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THE FIGURE OF THE TEACHER  
IN ENGLISH LITERATURE 1740-1918

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## INTRODUCTION

One indication of the valuation placed on teachers is that they have been comparatively little investigated as an occupational group. A century ago one author remarked that, amid all the concern for education, the teacher was "practically ignored" as a subject for study.<sup>1</sup> In similar terms in 1965, Michael Young wrote that the most important subject for the educational research he was describing was largely unexplored: the teachers themselves. "They are education, and yet very little is known about them. Almost any additional knowledge will be welcome."<sup>2</sup> Young went on to list some of the topics of "special interest", among which were the process of becoming a teacher, the kinds of people who took it up, their motivation, the effects of teaching on their attitudes and behaviour, how they spend their time, and how "they adopt one or other of the many roles open to them."<sup>3</sup> The lack of information on these subjects - whether due to the inadequacy of sources, lack of curiosity, or the tradition of not looking too closely at those engaged in necessary but unsavoury occupations - inevitably results in greater weight being given to assumptions, prejudices and stereotypes.

What sort of assumptions are these? Many men and women are conscious of a personal debt to those particular people who taught them, but few will extend this to say with H. C. Dent that teachers are "the most important people in England".<sup>4</sup> As a group they are conventionally seen as being of a kind, indelibly marked with the same brand, bearing from the age of twenty-five "the stigmata of the profession ... the official mannerism", "all copies

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1 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book About Ushers, 1885, p. i.

2 Michael Young, Innovation and Research in Education, 1965, p. 48. Among others, George Baron previously remarked on the fact that "writers on educational history have tended to pass over the study of teaching as an occupation". Preface to Ph.D. thesis, "The Secondary Schoolmaster, 1894-1914", London University, 1952.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 51-2.

4 H. C. Dent, To Be a Teacher, 1947, p. 7.

of the same type".<sup>1</sup> Many books have perpetuated this notion that teachers are instantly recognisable, that they represent "one traditional type", with a look "which all schoolmasters sooner or later acquire", and that virtually every member of a staff is "an obvious schoolmaster".<sup>2</sup> One stock convention is that people fortunate enough to be in other occupations will instinctively attempt to avoid the teacher out of school. It is assumed that in the wider world he will demonstrate "that proneness to teach which is constantly exhibited by old schoolmasters", that he will be "invariably snuffy, unpleasant and forbidding", "rather a tiresome person" with a "lust for imparting information" and "that self-conscious, slightly histrionic air, which is one of the penalties of pedagogy", one of the "dullest and most arid of people", caught up in "the ultimate pedantry that awaits all but a very few of the profession".<sup>3</sup> The greatest compliment one young teacher receives is when a girl tells him, "You don't look like a schoolmaster", and the deepest fear of Anne, a primary school teacher, is "of becoming a typical schoolmistress, such as one might see in caricatures".<sup>4</sup> The same assumption of a stereotype underlies a stage-direction in Pinero's comedy The Schoolmistress. It is apparently sufficient to say of Miss Dyott on her first entry that she is dignified and rigid, "her dress and manner being those of the typical schoolmistress".<sup>5</sup> Schoolmistresses are conventionally seen as a "a complication of severities; a union of pepper, mustard

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1 Sir John Adams, The Teacher's Many Parts, 1930, p. 32; Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, 1917, p. 97.

2 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book About Ushers, 1885, p. 2; Frank Smedley, Frank Fairleigh, (1850) /1906/, p. 12; Kenneth Potter, The Shadow of the Chapel, 1926, p. 233.

3 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 1, p. 294; Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, p. 3; A. C. Benson, Schoolmaster, (1902) 1908, pp. 5-6; Arnold Bennett, The Old Wives' Tale, (1908) 1935, p. 53; Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, p. 26; R. F. Delderfield, To Serve Them All My Days, 1972, p. 236.

4 R. F. Delderfield, To Serve Them All My Days, 1972, p. 77; Iain Crichton-Smith, Goodbye, Mr. Dixon, 1974, p. 68.

5 A. W. Pinero, The Schoolmistress, 1894, pp. 18-9.



and vinegar", or "freaks, with hatchet faces and skimpy hair", and teachers in training themselves expect to end up as 'grumpy old schoolmarms'.<sup>1</sup>

When authors seek to establish an unfavourable impression, a favourite pejorative simile is that of the teacher. The objectionable Mr. Honeythunder rants "like a schoolmaster", a dangerous impulse seizes Jude "as a violent schoolmaster a schoolboy", an unattractive tone is said to be "like a school-mistress's rebuke".<sup>2</sup> When he leaves school, Mr. Polly is left thinking of God as

... a limitless Being having the nature of a schoolmaster and making infinite rules, known and unknown, rules that were always ruthlessly enforced, and with an infinite capacity for punishment, and, most horrible of all to think of, limitless powers of espial.

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The metaphor of God as teacher becomes progressively less attractive with each clause: rule-maker, punisher, spy.

Where have these conventional notions and associations come from? How is it, for example, that children instantly recognise cartoon figures of teachers in gown and mortar-board that resemble no actual teacher they will ever have encountered? What influence do these stereotypes have on public regard for teachers? To what extent are teachers themselves conditioned by conventional views of their role? Is it really true that there is, as the examples quoted suggest, a "typical" teacher, bearing a universal, unmistakable mark? Opinions are frequently offered on large questions of this kind, but they are based on little hard evidence. Before such topics can be sensibly discussed, it is surely necessary to establish more clearly what impressions of teachers seem to have been current at different times.

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1 A. M. Hall, Chronicles of a School Room, 1830, p. 5; Mary Cadogan and Patricia Craig, You're a Brick, Angela!, 1976, p. 129; Jane Gillespie, One of the Family, 1972, p. 82.

2 Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, (1871) 1972, p. 148; Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, p. 49; Martin Armstrong, Adrian Glynde, 1930, p. 71.

3 H. G. Wells, The History of Mr. Polly, (1910) 1946, p. 14.

As might be indicated by the examples cited, this study assumes that a major source of information, perhaps the best available to us, is literature. It is a source that still seems under-used in educational enquiry, despite the work of William Walsh, Peter Coveney and others in "making literature accessible to education".<sup>1</sup> By examining the ways in which teachers have been presented by a considerable number of authors, it should be possible to discover something of how they were regarded, the kinds of figure they cut, at different periods.

Since this study is arranged chronologically, and attempts to trace the development in literature of a particular professional figure, it is important to say that it does not claim to be a history of teachers, although it may be relevant to such a history. It is a record of shifting attitudes towards teachers. There is no major intention to establish how far the characters presented at different periods are or are not "true" to an "actual" state of affairs.<sup>2</sup> In this respect it differs from one of the few other works in this field, which argues that novels in which teachers play a part "mirror the every day life of an era", and that a novel-reader "can assemble a remarkably accurate conception of the educational movements of the period".<sup>3</sup> Such claims may be valid, but they depend on correlating two quite different orders of material, and this seems an unprofitable way of examining literature. The value of literary evidence is not primarily in the documentary accuracy of its presentation of facts, but in the revelation of attitudes through the tone, the assumptions shared between writer and reader, and the indicators within the conventions and the structure of the work. At a simple level, for example, it is possible to suggest that the general low esteem in which

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1 William Walsh, The Use of Imagination, 1959, p. 9.

2 See a fuller discussion of the problems of such an undertaking in Robert Protherough, "'True' and 'False' in School Fiction", B.J.E.S., vol. 27, No. 2, June 1979, pp. 140-53.

3 Geneva Mae Meers, "Victorian Schoolteachers in Fiction", Ph.D. thesis, Northwestern University, Illinois, 1953, pp. 29, 331.



teachers were held is reflected in the time which had to elapse before the hero or protagonist of a novel could be a teacher by occupation. It is true that Jane Eyre is a governess, and for a short while a village schoolmistress, and that Nicholas Nickleby passes a few days as an usher, but it is also clear that neither is really committed to this profession or realised essentially in that role by the author. Villette, 1853, is perhaps the first major novel to centre on a woman teacher from within that teacher's consciousness. Not until Bradley Headstone is there a real attempt to see a man teacher as a major figure in a novel, who is also a fully human being, with interests, ambitions and emotions that are not simply those of his occupation. It is significant to consider such questions as when marriage to a teacher can be seen as a happy ending, when fictional teachers are represented as actually thinking about teaching, or when school novels begin to centre on teachers rather than on pupils.

Some of these developments in the presentation of teachers, of course, will be related to wider changes in the style of writing novels, particularly in the revelation of character, but observations will not be less valid because of this. The fact that novelists generally are spending longer on the upbringing of their protagonists, or are exploring their consciousness more fully from within, or are more concerned with complexities of motivation, will influence the way in which teachers - like others - are presented. It will not, however, significantly affect the author's attitude towards his character, or the tone of that presentation, or the evaluation of the role.

Any published poem or novel has a two-sided relationship with the "real" world. On the one side, as has been suggested, it will represent that world to a greater or lesser extent, and it will also embody some of the social and literary conventions of the time in which it is written; its intelligibility will depend on the existence of a degree of shared experience between writer and reader. On the other side, once published it becomes a part of that

world, potentially an instrument of social change or reinforcement, aiding understanding, defining issues more precisely, influencing society's values. The emphasis of this study is as much on the second, the "influential" aspect, as on the "representational". A book is not like a historical event, happening once only; it exists again - and potentially differently - at every reading. In this sense, the presentation of teachers in literature does show "progress"; more and more models, or what Michael Young calls "roles", are made available as time goes on. A writer can have, theoretically at least, knowledge of all that has previously been written on the theme, and he reinterprets the enduring figures for his own time. The effect of these presentations may be as "real" as that of living men and women, and sometimes a good deal more influential.

It is not of major importance to argue, for example, whether the verse portraits of the mistresses of dame schools written between 1740 and 1830 were or were not accurate impressions of what must in actuality have been a wide variety of ladies. It is significant, however, that a dominant stereotype seems to have been established, which has now - and perhaps had then - an existence which is more "real" for readers than the forgotten personalities themselves, and which was imitated by later writers who had no first-hand experience of dame schools. This does not mean that it is unimportant whether or not the pictures of schools and teachers are faithful. There is significance in the very fact that in the nineteenth century authors began to find it necessary to insist on the truth of their representations of school, whereas previously this had not seemed a matter worth discussing. However, implausibility is usually to be detected in literary terms rather than by comparison with another set of written records. Zeraffa has described as "imaginative sociology" the practice of certain novelists: "They are able to grasp by empathy ... what the sociologist or historian deals with in terms of facts or concepts."<sup>1</sup>

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1 Michel Zeraffa, Fictions, The Novel and Social Reality, trans. C. and T. Burns, Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 41.



There are three major ways in which such literary presentation of teachers seems to have been particularly influential. First, and most simply, it has presented a template, a reference grid, by which we interpret our own actual and secondary experiences; ideas become clearer in relation to the representation. A shared image makes the discussion of teachers and educational issues easier and more precise. No sooner had Dickens presented his readers with characters like Squeers, Blimber and Creakle, than they became reference points for others, appearing in the letters and works of Thackeray, Arnold, Kingsley and others as a way of establishing and making concrete their arguments. Indeed, in his essay "The Incompatibles" Arnold defined the English middle class repeatedly in terms of Dickens's educational figures:

... by the middle class I understand those who are brought up in establishments which are more or less like Salem House, and by educators who are more or less like Mr. Creakle ... 1

Second, and in a more complex way, it has provided a direct influence on the principles and practice of education. It remains difficult, perhaps impossible, to say how important in a general climate of opinion Dotheboys Hall was in affecting the Yorkshire schools, but that it had an influence there seems no doubt. The most celebrated instance is the presentation of Arnold of Rugby in Tom Brown's Schooldays. Sir Joshua Fitch, in his book on the educational influence of the Arnolds, was only one of a number of scholars to say:

The truth is that the Arnoldian tradition which has become slowly evolved and has fixed itself in the minds of most English people, is based more upon Mr. Thomas Hughes' romance, than upon the actual life as set forth in Stanley's volumes. 2

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1 Matthew Arnold, Irish Essays and Others, 1882, p. 64.

2 Sir Joshua Fitch, Thomas and Matthew Arnold and their Influence on English Education, 1897, p. 104.

Third, and in a manner that is still harder to quantify, it has had a normative effect; life has, it seems, imitated fiction. Just as boys prepared themselves for boarding school by reading school stories - often with disastrous results - so teachers have less consciously drawn an impression of their role in part from their reading. The Doctor in the last century and Mr. Chips in this have been noteworthy models for conscious or subconscious imitation, but more particularly it has been the general tacit assumption reinforced by books that a public school master, say, has certain attitudes and norms of behaviour that has been dominant. Expectations are formed by the progressive emphasis on and elaboration of particular teacher models. So by the deliberate cultivation of appropriate traits, Mr. Juniper becomes a "half-fictitious", "legendary" figure, and the eccentric Mr. Roache-Quinn gives the impression that he has somehow "invented himself".<sup>1</sup>

Representations of any trade or profession presented in literature could be examined in this way - some already have been studied - but it should be pointed out that in some respects the teacher is distinct from others. First, whereas few readers will have much first-hand experience of certain characters (noblemen, sea captains, scientific researchers) or more than a perfunctory acquaintance with others (bank managers, lawyers), all are likely to have seen a good deal of teachers. The author can count on a much more general awareness of what teachers, and relationships with teachers, are like. Second, this awareness is likely to have stronger emotional associations than will be the case with other occupational groups. Teachers tend to be linked, for good or ill, with the significant stages of personal development; they bulk large in the mythology of childhood. Third, as is implied in the preceding points, the knowledge of teachers for most people is essentially a product of memory. Although adults may have other contact with teachers as

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<sup>1</sup> Edward Blishen, Uncommon Entrance, 1974, p. 89;  
William Trevor, Old School Ties, 1976, p. 105.



parents or friends, the dominant images tend to be recalled from the past. Insofar as this experience is shared by author and reader, it tends to emphasise the continuity, the unchangingness, of the teacher, which Anthony Powell, for example, catches memorably in his sequence The Music of Time.

The narrator's housemaster, Le Bas,

... seemed to represent, like a landscape or building, memories of a vanished time. He had become, if not history, at least part of one's own autobiography. 1

As far as authors are concerned, for much of the period under discussion they are drawing their raw material from a period perhaps half a century earlier than that in which the book is written. This is one of the reasons why so much school fiction is essentially conservative, and it also helps to explain why the coming of the teacher-author, for whom the time-lag between experience and writing does not exist in the same way, introduces different kinds of teacher-figure.

This survey is based on an examination of just over three hundred books, published between 1740 and 1918, which contain descriptions of or references to teachers and teaching. Most of these are novels, but poetry, plays, essays and memoirs are also represented. For each of three periods a sample of about a hundred books has been considered (rather more in the final period), in an attempt to discover what "models" of teachers and teacher behaviour seem most common at that time, and what kinds of assumption are most frequently made about the status, qualifications and conditions appropriate to the profession.

It is clearly necessary to define the way in which words like "teacher" and "literature" are used here, and to say something about the organisation of the study. Even today, the term "teacher" covers a huge range of men and women, of very different backgrounds and qualifications, doing varied work, with pupils of different ages in quite different kinds of establishment.

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1 Anthony Powell, The Acceptance World, 1955, p. 180.

