragged, the latest form of torture devised for the most prominent idiot, and all the customs, fashions and frivolities of their little world. After dinner a stampede is made to change from the appalling funereal garments of the morning which are given an all too brief respite, into the flannels necessary for the House match or nets of the afternoon. Some luckless ones who have perchance dropped a pen in the deadly stillness of a strict master's form or refused to do any preparation for over a week in a slack one's set, are hounded round the quadrangle for half an hour in an ignominious punishment drill, which drill sometimes contains over a hundred boys, which speaks well for the discipline of the school.

Suppose it is a House-match day, and nearly every day in the summer term sees one of these in progress, those in the Houses concerned, not actually playing, will all be compelled to watch: [303] nay, in fact so imbued with the evils of over-athleticism are they that they would all rather miss anything than one ball bowled, one run scored; their eyes are riveted on to the cricket pitch; the whole staff is there equally occupied; the life of the little nation is at stake; nothing at all matters except the winning or losing of this single match. It is the one big world event about which quarrels will be raised, criticism will be rife for days to come, in dormitory, in the Common Room, in the privacy of the masters' own sitting-rooms or in the studies of the boys. Other Houses not actually playing will be practising assiduously at nets until another bell rings to show that time is up; a rush is made to change back into the monastic garb preparatory to getting up more work (or pretending to) for afternoon school. The first period of the afternoon to-day is given up to what is called science for our forms; that is to say, a few nerveless experiments which never come off are tried by a man whom it is hard to differentiate from the bottle-washer of the laboratory, a man with an accent (not that that matters intrinsically), but a man with the vulgar attributes that accompany accent when promoted to spheres unused to such things; living in an air of snobbishness and hypocrisy, this "bounder" bounds more than ever he need and causes howls of derision as, in his nervousness he mispronounces words of which even Modern Shell have somehow acquired the correct tonation. A smattering of physics, chemistry, electricity, magnetism, heat and light, is now doled out in such minute quantities that no one ever derives any real idea of what is going on, what they all mean; just enough to temporize, to fill the [304] parents' minds with the idea that their sons are being liberally educated in every department of

life.

From this waste of time the boys proceed to their last hour of real school "teaching" for the day—French or German, taught again in sets by a man who took high honours in history and then spent six months in a German *pension*. His foreign accent is deplorable but he is a conscientious man and makes a valiant effort at least to keep a day ahead of his set (not a very hard task) in knowledge. He, however, has ideas on the subject of teaching modern languages and does not believe too much in the mental gymnastic of grammar, but buys periodicals in French and German, and also modern novels for his set to read: being an entirely honest man his ignorance is being continually shown up, particularly as he is unfortunate enough to have in his set one boy who spends all his holidays in Belgium or Switzerland, but his popularity carries him through, and his very lack of knowledge makes the boys work to see if they can beat him on his own ground: this, it is easy to see, is the Modern Shell's intellectual treat of the day. In examinations they do nothing, but most of them get some sort of a smattering of, and begin really to take an interest in, languages whose periodicals sometimes even publish football and cricket results and occasionally have pictures which remind them of certain London penny weeklies that they avidly read in dormitory.

A bell signalizes tea and the end of school. A hurried repast, for physical training follows hard on the top of it, a compulsory form of exercise that most boys frankly detest. After twenty minutes of this the preparation bell goes, and excitement is rife to see whether it is "The Cadger" or [305] "Hopeless George" on duty. If the former, work and the right work has to be attempted: if the latter, novels appear as if by magic and work is given, for an ecstatic hour, the go-by. Another bell (the bell is so constantly in use that a special man has to be kept who does nothing else but attend to this department) summons the school to evening chapel, a repetition of the morning roll-call, except that a lusty roar in a well-known hymn will testify to the Almighty that there are 300 boys who are well pleased that "another ruddy day is o'er." As a matter of fact it is not "o'er," for a further hour of preparation in the privacy, however, of their studies this time awaits them. Pathetic indeed is the sight of the tired-out wan faces of the Modern Shell boy, whose head can be seen nodding over the page of a dull grammar, trying in vain to keep awake and remember the consequences that will accompany his ignorance on the morrow if he forgets what a quasipassive or oxymoron is.