The range was even wider in some of the periods considered here. Most writers who have dealt at all with teachers have understandably divided them into categories according to their place of occupation: public school masters, dame school teacher, keepers of private schools, and so on. This study is organised differently because it suggests that certain conventional ideas of teachers, the "types" referred to by the authors quoted earlier, exist across these boundaries. Figures like the harsh disciplinarian, the ridiculed butt, the young innovator, the deliberate eccentric, the mechanical crammer, can exist in many school situations - indeed, outside schools as well. In public opinion, teachers are often lumped together in just this way. The central and dominating concern is with the teacher of children in an English classroom. However, at certain periods, and in dealing with certain aspects of the profession, it is not possible to separate out governesses from school-mistresses, headmasters from classroom teachers, or teachers in English schools from those in other parts of Britain or occasionally further afield. The particular role of the headmaster as such is largely excluded, as the proposed subject of a separate study. The straightforward principle has been to include any references which seem to throw light on the way in which teachers, as individuals and as an occupational group, are regarded at any particular time.

A similar empirical principle has had to underlie judgments about the nature of literature and the selection of a "representative" sample of books. Drawing neat defining lines is impossible. "Literature" itself is a notoriously vague term, and in dealing with a topic such as this there is no simple way of separating "factual" autobiography, say, from "imaginative" fiction (excluding Lamb or Leigh Hunt on their schooldays). Nor is it possible to make firm limits between adult literature and children's books (Tom Brown's Schooldays? Stalky & Co.?). In any case, children's books can be an important source of conventional types, both because dominant



images for adults are often established by their childhood reading of fiction and because juvenile books rapidly become a popular medium for reinforcing society's expectations, and therefore for incorporating significant assumptions about teachers and teaching. Again, not only is it difficult to make a neat evaluative distinction between what one Schools Council team calls "quality" and "non-quality" literature, it is also inappropriate for such an investigation as this. In considering the establishing of stereotypes, popular "non-quality" works may be of particular importance. Their temporary success can often be attributed largely to the precision with which they catch the feelings of their time, its attitudes and convictions. Therefore, in making the selection, any work by a major author in a literary mode has been considered eligible, even though it may be thinly disguised pedagogy, autobiography or polemic, and books for children have been included when these have been markedly influential, together with some popular minor works that are particularly concerned with teachers.

A broad survey of this kind, which considers significant developments in the presentation of teachers, had inevitably to cover a considerable period of time, but its limits were arbitrary. The starting point of 1740 was selected because it seemed to mark the re-emergence of teacher figures in literature after a lengthy interval. There had been schoolmaster characters in the plays of Shakespeare and Marston, but few teachers as individuals appear in the writings of the early eighteenth century. Despite their concern for education, Addison, Steele and Budgell, for example, tend to subsume teachers in such generalised images as the sculptor working on a block of stone or the gardener training his plants. By contrast, in the 1740s, as well as works entitled "The Schoolmistress" and The Governess, there were Fielding's novels, with their teachers and tutors, and more specifically pedagogic works like Dalton's Epistles, Fordyce's Dialogues Concerning Education and Downman's Infancy, a poem. The year 1918 seemed a logical terminal point, not simply because it marked the end of the war.

The 1918 Education Act charged the local authorities with the organisation of education in their areas, and established a national leaving age of fourteen. The setting up of the Burnham Committee in the same year meant the coming of agreed teachers' salary scales, and the 1918 Superannuation Act was supported as promoting the unity of the profession. In 1917, a tangle of examinations had been replaced by an organised system of School Certificate and Higher School Certificate. Insofar as these developments signalled the coming of a more coherent, national system of education, they also mark the beginning of the modern age for teachers. Work on the subsequent period suggests that the sixty years from 1918 require to be treated in virtually as much detail as the previous one hundred and eighty years, because of the number of works written involving teachers and their increasing complexity. Such a study demands to be a separate work.<sup>1</sup>

For any coherent pattern to emerge, the years 1740 to 1918 had to be divided into periods. For the purposes of this study it seemed most helpful to begin with a period of nearly a century, during which there seemed little change in the way in which teachers were presented. This is followed by two shorter periods, marked by major developments. The actual dividing dates have a symbolic educational significance: 1833, the first parliamentary grant for education, and 1870, an important Education Act, and the first conference of the National Union of Elementary Teachers. These periods also have some coherence in literary terms. Nearly all the selected authors can be discussed within a single period. The novels of Dickens for example, that most influential portrayer of teachers, all fall within the years 1834 to 1870.

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1 The 1979 stock list of Novels and Plays with a Background of School, compiled by A. K. D. Campbell, contains only fifty-five works in the period to 1918, and well over two hundred since that date.



Books are normally placed in this chronological structure according to the date of their publication.<sup>1</sup> It has already been suggested that many writings about teachers draw retrospectively on earlier memories and some fiction is deliberately set in an earlier period, but it would not really be helpful to consider works in terms of the period they "represent", even if they could all be clearly allocated in this way. An author's attitudes will inevitably be those of the time in which he is writing. More crucially, however, in considering the impression of teachers created by literature at a given period, it is only when a work is published that it can exercise any influence. As far as possible, works have been drawn evenly from the different parts of each period, so that no particular decade is over-represented. This does not disguise the fact that within each period there are certain "peak" years when works referring to teachers and teaching are most frequent: 1814 to 1821, for example, the decade of the 1850s, and the final years examined, 1910 to 1918. Within each period, the chapters are arranged in pairs. The first one of each pair examines in some detail the representation of particular teachers by authors of that period, and illustrates those models which seem dominant at that time. The second attempts to estimate more impressionistically, from a wider variety of sources, general reactions during the same period to teaching seen as an occupation: its apparent status in public estimation, the qualifications thought necessary or desirable for teachers, and the salaries and conditions of employment which seem appropriate for them. The decision to carry out a survey of this kind, which would make available a wide range of references as the basis for further discussion, has obviously restricted the depth of commentary on particular works. Particularly in the second chapters of each pair the organisation of quotations to suggest similarities and differences in tone, attitude and emphasis is intended to establish points economically.

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1 For this reason, where references are given, the date of original publication is shown in brackets before the date of the edition used, if this was not the first edition.

Although there does not seem to have been a systematic study of this kind before, the importance of books in conditioning people's responses to teachers has, of course, frequently been alleged without being tested. Particularly from the 1860s onwards books contrast "popular" notions of the profession, formed largely by the reading of fiction, with a supposed reality. The suggestion is usually that books offer a "misrepresentation", distorting the "facts", the "real existence" of actual experience.<sup>1</sup> Teachers themselves have sometimes been quick to see authors as "combined in a sort of conspiracy to malign and caricature a noble profession".<sup>2</sup> These pages may provide some opportunity to decide whether the influence of literature has been as overwhelmingly prejudicial as one headmaster, for example, rhetorically suggests:

A pitiable figure does the Schoolmaster cut in literature ... What a procession of brutalest of bullies, fawningest of sycophants; what a rout of the most fatuous of pedants, the most ludicrous of harlequins, the most childish of charlatans steps across the board as the mind summons up a pageant of schoolmasters such as poet and novelist have limned them! What a character do memoir and biography portray in no less vivid colours! Keate and Busby, Squeers and Blimber, dominie Sampson (O prodigious one!) and magister Holiday, what a contemptible crew the world deems us!

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- 1 For example, Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, pp. v-vii; Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 86; A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book About Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, pp. 178, 183.
  - 2 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 124.
  - 3 J. H. B. Creech, Didascalus Patiens, 1915, pp. 7-8.



THE FIGURE OF THE TEACHER, 1740 - 1833

That some hundred selected works of the period should offer such sketchy and perfunctory references to those who teach is itself significant. Teachers appear relatively infrequently, compared with representatives of other major professions and occupations, their appearances are usually brief, and they perform only a restricted repertoire of rôles. No novel considered here, written for the general adult reader, has a teacher as hero or heroine, or even as a major character. Teachers do appear, of course, in books for children set in school, but in many of these they are only shadowy moralising figures or a device for linking stories.<sup>1</sup> In poetry, it is striking that Thomas Surr could write thirty-seven quarto pages entitled "Christ's Hospital" without describing teachers or teaching in the school.<sup>2</sup> It may be significant that when William Combe's comic narrative The Schoolmaster's Tour, issued in The Poetical Magazine, reappeared in volume form, it was under the changed title, The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque. This may reflect not only a realisation that Syntax is a clergyman whose teaching rôle is little mentioned in the poem, but also a suspicion that the very word "Schoolmaster" in the title might be prejudicial to sales. Although a teacher is the protagonist in one of Hood's short poems, "The Dream of Eugene Aram, the Murderer", 1831, his profession is simply a convenient way of establishing conflict between the lively innocence of the pupils and the gnawing guilt of the man, isolated as he sits "remote from all":

"Oh, Heaven, to think of their white souls,  
And mine so black and grim!  
I could not share in childish prayer,  
Nor join in Evening Hymn:  
Like a Devil of the Pit, I seem'd,  
'Mid holy Cherubim!"

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- 1 For example, Elizabeth Sandham, The School-Fellows, 1818, and Charles and Mary Lamb, Mrs. Leicester's School, 1809.  
2 Thomas Skinner Surr, Christ's Hospital, 1797.  
3 Thomas Hood, The Complete Poetical Works, 1906, p. 210.

The actual story of the murder, presented as a "dream", and the arrest of the guilty man, bear no significant relation to his occupation, which is lightly and conventionally sketched in the opening lines.

It is not hard to think of plausible explanations for the minor place which teachers occupy, especially in fiction. In most eighteenth century novels the central figure's schooldays and youth are rapidly passed over, and the influence of the teacher is therefore not of the significance that it was to become in developmental narrative, the Bildungsroman. The teacher's work did not naturally involve him in the affairs of adult life, so that he would have an inevitable causal rôle in the unfolding of a narrative, in the way that a clergyman, soldier or lawyer might. It could be imagined that authors lacked the first-hand experience of teaching which would have enabled them to portray masters and mistresses more fully and convincingly. In fact, an examination of the careers of almost all the eighty authors represented in this period indicates that as many of them had some experience of teaching as of other professions and occupations. Thirteen had taught as laymen, compared with sixteen who were clergymen, some of whom also did some teaching, twelve lawyers, six engaged in medicine and five in the services. However, the number of teachers is less significant than the duration and kind of experience that many of them had. Thomas Carlyle was extremely unhappy in a brief spell of teaching, Oliver Goldsmith was said to have been even more briefly and unhappily an usher, Thomas Holcroft made an ineffectual attempt to set up a country day-school, Samuel Johnson was miserable as an usher at Market Bosworth, and Robert Lloyd quitted his post of usher at Westminster as soon as possible. Such reluctant and dissatisfied teachers were unlikely to describe the rôle as important or satisfying. Those who remained in teaching tended to be not only the minor authors but also those who combined the work with other occupations. For men, the church rather than the school often provided the real career (Gibbons Bagnall, John Bidlake, Charles Churchill,



William Coke); for women, teaching was not infrequently a family side-line in which others were more involved (Sarah Maese, Hannah More, Mary Robinson, Jane Taylor). Very few of these authors, that is, could be described as committed practising teachers, and a number clearly disliked the work.

Whatever the reasons, the small and generally unattractive part played by teachers in literature of the period must have suggested, even if it did not reflect, a low estimate of the men and women engaged in that occupation. Most of the portraits are perfunctory, relying on similar stock details, and conveying an assumption that a teacher is instantly recognisable as such, a figure isolated by his rôle. The strong element of conventional caricature can be illustrated by two examples from late in the period, one by a major author and one by an unknown writer, one in prose and the other in verse, one looking backward and one purporting to be contemporary. In chapter 9 of Scott's Kenilworth, 1821, Tressilian encounters the garrulous village schoolmaster, Erasmus Holiday. Although the story is set in Elizabethan times, the description is archetypal. The "honest pedagogue", "dominie", "preceptor", who lards his conversation with classical tags, is characterised immediately by his appearance:

A long, lean, shambling, stooping figure was surmounted by a head thatched with lank black hair somewhat inclining to grey. His features had the cast of habitual authority, which I suppose Dionysius carried with him from the throne to the schoolmaster's pulpit, and bequeathed as a legacy to all of the same profession. A black buckram cassock was gathered at his middle with a belt, at which hung, instead of knife or weapon, a goodly leathern pen-and-ink case. His ferula was stuck on the other side, like Harlequin's wooden sword; and he carried in his hand the tattered volume which he had been busily perusing.

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The suggestion here is that the identifying marks are not simply his "props" - the cane and the book - but the whole set of impressions: awkward, ageing, poor, bookish, authoritarian. His look is an unchanging "legacy" from classical times, that immediately marks "all of the same profession".

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1 Walter Scott, Kenilworth, (1821) Edinburgh, 1870, p. 109.

The broadsheet verses "The Dominie"<sup>1</sup> are headed by a cut of the master entering his classroom, a tawse hanging from his pocket, to discover two pupils drawing a caricature of him on the wall. The verses, in ten four-line stanzas, with a three stanza moralising epilogue, contain the stock ingredients: the teacher is seen as poor, old and ill-clad, one who rules by cane and strap, that makes the children go through their set, learned tasks, and yet who is to be seen as fulfilling an essential public function that is underestimated. It begins:

#### THE DOMINIE

What ghostly object do I see!  
It surely is a Dominie;  
His tatter'd garb, and wrinkled cheeks,  
His abject poverty bespeaks.

He mimics a majestic mein, (sic)  
As he perambulates his cane;  
If his appearance did accord,  
One might imagine him a Lord.

He surely better days has seen,  
When Fortune's sunshine was serene;  
But, oh! how abject he appears,  
As to his School he onward steers!

Both of these examples, despite their differences, seem to assume the existence of a tradition of caricature that readers will immediately identify; they suggest that the unflattering details are indicators of the rôle. The following examination of the most common teacher figures should help to indicate more systematically what kind of impression of the men and women engaged in that occupation a reader might have gained in the years up to 1833.

In effect, virtually all the teachers of the period fall into one of three broad categories which have endured, with some variations, to the present day. One of these can conveniently be separated, not simply because it contains the idealised "good" teachers but also because these figures occur chiefly in a special category of books, marked off from adult literature by

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1 Anon., published by W. Smith, 3 Bristo Port, Edina 1830.

their intended audience and function. In the latter part of the eighteenth century and the early part of the nineteenth, words like "school" in a title frequently signalled a book for young readers written with a morally improving or evangelical function, usually by a woman, frequently by one who had taught or was teaching at the time. In 1772 Sarah Maese published the final volume of The School, and this was followed by such titles as School Occurrences /1782/, The Village School /1785/, The Boys' School /1800/, Mrs. Leicester's School, 1809, The Schoolmistress, 1811, Ellen, the Teacher /1814/, Correspondence Between a Mother and Her Daughter at School, 1817, The School-Fellows, 1818, The Rebellious School-Girl, 1821, and Chronicles of a School Room, 1830. The purpose in the minds of some of the authors was made clear by sub-titles: "A moral tale", "Traits of character in early life", "A moral tale for young ladies". The teachers who figure in these books tend, not surprisingly, to be the embodiment of good qualities, so much so that they rarely have any credible life. The conjunction of fictional form with advocacy for the author's educational views is graphically demonstrated in the first of the novels mentioned above.

In her Preface to The School, Being a series of letters between a young lady and her mother, Sarah Maese writes:

The personages mentioned in the following sheets are indeed imaginary, but the plan of education is not ideal, being nearly the same as I have followed with the young ladies under my care ...

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Indeed, the Preface is preceded by a prospectus and price list for her own school in Bath, board and washing five guineas a quarter, with a long list of extras (French at one guinea a quarter, music one and a half). As well as listing the subjects taught, Mrs. Maese proclaims that:

Attention will be given to the Dispositions of the young Ladies; in order, as far as lies in the Power of a School-Mistress, to correct their Faults and cultivate their Virtues. 2

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1 Sarah Maese, The School, vol. 1, 1766, Preface.  
2 loc. cit.

Teachers are likely to be favourably, if unconvincingly, portrayed in such a volume, and such teacher characters, presented as representative of some professional ideal, will be examined at the end of the chapter.

The remaining teachers - the bulk of those examined - divide as neatly by personality types as they do by background: clerical or lay, university graduates or unqualified, working privately as tutors and governesses or publicly in schools. Virtually all can be summed up as butts or bullies. They prompt reactions from other characters and from the reader which are essentially degrees of amusement, ranging from an indulgent smile to downright derision, or degrees of condemnation, ranging from disapproval of the fear and suffering they cause to an endorsement of resistance and revenge against them. In mid-century, Fielding's Tom Jones, 1749, conveniently provides representative examples of the different types: Partridge, the unqualified layman, the schoolmaster, the butt; Thwackum, the university man, the clergyman, the tutor, the bully.

Although Partridge, master of a Somersetshire village school, undergoes a whole series of misfortunes, he is essentially a figure of fun rather than of pathos. The absurd situations in which he is presented serve to make even his good qualities ridiculous: attacked and overcome by his wife, he is reported a bully and a brute; teaching his maidservant out of goodness of heart, he is believed guilty of seducing her; he amuses a theatre audience by the naivety of his response to Hamlet and is terrified by the most incompetent of highwaymen. The epithet Fielding repeatedly uses of him is poor: "this poor man", "the poor fellow", "the poor pedagogue", "poor Partridge" - indeed, he even refers to himself as "poor Partridge".<sup>1</sup> The constant repetition helps to drain away feelings of sympathy; the reader quickly begins to assume that Partridge is going to have the worst of any situation. The early ambivalence, as when his teaching of Jenny is ascribed

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1 Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, (1749) 1933, vol. 1, pp. 41, 42, 47, 48, 56, 58, 324, 337; vol. 2, p. 107.



to "good-nature, or folly - just as the reader pleases to call it",<sup>1</sup> or when his domestic troubles are balanced by the information that "he was one of the best-natured fellows in the world ... master of so much pleasantry and humour ... reputed the wit of the county",<sup>2</sup> gives way after his reappearance in the story to a more straightforward view of him as a comic foil.

Academically, it is the contrast between Partridge's pretensions and the reality of his knowledge that makes him a figure of fun. He takes great pride in his scholarship, gracing his conversation with a few scraps of Latin and lamenting that "too much learning hath been my ruin".<sup>3</sup> He gets much more indignant over a slur on his grammar than about one on his honesty, he "could not bear to have his learning attacked" and says with absurd pride, "as to the grammar, I think I may challenge any man living. I think, at least, I have that at my finger's end."<sup>4</sup> Not only does he use his knowledge inappropriately, though, as a kind of status symbol, but it is clearly superficial. He cannot understand Horace when Tom quotes him.<sup>5</sup> Fielding says of the schoolmaster that "learning was the least of his commendations", and after a few years of his tuition, Jenny Jones "was become a better scholar than her master".<sup>6</sup>

If Partridge is a representative butt, then the appropriately named Rev. Mr. Thwackum is an equally representative bully, whose chief exercise is beating the hero of the story. The first time this tutor "to whom Mr. Allworthy had committed the instruction of the two boys" appears, he punishes Tom's refusal to answer questions with "so severe a whipping, that it possibly fell little short of the torture with which confessions are in

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1    ibid., vol. 1, p. 13.  
2    ibid., vol. 1, p. 41.  
3    ibid., vol. 1, p. 314.  
4    ibid., vol. 2, pp. 147-8.  
5    ibid., vol. 2, p. 107.  
6    ibid., vol. 1, p. 41.

some countries extorted from criminals".<sup>1</sup> It is said of Thwackum at one point that "his meditations were full of birch", and the sections in which he appears are full of references to corporal punishment: "a good lashing", "a larger castigation", "chastising", "flogging", or "execution". Thwackum makes "a hearty recommendation of birch", is eager "to find a rod" to "flea his skin"; elsewhere the pedagogue "whipped on", "proceeded immediately to castigation". Tom is "mounted on the back of a footman", "well scourged".<sup>2</sup> Part of the interest is in the verbal variations with which the one simple act is described.

Thwackum is one of those eighteenth century characters who polarise matters into a simple pair of alternatives: either softness, spoiling and a ruined character or justice, flogging and the driving out of bad qualities. As Fielding comments at one point, "Thwackum was for doing justice and leaving mercy to heaven".<sup>3</sup> When Allworthy pardons Tom, Thwackum:

... exclaimed against this weak, and, as he said he would venture to call it, wicked lenity. To remit the punishment of such crimes was, he said, to encourage them ... The pedagogue was obliged to obey those orders; but not without great reluctance, and frequent mutterings that the boy would be certainly spoiled.

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A few pages later he is protesting that Tom is "almost spoiled already",<sup>5</sup> and when he writes to Allworthy at the end of the novel it is to admonish him for the many "unwarrantable weaknesses exemplified in your behaviour to this wretch". He goes on:

Had not my hand been withheld from due correction, I had scourged much of this diabolic spirit out of a boy, of whom, from his infancy, I discovered the devil had taken such entire possession.

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1    ibid., vol. 1, p. 74.  
2    ibid., vol. 1, pp. 81-2, 86-7, 90-1, 92, 106.  
3    ibid., vol. 1, p. 94.  
4    ibid., vol. 1, p. 81.  
5    ibid., vol. 1, p. 106.  
6    ibid., vol. 2, p. 365.

It is perhaps significant of the feeling of the times (possibly of Fielding's own experience) that Thwackum's taste for violence is not seen as a necessary disqualification for a teacher. It may be with a sense of irony that he is presented as talking of "the duty I have done" for Allworthy's family and "the care I have taken in the education of his two boys",<sup>1</sup> but there seems no irony in the tone of Allworthy's own final judgment that "he could never bring himself to part with a tutor to the boys" who was so well qualified, "an excellent scholar", "indefatigable in teaching", of "unimpeached honesty" and "a most devout attachment to religion".<sup>2</sup>

One weakness of the flogger's case, however, is presented in dramatic terms when Thwackum tries to assert what he calls the "indelible" authority of a master over his more fully grown pupil. Tom refuses to concede obedience "unless you had the same birchen argument to convince me", and when matters come to a struggle he proves too strong for the parson.<sup>3</sup> Thwackum is only one of a number of fictional pedagogues on whom physical retribution falls, with the author's implied judgment that justice is being done.

The remainder of this chapter discusses the cumulative effect of similar figures to establish conventions during the period so that Partridge and Thwackum come to be seen as representatives of types. In some cases it seems likely that literary models were more influential than any awareness of actual teachers. Certainly the common characteristics - whether or not drawn from life - come to outweigh heavily any individuality in the pen-portraits. The three categories to be considered are the teacher as figure of fun, the teacher as tyrant, and the model teacher.

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1    *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 176.

2    *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 366.

3    *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 186-9.

## THE TEACHER AS FIGURE OF FUN

Goldsmith, apparently speaking from some experience, wrote of ushers that they were "generally the laughing stock of the school". He also seemed to imply in his following words that the reasons for the ridicule were less causes than excuses; that the teaching rôle itself meant that pupils would inevitably find something absurd about the man. "Every trick is played upon the usher; the oddity of his manners, his dress, or his language, are a fund of eternal ridicule ..."<sup>1</sup> Certainly the opportunities for ridicule are not lacking in most authors' portrayal of fictional teachers. Smollett describes Peregrine Pickle's schoolmaster as ludicrous in appearance as well as in character and lack of qualifications, so that he swiftly "incurred the contempt and displeasure" of his nine-year-old pupil. Mr. Keypstick - the name indicating the conventional connection between punishment and pupil hostility - is "an old illiterate German quack", his chief characteristics "avarice, ignorance and vanity" and the highly-developed "art of cringing", and his appearance marked by "certain ridiculous peculiarities in his person, such as a hunch upon his back, and distorted limbs ..."<sup>2</sup> The figure is such a caricature, such a target for contempt and resentment, that virtually any cruelties and indignities heaped on him seem deserved; there are no human qualities which might seem worthy of sympathy.

Another ludicrously unqualified teacher is in charge of one of the schools to which Edward is sent. The founder of the school had a good reputation, but after his death his widow married "a man grossly ignorant, and in all respects unfit for the office of a school-master ... devoid of sense and knowledge". After flagrant injustice, he sees one of his pupils

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1 The Bee, 10 November 1759, in Goldsmith, Collected Works, Oxford, 1966, vol. 1, p. 458.

2 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, p. 57.



removed in a scene which reveals the teacher as ill-bred and muddled as well as unjust, and he is described by Mr. Wormwood as "a tyrannical blockhead".<sup>1</sup> In the Moral Tale "The Good Aunt", Mr. Supine is "from nature and fashion, indolent", happiest when "stretched, in elegant ease, upon a sofa". As a tutor he finds that instructing and correcting his pupil demand too much energy and only produce complaints. Instead he endears himself to the family by lavish praise, "obsequious" behaviour and a talent for gossip. His feeble behaviour and his affected love of the arts make him a ridiculous figure, and the reader is clearly intended to approve of the father, when he discovers Supine's incompetence:

" ... I've a right to be in a passion with that careless, indolent, dilettanti puppy, whom I've been paying all this while for taking such care of you. I wish I had hold of his German flute at this instant ... it's all Mr. Supine's fault - and mine, for not choosing a better tutor for you." 2

More broadly, William Forbes, one time schoolmaster at Peterculter, wrote a series of dialect verses about the ludicrous misfortunes of a dominie who squandered his money on drink and women, got a girl pregnant, and was discharged from his post.<sup>3</sup>

Schoolmistresses are not usually described with the same vigour (there is generally less stress on incompetence and more on faults of character), but the implications can be equally damning. When Maria Williams is sent to boarding school, she is placed in the care of Madame Du Pont, and the critical analysis includes an undertone of national antagonism. The author's portrayal of the governess is sardonic: she had "a high opinion of her own penetration", she was "by no means deficient in the characteristic garrulity of her nation"; she is "voluble" in flattery but critical behind people's

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1 John Moore, Edward, 1796, vol. 1, pp. 169-70, 180-1.

2 Maria Edgeworth, Tales and Novels, vol. 1, (1801) 1893, p. 212.

3 William Forbes, The Dominie Depos'd, (1761) Glasgow, 1780.

backs; and "respect for riches" is "a doctrine which she not only taught, but practised ..."<sup>1</sup> When Mrs. Williams, whom she suspects to be rich, arrives at the school, the teacher demonstrates her pupils' abilities in order to display her own.

The next morning was destined by Madame Du Pont for the exhibition of her pupils; I should speak more precisely if I said of herself. Mrs. Williams was compelled to be present at the examination of every genius in the seminary, in all their excellencies. She was forced to listen to a detail of the various methods by which this incomparable governess discovered their respective tastes. 2

The pupils mock the appropriately named Miss Frivol, assistant at another school, because she is for ever admiring herself in the mirror and adjusting her dress, with a "peculiar expression of vanity and self-satisfaction".<sup>3</sup> When she discovers an unflattering picture of herself with some descriptive couplets, Miss Frivol is filled with "rage and indignation", and forbids Eliza to have writing implements. As soon as she is set to needlework, however, Eliza busies herself "in working a figure of that lady with large ass's ears, and a pair of goggle eyes at each side of the head".<sup>4</sup>

In examples like these, it is the basic way in which antipathy is aroused, the unsubtle level of the derision, that is striking. It is not simply that these teachers are shown as ridiculous; it is the authors' choice of physical and moral characteristics to caricature. The Renaissance image of the schoolmaster as an ostentatiously learned, unworldly figure, like Shakespeare's Holofernes, is rare at this time. It might have been expected to be more common, since attacks on academic pedantry were so frequent in the eighteenth

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1 Jane West, The Advantages of Education, (1792) 1803, vol. 1, pp. 11, 14, 16-7, 25-6. Compare the presentation of "all the vulgar arts of flattery" practised by Mademoiselle Panache in the story of that name in Maria Edgeworth's Moral Tales, 1801.

2 The Advantages of Education, vol. 1, p. 17.

3 Mary Robson, The Rebellious School-Girl, 1821, p. 6.

4 ibid., p. 33.

century.<sup>1</sup> The conventional view of the pedantic scholar, wholly at a loss in the polite world and in relationships between the sexes, provided the major theme of an epistolary novel subtitled "The Amours of Mr. Pedant and Miss Hartley"<sup>2</sup> and later of one of Crabbe's Tales of the Hall,<sup>3</sup> but the central figures involved are not teachers. There are many comments in the books under review about the dangers of pedantry associated with education, but they come as asides rather than as a major element in the portrayal of a character. For example, there is condemnation in Tom Jones of "those learned pedants whose lives have been entirely consumed in colleges, and among books",<sup>4</sup> a comment in Gilbert West's Spenserian poem Education that the "supercilious pedant train" must be taught to prefer "knowledge of the world" to "learning's richest treasures",<sup>5</sup> and a warning by Gibbons Bagnall in his verse essay that morality comes before learning, that without religion, " 'tis all but pedantry and false parade".<sup>6</sup> The nearest to direct mockery of a teacher as pedant comes in some of Byron's earliest attempts at satirical verse, caricaturing the new headmaster of Harrow, Dr. George Butler. For some reason, Byron appears to have been involved in a protest movement against the appointment of this brilliant young scholar, to whom he gives the name Pomposus in two poems, attacking him for inexperience and supposed pedantry.

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- 1 For example Jonathan Swift's satire at the expense of the Professors of speculative learning at the Grand Academy of Lagado in A Voyage to Laputa; Lord Chesterfield's letters to his son, (1774) 1901, vol. 1, pp. 206-9, vol. 2, pp. 47-9; Samuel Johnson's essays in the Rambler for 1751, numbers 157, 159, 179, Works, 1969, vol. 5, pp. 70-5, 80-5, 176-81.
- 2 Gregory Lewis Way, Learning at a Loss, 1778.
- 3 Book IX, "The Preceptor Husband".
- 4 Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, (1749) 1933, vol. 1, p. 376.
- 5 Gilbert West, Poems in Johnson and Chalmers Works of the English Poets, 1810, vol. 13, p. 187. See also, for example, Robert Lloyd, The Poetical Works, 1774, vol. 1, p. 3; Henry Man, Mr. Bentley, The Rural Philosopher, 1775, vol. 1, p. 141; and John Moore, Edward, 1796, vol. 2, p. 11.
- 6 Gibbons Bagnall, Education: an essay, 1765, p. 22.

Of narrow brain, yet of a narrower soul,  
 Pomposus holds you in his harsh control;  
 Pomposus, by no social virtue sway'd,  
 With florid jargon, and with vain parade;  
 With noisy nonsense, and new-fangled rules,  
 Such as were ne'er before enforced in schools.  
 Mistaking pedantry for learning's laws,  
 He governs, sanction'd but by self-applause.