At last, at ten o'clock the bell rings once more and with a burst of energy he flings his book aside and rushes upstairs only, in all probability, to find that it is his duty to keep "nixes-watch," that is, to stand near the end of the dormitory until nearly midnight to listen for the step of the House-master, who might otherwise pry into practices that would fill his complacent mind with disquiet. About midnight, worn out, yet not a whit improved in body, soul, or mind the luckless wight will be allowed to get into bed, to sleep, perchance to dream of a new regime, of a better order of things, where life will not be one dull, eternal round of uselessness, useless knowledge, useless punishments, useless games, useless virtues, useless vices, useless restraint, useless discipline, [306] but free, progressive, happy, where no such things take place as have taken place in this absolutely truthful picture I have drawn of a day in the life of a boy in the Modern Shell.

EPILOGUE

Education is the release of man from self. You have to widen the horizons of your children, encourage and intensify their curiosity and their creative impulses, and cultivate and enlarge their sympathies. Under your guidance and the suggestions you will bring to bear on them, they have to shed the old Adam of instinctive suspicions, hostilities, and passions, and to find themselves again in the great being of the Universe.—"The World Set Free."

MODERN SHELL: TO-MORROW

In the first place it must be borne in mind that one great difference in the attitude of this form to life in general in the future will be caused by the fact that it will be a mixed class of boys and girls, and will be recruited from all sections of the people, so that there will be every chance of there being practically no divergence in age, physique or intelligence between the top and bottom, to use the existing phraseology, between A and Z, as they will then be placed.

The boys and girls will be permitted to get up as early in the morning as they like, but not later than 7.30 in the summer months. Breakfast will follow at once in different Houses, boys and girls sitting at the same table as much mixed as possible, friend with friend. Chapel for those who wish to go will follow, a service short, devotional, sincere, containing a few personal prayers, a rousing well-known hymn and a lesson of particular applicability not necessarily taken from the Bible alone, but from any of the great masterpieces of the world. Masters and mistresses who feel inspired to give a personal address of not more than five minutes on any problem that may have been occupying their minds may interpolate their sermonette in the place of this lesson. This, the only service of the day, will not take longer than twelve minutes. If the weather is fine most of the [310] work of the day will be done out of doors, some of it, such as the manual labour classes, the digging, road-mending, gardening, will necessarily be so, but in favourable circumstances the intellectual side of the curriculum will be as far as possible carried out in the open air. If, however, this is to-day impossible, the Latin hour will be conducted in a classroom, where inspiring pictures, replicas of old masters and pieces of sculpture will make an already bright, airy, cheerful, healthy classroom still more so.

The master, mistress, girls and boys will all be dressed in those clothes considered most sane and healthy from the eugenics point of view; flannels and gymnastic dress will probably be most popular. The Latin taught will certainly not be of the grammar-grind sort: conversation will go on between girl and boy, others in the same class will be constructing a Roman amphitheatre, or working out, on a sort of *Daily Mail* war board, a campaign of Pompey or Cæsar.

The life of a Roman citizen will be enacted and written about by the classes: all the time the boys and girls will be doing the work; the teacher only flitting about from group to group as his or her presence is required, encouraging here, pointing out errors there, all the time acting as any real teacher ought to act, that is, not foisting his or her opinion on to the form but developing their own ideas on the lines most desirable for them.

The hour instead of passing as hours in school are passing nowadays in periods of long, slowly dragging minutes that make time seem interminable to those who take out their watches in the vain hope that Father Time will take a hint and have mercy, will go so quickly in the interest and [311] joy of real work and progress that the form will only regret having to leave the subject, were it not that the next is just as full of interest, just as helpful.

It is mathematics in this second period carried out in a sort of engineering schoolroom where practical implements are at hand for testing all their theoretical results.

One section of the class to-day splits up into a lot of stockbrokers and the rest into investors. Each investor has his own bag of gold or counters, his own cheque-book, the daily newspapers are brought into school and consulted, and each youthful financier tries his fortune with the investment that most suits his fancy at the time. Day by day he develops his original idea, buying here, selling there, so that his knowledge of stocks and shares by the end of a term is unassailable; the foundation is laid of a character that will not play ducks and drakes with his own real money in later life if he finds that his splashes now hold him up to ridicule from his fellows at school. In geometry the forms will invent their own problems and work out together as a body any that defeat the individual intelligence. And again the teacher's aid will only be invoked as a last resource; the children will teach themselves. Buying and selling, commission and percentage work will all be done as it were in real life by the taking of a case that one of the form invents or by going the round of the shops in the town or village and auditing their accounts, looking into their businesses and receiving real instruction from those whose life's work it is to conduct a trade or business, so that here again the factor of reality so absolutely essential to the intelligent learner shall be brought into play.

By the end of a term each pupil or at any rate each form will have produced its own algebra, [312] arithmetic and geometry, and these will be stored in the archives of the form if they are thought to be of sufficient value. At any rate they will be the only textbooks they will see in these subjects.

The period following on this will be an outdoor one if possible, either one of those mentioned above or a natural history study in the nearest wood, or drawing of the surrounding country, or dancing on the platform permanently kept for that purpose in a corner of the playing-fields to a gramophone, or singing in the open air, or any exercise or physical training decided on as beneficial to the human frame! From this the form will come in refreshed in body ready for more intellectual stimulus.

Then follows the hour of history and geography; the history on a plan rudely devised in the early part of the twentieth century by Mr. C. R. L. Fletcher in his "Sir Roger of Tubney" and Mr. Ford

Madox Hueffer in "Ladies Whose Bright Eyes," where all our ancestors, their customs and reasons for their strange actions, stand out clearly in the broadest outlines as real living forces. The Elizabethan adventurer, the peasant, the villein, the Norman baron, the various Kings, the Cavalier gallant, the Augustan Age courtier, the Georgian politician, the powder-puff-age lady satirized by Addison, all will live as actually as our own relatives and friends.

Scenes from history again will be acted in costume, debates will take place in class as to why Shakespeare does not see fit to mention Magna Charta, what effects followed, what causes, why enthusiasm was held in such disdain in the eighteenth century, and altogether, hand in hand with [313]
the literature of its age, the history of each period in the nation's life will be carefully worked out, and its bearing on present-day character and custom soundly sifted and thrashed out.

I said geography would be taken at the same time: geography as studied in the new schools will be an excellent mixture of political economy, history (really it is hard to separate the two), science and mathematics, all in their relation to actual facts.

Calculations of temperatures by isotherms, geological strata, even numerical facts about other races, all of these things will strike home and be found of paramount interest to boys and girls, but most especially will this be the case when, as will always happen, the form decide to work out and write up in detail the accurate history and geography of their school and the district immediately surrounding it. This will give so much, such ample opportunity for the rousing of and keeping keenly alive their faculties, that of all subjects, history and geography will be the hardest from which to tear the ardent enthusiasts. The nature of the soil, the various winds that blow, the effect of these winds on the weather, that is, what weather to expect after different winds, the rainfall, the contour of the outlying lands, the agricultural state, the condition of the crops—the list might be magnified into a book by itself, all these things will help the child to a better and truer understanding of the making of history and geography than any textbook, and will prove of lasting worth to him as a useful citizen of the future. After this period there will follow an entirely free time, when the school will be at liberty to follow its own devices until lunch-time: there will be voluntary lectures on all sorts of subjects that appeal to the stamp-collector's or the natural [314]
historian's mind by men and women who have made their mark. Great explorers and big-game hunters will themselves come and give an account of their exciting experiences. Perpetual pianolas, perpetual cinematograph films will be in use during these hours in which the school is at liberty. In the afternoon, free time will be given for games of every description to be played, no particular partiality being extended to one over another. Running, swimming, tennis, basket-ball, racquets, fives, golf, cricket, shooting, all will be equally accessible and equally encouraged.