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In "Childish Recollections", Pomposus appears as "the young usurper",  
 an "upstart pedant", "unfit to govern, ignorant of rule -".<sup>2</sup>

Here and elsewhere, the shadowy notion of teachers as pedants seems to underlie the writing without ever defining such a figure as an individual. Generalised impressions are more common. For example, in a novel of 1797, Lady Aubrey defends her choice of a "female preceptor" precisely because she will be more polished and less pedantic than a man. "I hate your dull scholastic pedant; your animal made up of musty rules and obsolete opinions."<sup>3</sup> At the very end of this period, Carlyle's *Teufelsdröckh* complained that his teachers were "hide-bound pedants". "How can an inanimate, mechanical Gerund grinder ... foster the growth of anything ...?"<sup>4</sup> Pedantry may be a minor element in the character of a teacher but it is hardly ever shown as a dominant one; where it occurs in figures like Parson Adams or Dr. Syntax it is not usually in connection with their pedagogic rôles. This could, perhaps, be interpreted as suggesting an even lower estimate of many teachers' academic capabilities: that Keypstick and others are too ignorant even to pretend to knowledge.

As examples of more gentle mockery, and of the way in which stereotypes seem to be established, two particular classes of teacher can be considered: the mistress of the dame school and the village schoolmaster.

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1 "On a Change of Masters at a Great Public School" (1807), Lord Byron, *Poetical Works*, 1945, p. 9.

2 *ibid.*, p. 34.

3 Mary Robinson, *Walsingham*, (1797) 1805, vol. 1, p. 133.

4 Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor Resartus*, (1833-4) 1896, p. 84.



The mistress of a dame school is one of the figures conventionally portrayed with an amused affection: not harshly ridiculed, but equally clearly not to be taken seriously. Shenstone's "The School-mistress", 1742, sets the tone, with its mock-heroic Spenserian pastiche, and its concern for "modest Worth". Indeed, Shenstone seems to underlie most of the other verse-portraits which follow, some brief and some more developed.<sup>1</sup> Shenstone himself, of course, intended to give a generalised portrait rather than a description of any individual: "In every village ... there dwells ... a matron old, whom we School-mistress name." It is not of particular importance whether the other writers are, in fact, echoing Shenstone, or whether (as, for example, Kirke White's biographers suggest)<sup>2</sup> they are describing actual figures. The significant feature is the virtual identity of the elements in the description: a pattern is established in the years 1740 to 1820, and no poet represented in this survey varies the stock details significantly. Virtually all of these are to be found in Shenstone and at least one of the later poets.

The mistress, for example, is always aged: "a matron old" (Shenstone), "some worn-out matron" (Bagnall), "the vet'ran dame" (Bidlake), "the venerable matron" (Kirke White), "ancient widow" (Crabbe). Though poor, she keeps her clothes spotless:

Her cap, far whiter than the driven snow. (Shenstone)

Her linen fair ... (Bidlake)

Her neatly border'd cap, as lily fair ... (Kirke White)

She sits, throned in state, like "Our sovereign prince", "In elbow chair ...

The matron sate" (Shenstone); "In elbow chair she sat, in rigid state" (Bidlake).

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1 Charles Churchill, Gotham, Book 3, 1764; Gibbons Bagnall, Education: an essay, 1765; John Bidlake, Youth, A Poem, 1802; Henry Kirke White, "Childhood", 1803; George Crabbe, The Borough, letters 18 and 24, 1810; John Clare, The Shepherd's Calendar, "September", 1827.

2 Memoir by Sir Harris Nicholas, in White's Poetical Works, 1840, and biographical note in The Remains, Glasgow, 1827.

The birch or the cane is the symbol of her authority:

And in her hand, for sceptre, she does wield  
Tway birchen sprays ... (Shenstone)

... brandishing the rod ... (Shenstone)

... in one hand, fit emblem of thy trade,  
A rod ... (Churchill)

The terror-waking birch she dreadful drew? (Bidlake)

We own'd her justice and rever'd the rod ... (Bidlake)

Her white rod nimbly walks about. (Crabbe)

She preserves control by assuring the pupils that little birds will confide  
their secrets to her:

... if little bird their pranks behold,  
'Twill whisper in her ear, and all the scene unfold. (Shenstone)

Her tell-tale pigeons ... (Bidlake)

Aided by ... tell-tale birds ... (Crabbe)

Those who do well are rewarded with pennies:

Some with vile copper-prize exalt on high ... (Shenstone)

How was the penny priz'd, when, new and bright,  
It met, a proud reward, the exulting sight ... (Bidlake)

The study is concerned with basic literacy, the ABC through the hornbook:

Their books of stature small they take in hand  
Which with pellucid horn secured are ... (Shenstone)

... gaudily array'd  
A hornbook, gilt and letter'd. (Churchill)

When first I trembled o'er the gilded book?  
... Her needle pointed at the guarding horn. (Crabbe)

... From his hornbook turns away,  
To mourn for liberty and play. (Clare)

The mistress also has charge of the smallest infants, who are sent to her to  
be kept out of harm's way:

And at the door imprisoning board is seen  
Lest weakly wights of smaller size should stray ... (Shenstone)

Her threshold high, they cannot run away ... (Crabbe)

None but imprison'd children now  
Are seen ... (Clare)

In prose, a similar impression is given of Nanse Banks, mistress of a Scottish dame school, in Annals of the Parish. Described by the clergyman narrator as a "worthy and innocent" creature, Nanse is an elderly lady, noted for cleanliness, who teaches small children reading and sewing for twopence a week, and who continues in her work until within a week of her death.<sup>1</sup>

The 1794 picture "The Schoolmistress" engraved by J. Coles after F. Wheatley<sup>2</sup> shows the same figure: an elderly woman, wearing a spotless white cap with a trimmed border, and with glasses on her nose, sitting in an imposing armchair with her birch on the adjacent table, pointing at the letters in a book which a small child is reading while others await their turn, and a boy - presumably punished - cries in a corner. The extent to which these images of the dame school were perpetuated can be seen from later books, like Kingsley's The Water Babies, 1863, Thomas Cooper's Life, 1872, Mrs. Ewing's Jan of the Windmill, 1876, Arnold Bennett's Clayhanger, 1910, or Lawrence's The Rainbow, 1915. In the first of these, for example, the old Dame is described in her cottage:

... the nicest old woman that ever was seen, in her red petticoat, and shot dimity bedgown, and clean white cap, with a black silk handkerchief over it, tied under her chin ... and opposite her sat, on two benches, twelve or fourteen neat, rosy, chubby little children, learning their Chris-cross-row; and gabble enough they made about it. 3

The dominant note in these portraits is one of indulgent retrospect, a half-wistful recapturing of the innocence of childhood, which could take so seriously an old woman with few real pretensions to respect. The reader is invited to share the poet's amusement, to contrast his present superiority over such a figure with the awe which the children show. The pupils in Shenstone view her with "pious awe" and "gaping wonderment", "and think, no

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1 John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (1821) 1967, pp. 13-4, 43-5.

2 Reproduced in J. Lawson and H. Silver, A Social History of Education in England, 1973, p. 240.

3 Charles Kingsley, The Water Babies, (1863) 1920, p. 52.

doubt, she been the greatest wight on ground". In Crabbe, "Her power they dread and reverence her words." Bidlake's children view this figure of "wond'rous fame" with "awe"; "Her own importance well she knew to raise ..."; when she sits in state,

With pow'r and jealous consequence elate.  
Ah! how we urchins shrunk, how trembled round ...

1

A similar figure, viewed with an almost affectionate irony, is the village schoolmaster. Goldsmith's portrait in The Deserted Village, 1770, captures or sets the pattern:

There, in his noisy mansion, skill'd to rule,  
The village master taught his little school ...

The two qualities developed in this sketch are both defined in relationship to particular groups: the severity which makes the pupils read the signs from his face and tremble at his frown, and the show of learning which amazes the rustic community: "The village all declared how much he knew." In both cases, the implication is that a more sophisticated audience would fail to take his carefully nurtured prestige seriously. Both aspects of the schoolmaster recur in the couplets of other poets. John Bidlake, for example, describes hurrying through the cold morning to the school-house.

What pangs severe depress'd my unfledg'd mind  
If but, perchance, the tutor frown'd unkind!  
If but his undrest wig, and brow deep knit,  
The spruceless coat, the sullen thoughtful fit,  
Bespoke the sour'd soul - how shrunk we round  
Half-petrify'd, and swooning, as he frown'd!

2

John Clare gives a verse picture of a schoolmaster who is also parish clerk in "The Cress-gatherer", published in The Village Minstrel, 1821, and in it he emphasises with a similar ironic emphasis to Goldsmith's the way

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1 Compare such prose sketches as Maria Edgeworth's in Simple Susan, where the dame-school is "reverenced ... by the young race ... The dame who governed here was well obeyed, because she was just, and well beloved ..."  
(The Parent's Assistant, (1796-1800) 1804, vol. 2).

2 John Bidlake, Youth, 1802, p. 12.



in which the villagers marvel at the man's learning.<sup>1</sup>

He lov'd his skill to flourish, and to show  
As well as godly he was learned too ...  
He'd many things to crack on with his ale  
For clowns less learn'd to wonder at the tale ...  
Till those around him swore each wise remark  
Show'd him more fit for parson than for clerk. 2

One aspect stressed by the poets of the early nineteenth century is the alacrity with which the pupils leave the school and the teacher. There is a liveliness in the verse which is certainly lacking in the descriptions of the pedagogue.

Then burst we forth, and with a torrent's bound  
Tumultuous rush'd, and leap'd, and madden'd round ...  
Elastic vigour, ever prompt to rise,  
Flush'd the bright cheek, and fir'd the sparkling eyes;  
Invok'd the sport, the sport for youth assign'd,  
That knits the limbs, and clears the stagnant mind. 3

... from the prison school-room all rush out,  
Wild with delight - a noisy, laughing rout! ...  
Quickly the Latin books are thrown aside,  
The hats snatched up; and, like a flooding tide,  
Out rush the merry hearts, o'erjoyed to be,  
Thus early in the fragrant morning, free! 4

This emphasis on freedom opposed to school as prison, the use of natural images like "torrent" and "tide" to describe the boys' movements, suggesting that the schoolmaster's realm is not their natural environment, is taken further by John Clare. Although a number of his poems deal with children and schoolboys, the concern is nearly always with their behaviour out of school. "Evening Schoolboys" begins as class ends:

Hark to that happy shout! - the school-house door  
Is open thrown, and out the younkers teem ... 5

"Schoolboys in Winter" deals with "morning rambles" to the village school, but stops before they arrive there. Even "The Student", whose learning is

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1 John Clare echoed The Deserted Village in a number of poems written at the time. See Robert Protherough, "A Study of John Clare's Poetry", B.Litt. thesis, Oxford, 1956, pp. 62-72.

2 John Clare, Poems, 1935, vol. 1, p. 220.

3 John Bidlake, Youth, 1802, p. 13.

4 Thomas Maude, The Village Grammar-School, 1824, pp. 19-20.

5 John Clare, Poems, 1935, vol. 2, p. 130.

admitted by all the village, "seems to gather knowledge by the way" on quiet walks. "The Schoolboy" is described "with slate and bag at back, and full of books", but his amusements are also extra-mural, indeed he "often keeps from school with vain excuse". Even the personal sounding "My Schoolboy Days" makes no actual mention of schooling or the work of the teacher.<sup>1</sup> In "Childhood", the list of memories does include some of school, but the often-repeated word "joy" is only applied to experiences outside it; school is a "prison house" and joy returns when the boys quit it.<sup>2</sup> Although the pleasure in nature rings true, the attitude to school is more conventional. From his prose writings as well as the poems we have an impression of Clare as a solitary, bookish boy eager for learning, not the inadequate scholar rushing out as one of a yelling crowd as suggested in "Childhood". He recalled that until he was eleven or twelve, never less than three months a year was "luckily spared" for his improvement, first with a dame in the village and later with the schoolmaster in the neighbouring village of Ginton, following up his studies at home:

... my master was always surprised to find me improved every fresh visit, instead of having lost what I had learned before; for which, to my benefit, he never failed to give me tokens of encouragement. 3

Poverty overcame the boy's ambitions, those of his parents, and the ideas of the schoolmaster that he should qualify as an usher in a school, but it was with reluctance that he left.<sup>4</sup> In his long autobiographical poem,

The Village Minstrel, Clare describes how

... pinching want soon baffled all their schemes,  
And dragg'd him from the school a hopeless boy. 5

1 ibid., vol. 2, pp. 150; 350, 354-5, 475-6.

2 ibid., vol. 2, pp. 27-36.

3 Sketches in the Life of John Clare, ed. E. Blunden, 1931, p. 48.

4 See his Autobiography in J. W. and Anne Tibble, The Prose of John Clare, 1951, pp. 15, 18, and John and Anne Tibble, John Clare: His Life and Poetry, 1956, pp. 14-5.

5 Clare, Poems, 1935, vol. 1, p. 140.

Read with this in mind, the description of the village master and his school appears more derivative, with its familiar emblematic juxtaposition of hornbook and birch:

The morn when first we went to school -  
Who can forget the morn  
When the birch whip lay upon the clock  
And our horn-book it was torn?

The boys' reactions are conventional, like those in Bidlake and Maude:

Naught seemed too hard for us to do  
But the sums upon our slate,  
Naught seemed too hard for us to win  
But the master's chair of state.  
The 'Town of Troy' we tried and made  
When our sums we could not try,  
While we envied e'en the sparrows wings  
From our prison house to fly.

When twelve o'clock was counted out,  
The joy and strife began,  
The shut of books, the hearty shout,  
As out of doors we ran.

1

The emphasis is different in poems written by men who had actually worked as village schoolmasters. They are more concerned with the poverty and the lack of esteem, balanced by concern for their pupils. In his verse farewell to his school John Day wrote:

I've met with Blessings which do reach but few  
Within thy claybuilt Walls and thatched roof:  
More than a thousand times I have had proof,  
When o'er my tender Charge my bowels yearn'd,  
Lest they should lose what they in part had learn'd  
Of God and Goodness and the Rule of Life ...

2

Similarly John Marshall said of the teacher's situation that

... the improvement of a youthful mind  
Requites him for innumerable cares,  
Excites sensations grateful to his soul,  
And softens unavoidable chagrin.

3

Marshall's poem, in fact, describes with understanding and some sly humour how the village schoolmaster can, by degrees, raise himself in the social

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1 Clare, Poems, vol. 2, p. 33.

2 V. N. Wright, John Day, A Village Poet, Sigglesworth, Yorkshire, 1968.

3 John Marshall, The Village Paedagogue, Newcastle, 1817, p. 47.

scale, flattering the ladies, being invited to the vicar's table, where

Th'advantages which education gives,  
Us'd with discretion, shall avail thee much ...

and eventually being "exalted to the board" of the local squire.<sup>1</sup>

The contrast between the descriptions written from outside the situation and those from inside will later become important. At this time, however, Day's poems would have been unknown and Marshall's little read. There is no doubt that the Goldsmith tradition would have been the dominant one, especially as it would have been reinforced by sketches of village masters and mistresses in prose works. For example, there are the schoolmaster in Peregrine Pickle who writes the absurd replacement letter to Emilia, full of inappropriate learned phrases, the threadbare pedagogue ("a man of a pale aspect sat on a decayed chair") in The Fool of Quality, Mr. Selkirk with his strange new style of grammar teaching ("I make eight boys represent the eight parts of speech"), Mrs. Bell and Mrs. Fairfield, who both give a very class-conscious education, and the former of whom goes up in smoke with her thatched cottage.<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Trimmer wrote of the latter:

... she did not forget that she was a village schoolmistress, and that it would be very improper to give her scholars a taste for things which were unsuitable to the simplicity of a country life; therefore, though she knew how to do several kinds of ornamental work, she professed to teach only knitting, plain-work, marking, and darning ...

3

Mrs. Trimmer's seriously expressed view of the village teacher's rôle may have been even more damaging than the irony or downright mockery of other authors.

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1 ibid., pp. 8, 12.

2 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, pp. 104-5;  
Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality, (1766-70) 1906, p. 410;  
Richard Graves, The Spiritual Quixote, (1773) 1967, pp. 347-8;  
Dorothy Kilner, The Village School, /1785/;  
Sarah Trimmer, Instructive Tales, 3rd ed., 1815.

3 Instructive Tales, 1815, p. 139.



## THE TEACHER AS TYRANT

The frequent appearance of the Thwackum figure seems to depend partly on a continuing debate about the desirability and effectiveness of corporal punishment, and partly on a stereotyped view of the teacher, with the birch as the tool of his trade, because this was such an obviously identifiable characteristic. Teufelsdröckh says ironically that although soldiers may wear swords or carry guns,

... nowhere, far as I have travelled, did the Schoolmaster make show of his instructing-tool: nay, were he to walk abroad with birch girt on thigh, as if he therefrom expected honour, would there not, among the idler class, perhaps a certain levity be excited? 1

A number of authors maintained that strict discipline was essential in the child's interests. "Heedless" innocence requires the discipline of a "sterner nurse to lead it on", and if such treatment seems cruel, ultimately it is "more cruel to forbear".<sup>2</sup> Boswell records Johnson returning several times in March and April 1772 to the "duty" of the teacher to ensure that a stubborn pupil is "corrected till he is subdued", for no severity can be as cruel as leaving the scholar "too careless for instruction, and too much hardened for reproof".<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of the second canto of Don Juan, Byron urges the teachers of "ingenuous youth", with some irony, to adopt Thwackum's policy:

I pray ye flog them upon all occasions,  
It mends their morals, never mind the pain ... 4

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- 1 Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, (1833-4) 1896, p. 85.
  - 2 Edward Young, "Night Thoughts" (1742), Johnson and Chalmers, Works of the English Poets, 1810, vol. 13, p. 466.
  - 3 James Boswell, Life of Johnson, Oxford, 1934, vol. 2, pp. 146, 157, 183-6.
  - 4 Don Juan, cantos I and II (1819), Lord Byron, Poetical Works, 1945, p. 661. Also see, for example, Swift, "Essay on Modern Education", Prose Works XII; Francis Coventry, The History of Pompey the Little, 1751; the episode of the squire in book 3 of Fielding's Joseph Andrews, 1742; Young, Night Thoughts, night 8, 1742; the education of Jonathan Wild in Fielding's novel of that title, 1743; Goldsmith "On Education" in The Bee, number VI, 10 November 1759.

On the other side, the case against corporal punishment was vigorously presented in literature in the eighteenth century as well as by educational theorists like John Clarke, Thomas Sheridan, George Chapman and Percival Stockdale.<sup>1</sup> Steele had earlier attacked the ignorance of schoolmasters - "Many of these stupid Tyrants exercise their Cruelty without any Manner of Distinction of the Capacities of Children" - who seemed to imagine that boys could only be "whipped up", "chastised" into knowledge.<sup>2</sup> This association of classics and birch was a conventional one.<sup>3</sup> Wormwood says to Mr. Barnet that "although a little Latin and Greek may be whipt into a boy at school, whether he will or will not, all is soon forgot ..."<sup>4</sup> It is Mrs. Holloway, described as "the silly lady", who has put into her mouth the complacent assurance that her son is good at Latin because "it was flogged into him well at first, at a public school, which, I understand, is the best way of making good scholars".<sup>5</sup> In the same story one unfortunate Creole boy is "flogged three times a week" because his previous education has been neglected, and the effect is to drive him into despair and the conviction that he really is a dunce.<sup>6</sup> The birch becomes a symbol for the traditional kind of academic education. An emblematic grove of birch trees is an essential feature of Gilbert West's Education: a poem, 1751, in which the "striplings" are "lash'd" on to learning with "scourges".<sup>7</sup> The same phrase, "to lash ... into learning" is used to describe "the harsh discipline of a pedagogue" inflicted upon

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- 1 John Clarke, The Education of Youth in Grammar Schools, 1720; Thomas Sheridan, A Plan of Education ..., 1769; George Chapman, A Treatise on Education, 1773; Percival Stockdale, An Examination of the Important Question ..., 1782.
  - 2 Spectator, No. 157, 30 August 1711. Also see No. 168, 12 September 1711.
  - 3 See Richard Jago, Edge Hill, Bk. 3, 1767; Thomas Maurice, "The Oxonian" in Poems, 1779; William Coke, A Poetical Essay on the Early Part of Education, Oxford 1785; Tom Hood, "The Irish Schoolmaster", 1826; W. P. Scargill/ Recollections of a Blue-Coat Boy, Swaffham, 1829, pp. 49-50; Anna Maria Hall, Chronicles of a School Room, 1830, p. 34.
  - 4 John Moore, Edward, 1796, vol. 1, p. 257.
  - 5 Maria Edgeworth, "The Good Aunt" in Moral Tales. Tales and Novels, vol. 1, (1801) 1893, p. 149.
  - 6 *ibid.*, p. 159.
  - 7 Johnson and Chalmers, Works of the English Poets, 1810, vol. 13, pp. 180 ff.

Edward Saville, and in an earlier novel, Cynthia's brother has to be "whipp'd into learning".<sup>1</sup> In the historical novel Kenilworth, 1821, the men in the inn discuss Dr. Bircham, who had been their schoolmaster, and whose lashings had spurred on their classical studies. His final words on his death-bed were, "My last verb is conjugated."<sup>2</sup> In the same author's The Heart of Midlothian, 1818, Reuben Butler - deputy schoolmaster to old Mr. Whackbairn, corrects the Latin of an adult and says that if a counsellor used dative for nominative he should be thrashed, for "there is not a boy on the booby form but should have been scourged for such a solecism in grammar".<sup>3</sup>

There are at least two mock-heroic poems dealing in elevated but critical language with birching pedagogues. Henry Layng's, indeed, in three cantos, is entitled The Rod, 1754, and in the first canto there is a solemn description of the preparation of a birch. Although some of the descriptions of scourgings are comic, as when raspberries in cream are used as an image for "Poor Snowden's milk-white Bum unwhipp'd before",<sup>4</sup> the initial Advertisement states Layng's aim plainly: "to recommend with Pleasantry and good Temper a more mild and amiable carriage to our Preceptors". The style is designed to make birching appear simultaneously barbarous, absurd and ultimately ineffectual.

The low'ring Pedant with an awful Nod  
 Doom'd him to stoop beneath th'uplifted Rod.  
 With red right arm the threat'ning scourge he shook,  
 Th'entwining Birch bent round at every stroke:  
 His pitying Comrades saw with Silent Woe  
 Wounds yet unheal'd gush forth at every Blow. 5

At the climax of the poem, the pupils combine against the tyrant and assassinate him, and according to the Argument, "The Story is founded on true History".<sup>6</sup>

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- 1 Clara Reeve, The Two Mentors, 1783, vol. 1, p. 2; Sarah Fielding, The Adventures of David Simple, (1744) 1769, p. 102.  
 2 Walter Scott, Kenilworth, (1821) Edinburgh, 1870, pp. 16-7.  
 3 Walter Scott, The Heart of Midlothian, (1818) Edinburgh, 1870, p. 48.  
 4 Henry Layng, The Rod, Oxford, 1754, p. 13.  
 5 *ibid.*, p. 43.  
 6 *ibid.*, Advertisement, p. 7.



Similarly Thomas Maurice's poem, The Schoolboy, 1775, describes the first terrifying entry of the Pedagogue, a staff in his right hand, while -

His left, a Bunch of limber Twigs sustains,  
Call'd by the Vulgar Birch, Tartarean Root,  
Whose rankling Points, in blackest Poison dipt,  
Inflict a mortal Pain; and, where they light,  
A ghastly Furrow leave.

1

Criticism of such violence is frequently made more explicit. In his dispute with Joseph, Parson Adams exclaims, "Discipline indeed! because one man scourges twenty or thirty boys more in a morning than another, is he therefore a better disciplinarian?".<sup>2</sup> Gibbons Bagnall argues that lashing can inhibit rather than encourage learning in boys:

They shrink, of sour severity afraid:  
Stern Busby spoil'd more scholars than he made.

3

Cowper writes in Tirocinium that -

The management of tiros of eighteen  
Is difficult, their punishment obscene.

4

From the victims' point of view, the fifth number of The Flagellant, written by Robert Southey and other Westminster boys, is given over to an attack on corporal punishment, saying that Mr. Thwackum and other "savage and unrelenting" schoolmasters who flog their pupils are employing "a method equally disgraceful and ineffectual".<sup>5</sup> John Bidlake, in Youth, a Poem, 1802, warns against the dangers of excessive or inappropriate use of the "scourge" by the "sons of discipline".<sup>6</sup> Similarly, speaking from experience, a village schoolmaster's poem advises, "be sparing of the rod".<sup>7</sup> De Quincey contrasts the self-discipline emphasised at Manchester Grammar School by Mr. Lawson, the headmaster, with punishments that depend on "the sense of bodily pain" imposed by "gloomy tyrants, exulting in the discipline of fear".<sup>8</sup>

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1 Thomas Maurice, The School-Boy, Oxford, 1775, p. 4. The poem goes on to describe in the first person the narrator's sufferings beneath the birch.  
2 Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, (1742) 1961, p. 247.  
3 Gibbons Bagnall, Education: an essay, 1765, p. 14.  
4 William Cowper, Tirocinium, 1785, lines 220-1.  
5 The Flagellant, Thursday 29 March 1792, pp. 76-7.  
6 John Bidlake, Poetical Works, 1804, p. 13.  
7 John Marshall, The Village Pædagogue, Newcastle, 1817, p. 46.  
8 Confessions of an English Opium-Eater, 1821, in Works, Edinburgh, 1878, VOL. 1, p. 37.

When the schoolmaster is seen in action in fiction or poetry, his commonest function seems to be that of administering punishment. Even the kindly Dr. Syntax nearly always presents his teaching rôle in terms of beating when he talks to new acquaintances on his tour. Although he says, "I hate to use the birchin rod", he adds that lying is just one of the boyish crimes which he punishes with "heavy strokes". His dual professions he distinguishes as:

"... when I'm in the parish church;  
Or when at home I wield the birch ..."

His teaching rôle is to hunt "a pack of idle boys":

"I am a special whipper-in;  
Nay, if they should be found at fault,  
I crack my whip, Sir, as I ought." 1

"As I ought" suggests a sense of duty, deriving from convention, to use the birch. In other books, the author's attitude frequently implies that the punishment being administered is unjust or ineffective. For instance, Edward is thrashed simply to placate a titled lady, and declines to apologise to her son, despite the master's threat of "being more severely whipt than he had been already". The incompetent teacher, described in this passage as behaving "with an intemperance of manner, natural to the abject-minded when possessed of power", and as a man who "possessed in hardness of heart what he wanted in understanding", carries out his threat "with unprecedented cruelty" - an act which eventually leads to Edward's removal from his school.<sup>2</sup> A ten-year-old new boy is greeted by the master with the threat that things at school will be very different from home:

"There probably you did as you pleased, but here,  
if you deserve it, you will be flogged into obedience.  
My system is to whip, and to have done with it." 3

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1 William Combe The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque, (1809) 1813, pp. 127, 172, 193.  
2 John Moore, Edward, 1796, vol. 1, pp. 177-8.  
3 William Stephen Gilbey Academic Errors, 1817, p. 7.

In fact, the narrator is frequently severely whipped for no real reason at all. Another similarly falls into the hands of -

... one of those pedagogues of, what is called, the old school. He had implicit faith in his divining rod, which he kept in continual exercise, applying it on all doubtful occasions ... I was flogged seldom more than once a day, or caned more than once an hour. After I had become inured to it, I was callous ...

1

For severe offences, there are ceremonial floggings. Lamb describes the process in some detail in his essay "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago".<sup>2</sup> "The scourging was, after the old Roman fashion, long and stately." An approving view of the process, accompanied by a picture of a teacher with a large birch in hand and finger lifted in reproof to a boy, is given in W. F. Sullivan's Young Wilfred (1816), new edition 1821. The Doctor, claiming God's blessing on his endeavour "to expel the evil spirit out of thy little body", presides over two hundred lashes "unsparingly bestowed" on the child. "We may judge of the spectacle his back exhibited ...".<sup>3</sup>

The two descriptions of the Upper Master of his time at Christ's Hospital which Charles Lamb gives in essays seven years apart show an interesting shift of tone (just as, indeed, much of the opening of the later essay seems deliberately to set out to give a grimmer picture of the school, under the device of being written by a different person). In the earlier piece, "Recollections of Christ's Hospital", originally published in The Gentleman's Magazine, June 1813, the description of the Rev. James Boyer is in general terms, the construction is complex, the language is mannered and almost in the style of a testimonial. Boyer is "our excellent upper grammar-master", a man of "unwearied assiduity", a "slave to the most laborious of occupations". His behaviour to the pupils is skated over by

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1 E. J. Trelawny, Adventures of a Younger Son, (1831) 1974, p. 9.

2 Elia, Essays, 1823, pp. 38-9. Compare the account in W. P. Scargill, Recollections of a Blue-Coat Boy, Swaffham, 1829, pp. 49-50.

3 Reproduced in Andrew W. Tuer, Pages and Pictures from Forgotten Children's Books, 1898-9, pp. 399-402.



the phrase "He was a disciplinarian, indeed", and the conclusion loses sight of the man in a vague effusiveness that could be applied to virtually any senior master. In "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago", London Magazine, November 1820, however, Boyer is shown more graphically in personal reminiscence, and with an emphasis on his use of the rod. Lamb was happy to have been taught by the Rev. Matthew Field in a part of the room divided from Boyer's by an "imaginary line". The worlds of the two masters are continually contrasted. "Field never used the rod", his pupils were "careless as birds", "nobody molested us", "enjoying ourselves at our ease", "soothing images of indolence, and summer slumbers, and work like play, and innocent idleness ...". On the other hand, the images used of Boyer's régime contrast his "young Spartans" with Field's "Helots": "His pale students were battering their brains", "his thunders ... his storms", "His pupils cannot speak of him without something of terror allaying their gratitude", "Tartarus", "a heavy hand", and so on.<sup>1</sup> In this version of Boyer's personality it is his "great merits as an instructor" that are passed over; the vivid stories are all of him as punisher: his sardonic comments on Field's pristine birch, his "passionate" wig which foretold "bloody execution", the rushing out for a delayed beating, the combined reading and punishment with "a paragraph, and a lash between", even the one remarkable occasion when he did not use the uplifted rod.<sup>2</sup> Years after leaving school, Coleridge reported of the same Upper Master that his "severities, even now, not seldom furnish the dreams ...".<sup>3</sup>

Corporal punishment occurs much less frequently in the accounts of girls' schools, but is not unknown there. One little girl's hand is "bruised and black" because her "very strict" schoolmistress had beaten her and others for failing to spin enough after a day's schooling.<sup>4</sup> Miss Starch,

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1 Elia, essays which have appeared under that signature in the London Magazine, 1823, pp. 40-44.