Tea-parties daily from 4 to 4.30 will be given by masters and mistresses, and by pupils to other pupils or to their elders, a time of social intercourse and polite society: the neighbouring populace will then be entertained by the youthful hosts, and courtesy and gallantry have a special chance of being adequately cultivated. After tea school will again be continued in the science hour, where each pupil will proceed to experiment under the care of an expert with the produce which he or she has been concerned with in the morning. It may be to-day that the Modern Shell are trying to discover a use for the millions of rotten bananas that are shipped into this country week by week in order to economize in produce or to discover a new fertilizer: it may be that they wish to discover how to eliminate from the water of the neighbourhood certain properties that have been found to have an evil effect on the health of the populace; once you see the bugbear, the nightmare of examination, is removed the child can occupy himself doing something really useful, something which will in all probability be, in the end, of great service to the State and at [315]
the same time train the youthful mind in the way it both wishes and ought to go.

The French period which finishes up the afternoon school will be of great use, for reminiscences will be indulged in of the last visit to a French school, village or town on the part of those members of the form who went last year, in the annual foreign tour; they will by these reminiscences, told of course in French, whet the minds of the neophytes, so that they will look forward more than ever to the holidays which will see them as a body transported to a land where so many fascinating customs may be witnessed. Conversation both in and out of school will be carried on in both German and French as much as possible, helped of course by the fact that there will be so many natives of these countries always in the school.

The evening will sometimes be spent in quiet reading, sometimes in lectures, sometimes in cinematograph shows (as a matter of fact the cinema will be very much in evidence throughout each and every day), sometimes in concerts, pianola and real, very often in theatricals; but on this particular evening of which I am speaking the Modern Shell have decided to do the English that the present-day form did in morning school before breakfast. This English period is, if anything, looked forward to more than any other period in the day.

The reason is that, in its many-sidedness, it is even perhaps more entrancing than geography. First there is the writing and editing of the form magazine, which is an intricate periodical with a daily news-sheet merging into a more serious-minded weekly, which itself turns into a monthly [316]
magazine of extraordinary bulk. News, verses, stories, long and short, novels, drawings, essays, debates, dialogues, all are heaped into this production.

Plays are written, produced and acted by each form, supervised only at the rarest intervals by the form master, parts for which are thought out and debated about spiritedly in form as part of the subject. Extracts from the great masters are discovered, learnt and declaimed by the discoverer to the rest of his confederates; everywhere and in every branch of this subject there is the fresh air and fierce pleasure of the explorer and pioneer, carving out for himself a gigantic task to be performed, disciplining himself for that task by repeated smaller undertakings. In such an

atmosphere of feverish excitement and interest, is it to be wondered at that the result is so magnificent? For our youthful poetry is real poetry written in the white heat of passion, the literature of our youth is real literature written while the fire of life is still burning strongly and furiously inside. Each boy and girl finds in him or her self something that he or she must say, something sacred that must be expressed after attempts which may often be futile, volatile, fluid; at length there emanates a solid, lasting record in sentences that will ring through the world of a generation that had risen out of the slough of sullen acquiescence in an age that cared not for learning or things of the soul, to the highest heights that had ever been dreamt of by the human race, and our schools of the future had shown how nearly godlike indeed are these puny mortals when they put their shoulders to the wheel and help God to grind His mill.

So we leave our dream-children and this sketch of Utopia in the fervid hope that something of truth exists in this vision that I have seen, and the last and most fervent prayer of my life is that I may live long enough to take part in a revolution that shall make such a vision possible, and see it in the initial stages starting on its godlike course; then shall I, like Simeon, be content to depart in peace, for I shall have, in little at any rate, O God, have seen Thy salvation. [317]

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