2 ibid., pp. 42-5.

3 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, (1817) 1947, p. 5.

4 Maria Edgeworth, "The Geranium", Tales and Novels, (1801) 1893, vol. 1, p. 14.

a mistress at a boarding school, is prone to slapping, and issuing threats of whipping (even to pronounce the word seems to give her pleasure). The narrator writes that when she accused another girl of cheating, Miss Starch slapped her, said, "You deserve to be well whipped for making use of such words", and then "shook me and beat me a great deal", although the girl protests that she is in the right. On different occasions, and for different imagined crimes, she tells pupils:

" ... you are a very naughty girl, and deserve to be well whipped."

" ... you are a very rude, naughty little thing, and ought to be whipped for dirting yourself so ..."

"You are always making some disturbance! I declare you deserve to be whipped ... "

1

In another book by the same author, Mrs. Bell, the village schoolmistress, greets the returning pupils with cakes and pictures for those who have learned their lessons and with a new cane for those who have not: "If children will be naughty, Mr. Tickle must come out."<sup>2</sup> The first incident in the book is when two girls who are playing with toys instead of doing their work are told by Mrs. Bell that she has "a great mind to beat you both". Instead, they are both ridiculed, but when the first boy misbehaves, "she took off his coat, and beat him very much with a cane she kept on purpose to beat naughty children".<sup>3</sup> He is then tied up and left at school overnight in a cupboard. This author seems obsessed with the need for corporal punishment, and presents approvingly a world in which schoolmistress, clergyman and parents maintain an adult conspiracy to pry, to encourage tale-bearing, and to thrash. Mrs. Bell threatens to send back children to the master of another school who "thrashes them most heartily; and, indeed, I think he is

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1 Dorothy Kilner, Anecdotes of a Boarding School, 1786, vol. 1, p. 45 and vol. 2, pp. 74-5, 96.

2 Dorothy Kilner, The Village School, (1785) 1828, p. 76.

3 ibid., p. 9.



in the right of it". Other children are given "a very severe whipping" or are "horsewhipped ... all the way home through the village". One is promised that he shall be "whipped and punished a great deal more than he had ever been yet", one is "thrashed ... most heartily (as he well deserved) with a cane", and another is flogged "most severely indeed" with a rod cut from the hedge.<sup>1</sup>

Such a continual emphasis on beating creates an impression that the teacher is by nature a tyrant or bully, who imposes control, with the corollary that the pupil's reaction will be one of antagonism, either passively in fear or actively in hatred and rebellion. Indeed, that such responses could become stereotyped, producing an unfair attitude by pupils towards just masters, is the theme of Maria Edgeworth's story The Barring Out. A boy from a "great public school" instigates a rebellion and a lock-out against Dr. Middleton, a reasonable headmaster. When other boys object that Middleton is no tyrant,

"All school-masters are tyrants, are not they?" replied Archer, "and is not he a school-master?" To this logic there was no answer.

2

This suggestion of almost automatic conflict between teacher and pupils runs through many of Crabbe's pen portraits set in school. Abel Keene, who abandons teaching with delight,

... kept a school of loud rebellious boys  
And growing old, grew nervous with the noise ...

In one day school, the "timid trembling crowd" of boys see their master only as "the tyrant stern or judge severe". In another squalid building,

Poor Reuben Dixon has the noisiest school  
Of ragged lads, who ever bow'd to rule ...

Beset with their "half-check'd rudeness", making "vain attempts to keep the peace", Dixon endures "Till tolls the bell, and strife and troubles cease ...".

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1 ibid., pp. 77, 26, 28, 43, 47, 53.

2 The Parent's Assistant, (1796) 1804, vol. 6, p. 35.



Even the gentler girls' school is a place of hardship and conflict:

The spirit's bondage and the body's pains;  
Where teachers make the heartless, trembling set  
Of pupils suffer for their own regret ...

Doctor Sidmere, the clerical headmaster of a select group of boys, cannot believe that the pupil who has run off with his daughter Clara will have lost the habit of subservience:

"And shall that boy, who dreaded to appear  
Before me, cast away at once his fear?  
'Tis not in nature! He who once would cower  
Beneath my frown, and sob for half an hour;  
He who would kneel with motion prompt and quick  
If I but look'd ...  
Soon as he sees me he will drop his lip,  
And bend like one made ready for the whip!"

1

In several novels a stronger mood of rebellion is seen as natural, and the fictional teacher is shown little sympathy by novelists when he receives at the hands of pupils some of the discomfort which - it is implied - he deserves. A few examples will show that the schoolmaster's sufferings are presented in such a way that the reader's sympathies are usually on the other side, as they are when Tom thrashes Thwackum.

Young Peregrine Pickle, for instance, not only torments Mr. Keypstick by causing him to fall and by driving pins into him, but ruins his food and kills his hens. Viewed objectively this would seem reprehensible behaviour, but Smollett weighs the scales. Perry is an "indefatigable wag", and his misdeeds are signs of "invention", "mischievous talents", "roguery", "jeux d'esprit". The tricks are aimed at unattractive qualities in the master: his "foppery", being "extremely penurious", his "violence" of "passion". Their results are described in terms which make the master appear absurd: "He lay in a very ludicrous attitude", "he became quite delirious, foamed at the mouth, danced to and fro in the passage like one bereft of his senses."

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1 The Borough, Letters 21 and 24, and Tales of the Hall, book 15.  
George Crabbe, Poetical Works, 1814, pp. 191, 206-7, 447.

One typical section demonstrates the approach.

Conscious of his own defect in point of stature and proportion, the little pedant used all the additions of art and address to improve his person, and raise himself as near as possible to the standard dimensions of nature; with this view he wore shoes with heels three inches high, strutted like a peacock in walking, and erected his head with such muscular exertion, as rendered it impossible for him to extend his vision downwards below the preternatural prominence of his breast. Peregrine, therefore, taking advantage of this foppery, used to strew his way with bean-shells, on which whenever he chanced to tread, his heels slipped from under him, his hunch pitched upon the ground, and the furniture of his head fell off in the shock; so that he lay in a very ludicrous attitude for the entertainment of the spectators. He moreover seized opportunities of studding his breeches with large pins, which when he sat down with a sudden jirk, penetrated the skin of his posteriors, and compelled him to start up again with infinite expedition, and roar hideously with the pain. Nay, perceiving that he was extremely penurious in his house-keeping, he spoilt many a pot of excellent soup maigre, by slyly conveying into it handfuls of salt or soot, and even drove needles into the heads of sundry fowls, that from the suddenness of their death he might conclude some infection was communicated to his poultry, and dispose of them accordingly for the half of their value.

1

The result of such treatment, and of hiding the teacher's wigs just before the appearance of a fashionable lady who intended to send her son to the school, is that "Keypstick fell ill in good earnest". By stages,

... the school degenerated into anarchy and confusion, and he himself dwindled in the opinion of his employers, who looked upon him as superannuated, and withdrew their children from his tuition.

2

There is no note of compassion at the collapse of the school, although, as the novel goes on to demonstrate, Peregrine's bad behaviour continues in other contexts. He seems to combine a love of mischief and a distaste for authority which makes him resentful of any imposed discipline. When he goes to Winchester, he rapidly undermines the authority of his tutor:

Scarce a day passed, on which he did not find means to render Mr. Jolter the object of ridicule; his violent prejudices, ludicrous vanity, awkward solemnity and

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1 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, pp. 58-9.  
2 ibid., pp. 60-1.



ignorance of mankind, afforded continual food for the raillery, petulance and satire of his pupil, who never neglected an opportunity of laughing, and making others laugh at his expence.

1

He gets Jolter drunk and traps him into a compromising situation with the chambermaid: "This adventure destroyed all the remains of authority which he had hitherto preserved over Peregrine."<sup>2</sup>

When the curate who is his brother's tutor strikes Peregrine for an attack on his elder brother, Peregrine unhorses him in a hedge and whips him about the face so that he cannot fulfil his duties for three weeks. The young man is delighted that the occasion gave him "an opportunity of chastising an officious wretch whose petulance and malice he had longed to punish".<sup>3</sup>

The most striking example of the interrelation between corporal punishment and rebellion, and of the consequent lack of sympathy for the teacher, is perhaps Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality, 1766-70. In this novel, re-published by Wesley because of its religious and humanitarian tone, and praised by Charles Kingsley for its picture of "the training, moral and physical, of a Christian gentleman"<sup>4</sup>, the concern for the poor, the needy and the unfortunate is strikingly withheld in the opening sections from only one figure: the teacher.

Brooke introduces Mr. Vindex, the schoolmaster who is to teach the two boys, with the significant comment on the disposition of Harry, the hero, that he could be "induced to do anything by kindness; but to be hardened and roused into opposition by severity".<sup>5</sup> Thereafter scenes of castigation and of boyish revenge alternate. During Mr. Fenton's absence, Mr. Vindex "began to assume a more expanded authority, and gave a free scope to the

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1 *ibid.*, p. 81.

2 *ibid.*, p. 82.

3 *ibid.*, p. 154.

4 Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality, (1766-70) 1906, Preface p.liii.

5 *ibid.*, p. 57.



surly terrors of his station",<sup>1</sup> having particular trouble with the "petulant" Ned.

The next day Mr. Vindex returned, doubly armed, with a monstrous birch-rod in one hand, and a ferule in the other. The first he hung up, in terrorem, as a meteor is said to hang in the heavens, threatening future castigation to the children of men. The second he held as determined upon present action; nor was he unmindful of any hook whereon to hang a fault, so that, travelling from right to left and from left to right, he so warmed the hands of the unfortunate Edward, as ruined the sunny economy of his countenance, and reduced him to a disagreeable partnership with the afflicted.

2

Ned's response to this treatment is to devise an ingenious machine beneath the teacher's stool which will drive a strong glover's needle upwards through the seat. The ensuing sufferings of Vindex, like those of Keypstick in Peregrine Pickle, are described for the reader's amusement, not his compassion. Pierced by the needle, he bounces up "and gives two or three capers as though he had been suddenly stung by a tarantula", "bounded, plunged, and pranced about the room, as bewitched", "Up he shot once more, like a sudden pyramid of flame ... he soared aloft, roared and raved like a thousand infernals".<sup>3</sup> When eventually he discovers the source of the trouble, Vindex's response is to flog Ned so severely that the boy has to be confined to his bed.

Then, reaching at the rod, he seized his shrinking prey as a kite trusses a robin; he laid him, like a little sack, across his own stool; off go the trousers, and with the left hand he holds him down, while the right is laid at him with the application of a woodman, who resolves to clear part of the forest before noon.

4

The boys then devise a way of tormenting the schoolmaster's household by mysterious knockings at the door, which soon provoke a superstitious fear in the servants. When the truth of this prank leaks out, Vindex "snatches up a huge rod" and marches back to the schoolroom, where he subdues the

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1    *ibid.*, p. 57.

2    *ibid.*, p. 58.

3    *ibid.*, p. 59.

4    *ibid.*, p. 60.

kicking and fighting Harry, gives him three hard strokes for his share in the plot, and is incensed that the boy will not give away his confederates.

What, shall I be bullied and out-braved, replied the frantic savage, by such a one as you? You little stubborn villain, I will flay you alive, I will carbonade you on the spot. So saying, he laid at him as though he had been a sheaf of wheat ...

1

Harry is rescued by the intervention of Mrs. Hannah; who bursts into the room, "fastened every nail she had in the face and eyes of Vindex, and tore away and cuffed at a fearful rate", while Harry snatches up a sword intending to stab the schoolmaster, but only gives him "a slight wound" in the leg.<sup>2</sup>

The decisive stage in the escalating war of violence comes when the boys, with adult help, disguise the schoolroom as a hell, "vaulted with serpents, harpies, and hydras that dropped livid fire", and themselves as devils.

The unsuspecting schoolmaster is seized and stripped by the devils, and then -

... some sat upon his shoulders to keep him down, while others on each side, alternately keeping time like the threshers of barley, gave our flogger such a scoring as imprinted on his memory, to his last state of magistracy, a fellow-feeling for the sufferings of petty delinquents.

3

Not only does Vindex come off much the worst in these exchanges, he also sees his school destroyed as a result, like Keypstick's. Later in the book he describes how the boys jeered at him because of his sufferings - "a rod for the flogger!" - how they became disorderly and were withdrawn by their parents, how his bills were not paid, and eventually he was cast into a debtor's prison. Even at this stage, his sufferings are chiefly introduced in order to show Harry's magnanimity in giving money to restore Vindex to society.<sup>4</sup>

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1    ibid., p. 63.

2    ibid., p. 64.

3    ibid., p. 65.

4    ibid., p. 229.

This concept of justified revenge is frequently expressed. No sympathy is wasted on Mallett, the usher, "a pallid wretch" in Disraeli's Vivian Grey. When the pupils lock him in the schoolroom, and his "horrid cries" indicate that they are roasting him, Vivian Grey's only comment is: "Let me not, however, baulk your vengeance on yonder hound: if I could suggest any refinements in torture, they would be at your service."<sup>1</sup> Similarly Trelawny's protagonist records at one point that "I turned my whole thoughts to the possibility of revenging myself on the master".<sup>2</sup> With a group of ten boys he first sets upon the usher during a country walk.

... completely overcome, he entreated us, as well as he could articulate, to have mercy, and not to strangle him. I griped him the tighter, till the sweat dropped from his brow like rain from the eave of a pig's sty. We then unbreeched him and gave him a sample of flogging he could never forget.

3

Later he assaults the master ("I, with one sudden exertion, seized him by the legs, when he fell heavily on the back of his head") and sets fire to the school before he is expelled.<sup>4</sup>

The viewpoint from which these incidents are narrated is the key factor. Not once is the beating or other tormenting of a teacher told from his point of view; it is always witnessed from the outside, either by the all-seeing author or by a pupil who has suffered at the hands of the master. The suggestion is almost always that the teacher brings the sufferings on himself, and that they are intended to have a reforming effect on him. It is hard to avoid the feeling that at this period teachers occupied the stock rôle of villains in popular culture: alien figures, frightening or absurd, existing to be overthrown. Their sufferings do not count because they are somehow less than human.

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1 Benjamin Disraeli, Vivian Grey, (1826-7) 1919, p. 12.

2 Edward J. Trelawny, Adventures of a Younger Son, (1831) 1974, p. 10.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 10-11.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 11-12.



## THE MODEL TEACHER

The few good teachers of this period are usually described in approving terms either by the authors themselves or by a "mouthpiece" character; they are rarely seen in action, except in making public pronouncements, and when they are shown with children the pupils' reactions generally seem contrived. Their names frequently indicate that they are to be seen as symbolic rather than realistic figures: Teachum, Teachwell, Rightway. Few of them appear in works of much literary merit; they are more likely to be the pallid embodiments of an educationalist's theories. A reader would not turn to these works for narrative interest or character development. The story, such as it is, is the coating on the didactic pill; the characters are mouthpieces for ideas.

Euphranor, for example, is said by Sophron, his admiring assistant, to be unafraid "either of diminishing his Authority, by his Openness and Familiarity with his Scholars, or of exposing his Character, as a Teacher, by allowing them to grapple with him in free Debate".<sup>1</sup> This is essentially theory about the author's image of an ideal system; Euphranor is not shown working out these principles in practice; everything remains abstract.<sup>2</sup> One of the best of these figures, because the nearest to realisation, is Mrs. Teachum, in Sarah Fielding's The Governess, 1749. Even though the school's curriculum is left very vague, Mrs. Teachum is shown dealing with particular problems of discipline and employing deliberate strategies to suit the characteristics of different children. Unlike some of the pupils, however, who have marked personalities, Mrs. Teachum herself is strangely neutral, because she is essentially a composite of good qualities with no life apart from her rôle. The dominant tone is still generalised and idealised: the author's intervention is too deliberate.

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1 David Fordyce, Dialogues concerning Education, 1745, vol. 1, p. 19.

2 Compare James Forrester's dialogue "Between Eugenio a Moralist, and Horatio Master of a Boarding-School near London", in Dialogues on the Passions, Habits, and Affections Peculiar to Children, 1748.

Mrs. Teachum had so much Judgment, that, perceiving such a ready Obedience to all her Commands, she now endeavour'd, by all means she could think of, to make her Scholars throw off that Reserve before her, which must make it uneasy to them for her ever to be present whilst they were following their innocent Diversions: For such was the Understanding of this good Woman, that she could keep up the Authority of the Governess in her School, yet at times become the Companion of her Scholars.

1

Similarly in "The Good French Governess",<sup>2</sup> Madame de Rosier is shown analysing the characters of her different charges, and finding methods to aid their development, but essentially she is less a character in a story than an embodiment of Edgeworth's<sup>3</sup> notions of practical education. The intention is to exemplify these principles for girls who would themselves later have children to bring up. So Madame de Rosier is shown helping Isabella to question the purpose of the miscellaneous rote knowledge she loves to display, encouraging Matilda to begin from knowledge of her own limitations, helping Herbert to learn to read, and freeing little Favoretta from the dangerous influence of the lady's maid. Although the visit to the shop which sells "rational toys" is slightly comic in its earnestness, Madame's stress on the need to create appropriate occupations for each child is enlightened, and only unconvincing in the speedy total success which her methods obtain.

In a somewhat less plausible work in similar vein, the idealised teacher is named Mrs. Teachwell, under which pseudonym Lady Eleanor Fenn put forward her educational views.<sup>3</sup> Yet another is called Mr. Rightway, in an uneasy work called "An Entertaining and Instructive Lesson for Young Gentlemen".<sup>4</sup> It is perhaps not surprising that women are the authors of the majority of novels in which educational pills are given a thin fictional

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1 Sarah Fielding, The Governess, 1749, pp. 149-150.

2 Maria Edgeworth, Moral Tales, 1801, in Tales and Novels, vol. 1, 1893.

3 School Occurrences: supposed to have arisen among a set of young ladies under the tuition of Mrs. Teachwell; and To be recorded by One of Them, 1782.

4 W. F. Sullivan, The History of Mr. Rightway and his pupils, 1816.



coating in the later eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Most of the imaginary schools seem to centre on at least one admirable, if not convincing, teacher. Unfortunately under the pressure of moral earnestness the teaching rôle and sometimes the school itself often fade away as the book goes on.

It was from life rather than from fancy that Coleridge drew a rare approving portrait which balanced good and bad qualities, and which was grounded in actual classroom behaviour. His description of the ferocious but able Upper Master of Christ's Hospital, James Bowyer or Boyer, in the first chapter of Biographia Literaria, 1817, must be one of the earliest attempts to define in some detail just what good pedagogic practice is. Bowyer "moulded" the taste of his pupils by wide reading of the classics, alongside Shakespeare and Milton, and by making comparison and evaluation habitual. Through close study, he encouraged pupils to discuss why the poet had chosen each particular word. In English composition, he "showed no mercy to phrase, metaphor, or image, unsupported by a sound sense, or where the same sense might have been conveyed with equal force and dignity in plainer words". Certain hackneyed words, images and parallels were forbidden. The particular technique which Coleridge picks out as "imitable and worthy of imitation" depended on waiting until each pupil had four or five exercises to be examined.

Then placing the whole number abreast on his desk, he would ask the writer, why this or that sentence might not have found as appropriate a place under this or that other thesis: and if no satisfying answer could be returned, and two faults of the same kind were found in one exercise, the irrevocable verdict followed, the exercise was torn up, and another on the same subject to be produced, in addition to the tasks of the day. 1

Such specific details are rare, even in books by writers who were themselves teachers, and who might therefore be capable of describing enlightened work. The attention is almost always on the nature and character of the

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1 Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Biographia Literaria, (1817) 1947, pp. 3-5.



teacher, not on the quality of the teaching. This may reflect a traditional concept of the teacher as instructor, assuming that there is no real choice of methods, but that the rôle is simply to enforce learning efficiently by conventional means. In such a case, it would be reasonable to distinguish teachers in terms of their attitudes and of the guidance they offer.

Since Sarah Maese kept a school in Bath, it is perhaps not surprising that the teachers in her epistolary novel The School, 1766-72, come out well. Maria's first letter home to her mother describes how, on her arrival, Mrs. Wheatley "embraced me with such an air of humanity, compassion, and even tenderness ... reminding me ... of my dear mamma ...".<sup>1</sup> The other girls were gay and cheerful, while -

Mrs. and Miss Wheatleys joined in their mirth with ease  
and good nature, without laying aside an air of dignity,  
which I imagine necessary in their station ...

2

Mrs. Milton replies to her daughter with pleasure at her agreeable reception and approval of the methods of instruction,<sup>3</sup> which appear to consist largely of question and answer catechisms on the facts of geography and history, some of which are implausibly interspersed in the letters home. ("My dear Mamma, Your last letter kindly tells me, that my fear of wearying you with the historical anecdotes I sent, were vain."<sup>4</sup>) In fact, before half way through the first volume, the fictional school has virtually disappeared, except as a tenuous theme for catechisms, exercises and moral stories. ("Mrs. Wheatleys contrive to make amusement accompany instruction," Maria tells her Mamma.<sup>5</sup>) Fortunately, mother is easily satisfied: "My Dear Maria, Whatever subject you chuse to write upon, you cannot fail of giving me pleasure."<sup>6</sup>

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1 Sarah Maese, The School, 1766-72, vol. 1, p. 3.  
2 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 4.  
3 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 17.  
4 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 129.  
5 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 168.  
6 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 286.

In another novel, accurately subtitled "a moral tale", the schoolmaster, Mr. Morton, is hardly seen in any other rôle than that of moral guide or pastor. He is not shown teaching or, indeed, punishing; his character is conveyed virtually entirely through public or private exhortations. When a lame boy with a lisp is about to join the school, for example, he warns the rest of the pupils:

"... such are the evil propensities of our nature, which it should be our endeavour to subdue, that my younger scholars, who have probably never seen any one so unfortunate, might be inclined to laugh at him, and thus aggravate the keen sense he must already have of such accumulated ills. 1

More generally, however, he speaks to individuals in correction or guidance:

"In consideration of your childishness, I forgive you this time; but ...";

"Why do you not rise above it?"; "We must submit to the means Providence has

appointed"; "I foretold how this sudden friendship would end"; "My advice

and interest ... is at your service."<sup>2</sup> His concern is with moral discrimi-

nation, making issues clear and drawing conclusions.

When Ellen first becomes a teacher, she is fortunate to be under the guidance of another paragon, who makes her position easy.

Mrs. Saunderton, the good lady under whose protection she now resided, always endeavoured to support her authority amongst her own scholars, without exacting from her any affectation of consequence unnatural to her years. She was a clever, sensible, and good woman, who thoroughly understood the important task of female education, to which, for several years, she had devoted herself with great success ... 3

Mrs. Ann Taylor and Jane Taylor vary the approach slightly in Correspondence

between a Mother and her Daughter at School, 1817, by having the daughter

make ingenuous comments on her affection for her headmistress, Mrs. W., and

putting the idealising or moralising gloss into the mother's replies:

Do not suppose a benevolent and tender disposition towards you, inconsistent with the strict discipline she is obliged to maintain: great is the charge she has undertaken;

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1 Elizabeth Sandham, The Boys' School, /1800/, p. 3.

2 ibid., pp. 5, 38, 58, 80, 91.

3 Barbara Hofland, Ellen, the Teacher, /1814/ 1819, p. 136.



and arduous is her task. You will believe this when you see the various dispositions she has to encounter ...

1

Even in more genuine novels, which are not didactic tracts on education in disguise, the occasional good teacher is generally seen as wholly good, remarkable for his accomplishments, in marked contrast to other teachers in the book, presented in terms of the author's own valuation, and rarely developed as a character. For example, among the other teachers who are figures of fun in Peregrine Pickle, Mr. Jennings, the usher, stands out by being idealised, the reasonable man between the extremes of indulgence and cruelty. He is described as "a man of learning, probity, and good sense", who had alone brought the school to a high standard. His methods and his concern for individuals soon produce a change in Peregrine:

... and in less than a twelve-month after his arrival, this supposed dunce was remarkable for the brightness of his parts; having in that short period learnt to read English perfectly well, made great progress in writing, enabled himself to speak the French language without hesitation, and acquired some knowledge in the rudiments of the Latin tongue.

2

Indeed, by the age of twelve, the boy -

... had made such advances under the instruction of Jennings, that he often disputed upon grammar, and was sometimes thought to have the better in his contests with the parish-priest, who ... did great justice to his genius.

3

Unfortunately, Peregrine's later career does little to suggest that the usher's influence was very lasting.

Similarly Thomas Holcroft gives a picture of an usher in which the qualities ("well read ... good scholar ... amiable man ... excellent poet ... assiduous to teach") are so heaped together that it reads more like a testimonial.

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1 Mrs. A. Taylor and J. Taylor, Correspondence between a Mother and Her Daughter at School, 1817, p. 10.

2 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, pp. 54-5.

3 ibid., p. 78.



The usher of the school got preferment, and his successor happened to be well read, both in the dead and living languages. This person, whose name was Wilmot, was not only a good scholar and an amiable man but an excellent poet. He had an affection for me, and I almost worshipped him. He was assiduous to teach me every thing he knew; and fortunately I was no less apt and eager to learn. Having already made a tolerable proficiency in the learned languages, the richness of the French in authors made me labour to acquire it with avidity. The Italian poets were equally inviting; so that, by his aid, I mastered the idioms and attained the spirit of both those languages. The dialects of the Teutonic were likewise familiar to him, and I made some progress in the German; being desirous from his recommendation to read, among others, the works of Lessing, Klopstock, Goethe, and Schiller. The acquirement of knowledge is an essential and therefore a pure pleasure; and my time, though laboriously spent, glided swiftly and happily away. 1

There was surely a danger in such a dichotomy between idealised images of model teachers on the one hand and satirical portraits of others as fools or brutes on the other. The gap between aspiration and actuality must have seemed unbridgeable, since few readers can have imagined that the Teachwells and Rightways were flesh and blood. To encourage awareness of the difference between what is and what might be could be potentially valuable. Such oversimplification of good and bad, however, must have made it difficult to base any real consideration of educational issues on the impressions gained from reading about teachers. In particular, hardly one figure in poems or novels of this period has any existence as a human being with interests and relationships outside the school: the rôle swallows up the personality.

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1 Thomas Holcroft, The Adventures of Hugh Trevor, (1794-7) 1973, p. 61.

STATUS AND PUBLIC ESTEEM

The fact that teachers appear so little in literature, and play such subordinate and unattractive rôles, as suggested in the last chapter, is itself an indicator of a general lack of public regard for the occupation in the years to 1833.<sup>1</sup> Virtually all writers assume that the teacher's social position is low, and few question that this should be so. Although teachers formed a heterogeneous group, like those engaged in the law, or in medicine, they seem more likely to be lumped together disparagingly. The clear awareness shown by writers of different social levels in the church, for example, is not paralleled in their treatment of education until Dickens, from the 1830s onwards, begins to place his teachers at different points on the social scale with more discrimination. In one way, a general contempt for teachers is simply part of a wider disillusionment with education. The literature of the eighteenth century is full of complaints that the educational system is not achieving even its most limited aims. Fielding declared that the majority of boys left school at fifteen or sixteen "very little wiser, and not at all the better for having been sent thither".<sup>2</sup> The dandies and boobies that fill the pages of essays, novels and plays serve as a condemnation of what Swift had earlier called "the corrupt Method of Education among us"<sup>3</sup> and - by extension - of the "wretched Pedagogues"<sup>4</sup> who taught them. There is frequently some incongruity between the lip-service paid to ideas of

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- 1 Compare the more general judgment that "there is a great paucity of contemporary matter dealing with the schoolmaster in the eighteenth century ...". C. Chegwidan, "Some Aspects of the Social Position of the Professional Teacher ...", M.A. thesis, University of Wales, 1932.
  - 2 Henry Fielding, The Covent-Garden Journal, No. 56, 25 July 1752 in The Covent-Garden Journal, ed. Gerald Edward Jensen, New York, 1964, vol. 2, p. 65.
  - 3 Jonathan Swift, The Intelligencer, No. IX, in Swift, Prose Works, Oxford 1955, vol. 12, p. 47.
  - 4 *ibid.*, p. 50.

education and the distaste or contempt so generally shown for those involved in it.

The common reaction was caught by Charles Lamb when he recorded the dawning recognition, with a mixture of alarm and pity, that a chance acquaintance is a teacher, and the constraint that this imposes. His encounter on a coach with a "staid-looking gentleman" in "a greenish-coloured coat", who speaks with an air of authority on a range of topics and poses sharp queries, culminates in his realisation that his companion is a schoolmaster.<sup>1</sup> He goes on to ask, and to attempt to answer, the key question: "Why are we never quite at our ease in the presence of a schoolmaster?" Lamb concludes that the teacher is "out of place in the society of his equals", that he is so conditioned by his rôle and by association with children that he cannot engage appropriately with adults. It is difficult to see a schoolmaster as a friend, and there is an inevitable social distancing, even though Lamb looks at their work with some respect. Goldsmith had earlier expressed crisply this discrepancy between the theoretical and the actual valuations placed on teachers:

Of all professions in society, I do not know a more useful, or a more honourable one, than a schoolmaster; at the same time I do not see any more generally despised, or men whose talents are so ill rewarded.

2

In this claim, Goldsmith seems to be using the word "profession" in the wider sense, as defined by Johnson, to apply to any "calling, vocation, known employment", which could equally refer to skilled workmen. It seems unlikely that he was attempting to claim that teaching was on a level with the three "liberal professions" of divinity, law and medicine. Indeed, in books of this period, teaching seems almost never to be termed a profession in the more modern sense ("A vocation in which a professed knowledge of some department of learning or science is used in its application to the affairs of others or in

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1 Elia, Essays, 1823, pp. 112-7.

2 The Bee, No. VI, 10 November 1759, in Goldsmith, Collected Works, 1966, vol. 1, p. 457.



the practice of an art founded upon it" - O.E.D.). Goldsmith's observation, then, is a moderate one. By contrast, it is equally difficult to take seriously either the ironically-viewed enthusiasm of Parson Adams, who "thought a schoolmaster the greatest character in the world, and himself the greatest of all schoolmasters",<sup>1</sup> or the seriously presented idealism of Mr. Barlow, who proclaimed that "he that undertakes the education of a child, undertakes the most important duty in society".<sup>2</sup> However socially important the rôle, the general emphasis until well into the nineteenth century is on the inferior position of teachers. It seems clear that books were here expressing a common opinion, as can be seen from the generalisations about low status in parliamentary papers.<sup>3</sup>

Teachers are repeatedly seen as employees who are therefore on a par with servants. Swift classes the governess with the footmen and the maids in including her in his Directions to Servants, 1745. Mrs. Darnforth reports that when she went as a governess, she was treated with contempt as one that receives wages, "which made me a dependent, not much above a servant".<sup>4</sup> Walsingham, in the novel of that name, says that his mother came from an ill-fated family, and sums up their lowest point as having to engage in teaching: "The name had gradually sunk into decay till the parent of my mother was reduced to the humble occupation of a country schoolmaster."<sup>5</sup> The appalling Mrs. Norris, in Mansfield Park, 1814, makes two comments about Fanny's arrival which neatly combine to show in what esteem she holds the governess. First, she says that "it will be just the same to Miss Lee, whether she has three girls to teach, or only two - there can be no difference". Shortly afterwards, however, she anticipates a problem in dealing with Fanny's

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1 Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, (1742) 1966, p. 247.

2 Thomas Day, The History of Sandford and Merton, (1783-9) Halifax, 1863, p. 27.

3 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, pp. 7 ff.

4 Clara Reeve, The School for Widows, 1791, vol. 2, p. 6.

5 Mary Robinson, Walsingham, (1797) 1805, vol. 1, p. 21.

clothes, "for I suppose you would not think it fair to expect Ellis to wait on her as well as the others".<sup>1</sup> This distinction between what can be expected of a maid and of a governess is a revelation of Mrs. Norris's attitude, but since "Lady Bertram made no opposition" and Sir Thomas says nothing, she is presumably not alone. The "good schoolmistress" in the fourteenth of Sarah Trimmer's Instructive Tales is said to be one of the "inferiors of the village" though in a "rather higher sphere" than the "paupers or labouring-poor".<sup>2</sup> Vivian Grey and his schoolfellows in Disraeli's novel consider their ushers "a species of upper servants",<sup>3</sup> and it is thought worthy of special note that the idealised Mrs. Teachwell would never permit her assistant to be called a servant.<sup>4</sup> Humility and submissiveness, "knowing one's place", are frequently mentioned as desirable qualifications for a teacher, as will be seen in the following section of this chapter. Some of the parishioners of Dalmailing find it a cause for complaint that the new schoolmistress is "more uppish in her carriage than befitted the decorum of her position".<sup>5</sup>

The comparisons that are made between teaching and other careers are particularly significant. Swift tells an anecdote of two men who competed for the position of master of a small school in Yorkshire. The "better Scholar, and more gentlemanly Person" was appointed, but whereas the inferior candidate eventually "lived and died in a great Station", the schoolmaster lived "too obscure for Fame to tell as what became of him".<sup>6</sup> When Peter Wilkins is left fatherless and penniless at school, he rejects the schoolmaster's offer to complete his education free so that he himself can join

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- 1 Jane Austen, Mansfield Park, (1814) 1934, pp. 9-10.
  - 2 Sarah Trimmer, Instructive Tales, 3rd ed., 1815, p. 130.
  - 3 Benjamin Disraeli, Vivian Grey, (1826-7) /1919/, p. 8.
  - 4 Lady Eleanor Fenn, School Occurrences ..., /1782/, p. 25.
  - 5 John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (1821) 1967, p. 49.
  - 6 Jonathan Swift, Prose Works, Oxford, 1955, vol. 12, pp. 40-1.

the profession, because "my Heart was too lofty to think of becoming an Usher".<sup>1</sup> Jennings, the able usher in Smollett's Peregrine Pickle, 1751, resigns the post, "hoping to find a settlement in some of our American plantations".<sup>2</sup> Another ex-usher proclaims, "I had rather be an under turn-key in Newgate".<sup>3</sup> The schoolmaster poet John Day of Sigglesworth records in his then unpublished verses how when he married and had a family he had to give up his school and become a gardener or labourer "to get us Bread and Cheese and Cloaths to wear".<sup>4</sup> The able usher, who teaches Hugh Trevor is bitter at having to accept such a position instead of "those more noble and beneficial pursuits for which I think I had proved myself fitted".<sup>5</sup> Crabbe's Abel Keene is delighted to be promoted - as he sees it - from schoolmaster to merchant's clerk.<sup>6</sup> John Marshall describes a member of "this important, tho' despised class", forced into teaching because unqualified for anything else, and envying the humblest tradesman:

To dig incompetent, to beg ashamed,  
 To no profession regularly bred,  
 But wand'ring broken-hearted thro' the streets,  
 And at the cobbler casting envious looks,  
 Who gaily whistles o'er his work, secure  
 To reap at eve the wages of his toil.

7

Because of this low ranking, more socially successful teachers are reluctant to be identified as belonging to the profession. The snobbish Miss Fanshaw makes much of the fact that her mistress, Mrs. Suxberry, keeps a coach. "I assure you she's not at all like a schoolmistress, and she thinks it very rude of any body to call her a schoolmistress."<sup>8</sup> Writers of this period combine

- 1 Robert Paltock, Peter Wilkins, (1750) 1973, pp. 27-8.
- 2 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, p. 60.
- 3 Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, (1766) Oxford, 1966, p. 107.
- 4 V. N. Wright, John Day, A Village Poet, Sigglesworth, 1968.
- 5 Thomas Holcroft, The Adventures of Hugh Trevor, (1794-7) 1973, p. 232.
- 6 George Crabbe, The Borough, letter XXI, Poetical Works, 1914, pp. 191-2.
- 7 John Marshall, The Village Paedagogue, Newcastle, 1817, p. 5.
- 8 Maria Edgeworth, "The Good French Governess", Tales and Novels, vol. 1, (1801) 1893, p. 338.



to suggest that in career terms even the most humble occupations are preferable to teaching, that it is frequently seen as a last resort, and that a girl who has to support herself has teaching virtually forced upon her. For Crabbe's Ellen Orford, teaching is the only support left for the betrayed widow:

The parish-aid withdrawn, I look'd around  
And in my school a bless'd subsistence found - 1

Crabbe's images for the work of teachers are almost invariably humble: they are "dependent helpers always at the wheel", "attendants fix'd at learning's lower gate", their work consists of "weary tasks", "sad duty", "unvaried toil and care that never ends", "labour dull".<sup>2</sup> In the later Tales of the Hall, 1819, Doctor Sidmere's wife urges a good marriage for their daughter with the overwhelming argument, "Is not this better than a noisy school?".<sup>3</sup>

Crabbe does also present, like Goldsmith, the other side of that ambivalence with which society regarded teachers. Their status is seen as low, the work humble and ill-paid, but at the same time the function is essential, and the community may remember with sentimental affection those who educated its leading figures. The frugal, pious schoolmistress of The Parish Register is described by the poet with "due respect"; idle neighbours have to adapt their behaviour to her; even the boys pass silently "in pure respect".<sup>4</sup> In The Borough Crabbe, like others, hails the dame who taught him his letters:

Nor I alone, who hold a trifler's pen,  
But half our bench of wealthy, weighty men,  
Who rule our Borough, who enforce our laws;  
They own the matron as the leading cause,  
And feel the pleasing debt, and pay the just applause ... 5

One of the pleasures Ellen Orford finds in keeping a school is this sense of being of use in shaping the future, of predicting what her pupils would become,

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1 George Crabbe, The Borough, letter XX, Poetical Works, 1914, p. 191.

2 ibid., pp. 206-8.

3 Tales of the Hall, Book XV, Poetical Works, 1914, p. 445.

4 Poetical Works, 1914, p. 58.

5 The Borough, letter XVIII, Poetical Works, p. 178.

and following their careers:

I loved them all; it soothed me to presage  
The various trials of their riper age ...

1

The mistress of the preparatory school is particularly skilled in this:

"No abler judge of infant-powers I know ..."

Long has she lived, and much she loves to trace  
Her former pupils, now a lordly race.

When important citizens, who have done well, return to visit her, she recalls her struggles with them:

She marks the pride which once she strove to check:  
A burges comes, and she remembers well  
How hard her task to make his worship spell ...

2

Her knowledge of the personalities, her hopes and fears for her students, pierce beneath social veneer: "Still the matron can the man behold." As Lamb wrote in "The Old and the New Schoolmaster" though, the apparent gratitude is not "genuine feeling"; the citizens feel pleasure in patronising those whom once they treated with respect or fear.

The notion that teaching is virtually the only paid occupation for an unmarried girl, and not often an attractive one, appears in a number of books. In the first letter of the supposed correspondence which a girl just beginning school keeps up with her mother is a description of a new teacher driven into the situation by family tragedy:

She is in deep mourning for her father, and, they say,  
has never been out before. I pitied her last night,  
as she was sitting with us, she looked so melancholy.

3

The same idea appears early in Jane Austen's writing. In the fragment The Watsons, written early in the nineteenth century though not actually published until 1871, Emma Watson says to her elder sister:

"I would rather be Teacher at a school (and I can think of nothing worse) than marry a Man I did not like." - "I would rather do any thing than be Teacher at a school -

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1 ibid., letter XX, p. 191.

2 ibid., letter XXIV, p. 206.

3 Mrs. A. Taylor and Jane Taylor, Correspondence Between a Mother and her Daughter at School, 1817, p. 5.

said her sister. I have been at school, Emma, &  
know what a Life they lead; you never have."

1

Although the mature novels are less outspoken, similar ideas are not uncommon, especially in Emma, 1816. When Miss Taylor, the much-loved governess and companion, leaves Hartfield after sixteen years to marry Mr. Weston, Mr. Knightley acknowledges that Emma will miss her very much,

But she knows how much the marriage is to Miss Taylor's advantage; she knows how very acceptable it must be at Miss Taylor's time of life to be settled in a home of her own, and how important to her to be secure of a comfortable provision....

2

What underlies this speech is important. Miss Taylor, of course, is making a good marriage, but the implication seems to be that even in such a happy situation as the one at Hartfield a governess has no real home or security, and that the problem of her future becomes increasingly urgent with age. The general reaction to governesses appears to be much less understanding than the Woodhouses\*. When Mrs. Elton meets the ex-governess, she expresses herself as "rather astonished to find her so very lady-like! But she is really quite the gentlewoman."<sup>3</sup> It is ironic that these words should be put into the vulgar mouth of Mrs. Elton, but she is not alone in seeing the role as incompatible with an accepted position in society. Jane Fairfax becoming a governess is described sardonically in terms of a nun abandoning the world:

With the fortitude of a devoted novice, she had resolved at one-and-twenty to complete the sacrifice, and retire from all the pleasures of life, of rational intercourse, equal society, peace and hope, to penance and mortification for ever.

4

Emma's jealousy of Jane disappears when she considers condescendingly what a fate awaits her in stooping to be a teacher:

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1 Jane Austen, Minor Works, ed. R. W. Chapman, 1954, p. 318.

2 Jane Austen, Emma, (1816) 1933, p. 11.

3 *ibid.*, p. 278.

4 *ibid.*, p. 165.



... when she considered what all this elegance was destined to, what she was going to sink from, how she was going to live, it seemed impossible to feel any thing but compassion and respect ...

1

In talking with Frank Churchill, she feels it necessary to skirt round what Mrs. Weston calls a "delicate" subject without even mentioning words like "governess": "You know Miss Fairfax's situation in life, I conclude; what she is destined to be."<sup>2</sup> Even Harriet can look down on Jane, remarking complacently of her ability at playing and singing, that "it is no more than she is obliged to do, because she will have to teach".<sup>3</sup>

The sense of a degree of esteem within the community co-existing with an instinctive feeling that teachers exist at a humble level is revealed in the way Mrs. Goddard and her school are discussed. Within limits, Mrs. Goddard is well established and respected in Highbury, in the second level of guests at the Woodhouses, with people like the widow of a former vicar.<sup>4</sup> As in most of Jane Austen's other references to teachers and governesses, it is Mrs. Goddard's personal qualities and her concern for the pupils that are dwelt on to the exclusion of intellectual accomplishments or pedagogic skills. The author seems to speak in her own person when praising the lack of sham and pretension.

Mrs. Goddard was the mistress of a School - not of a seminary, or an establishment, or any thing which professed, in long sentences of refined nonsense, to combine liberal acquirements with elegant morality upon new principles and new systems - and where young ladies for enormous pay might be screwed out of health and into vanity - but a real, honest, old-fashioned Boarding-school, where a reasonable quantity of accomplishments were sold at a reasonable price, and where girls might be sent to be out of the way and scramble themselves into a little education, without any danger of coming back prodigies.

5

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1    ibid., pp. 167-8.  
2    ibid., p. 201.  
3    ibid., p. 232.  
4    ibid., pp. 20-1.  
5    ibid., pp. 21-2.

When Jane Austen talks of the school being "deservedly" in "high repute", the reasons she gives are its healthy situation, the "ample" house and garden, the "wholesome" food, and the fact that Mrs. Goddard "let them run about a great deal in the summer, and in winter dressed their chilblains with her own hands". "She was a plain, motherly kind of woman, who had worked hard in her youth."<sup>1</sup> The tone of this, and the emphasis on the commercial nature of the enterprise, suggest that - however praiseworthy - Mrs. Goddard is linked with those engaged in trade or humbler occupations. Even Mr. Knightley, a man devoid of snobbishness, is blunt in his estimate of the social as well as the educational level of her school. Repudiating Emma's claims on behalf of Harriet, he says of her:

After receiving a very indifferent education she is left in Mrs. Goddard's hands to shift as she can; to move, in short, in Mrs. Goddard's line, to have Mrs. Goddard's acquaintance. Her friends evidently thought this good enough for her ...

2

At the time when Harriet is interested in the farmer, Robert Martin, she remarks artlessly to Emma that one of the three teachers at the school "thinks her own sister very well married, and it is only a linen-draper", to which Emma responds,

"One should be sorry to see greater pride or refinement in the teacher of a school, Harriet. I dare say Miss Nash would envy you such an opportunity as this of being married. Even this conquest would appear valuable in her eyes."

3

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1    ibid., pp. 21-2.

2    ibid., p. 62.

3    ibid., p. 56.

## QUALIFICATIONS

When considering the qualifications of teachers in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries as presented by writers of the period, three impressions seem inescapable. First, although the state of affairs may be criticised, it seems to be assumed that the majority of teachers will lack any apparent qualification for the post. Second, the discrepancy between the unreal pictures of highly-qualified "ideal" teachers, intended to prove a thesis, and the horrifying descriptions of inadequate pedagogues, much more vividly realised, suggests at least one reason for the low esteem in which teachers were held. Third, although there is disagreement about the kinds of qualification expected, qualities of character and moral or religious attitudes normally seem to take precedence over academic or intellectual abilities, and pedagogic qualities, the skills of teaching, are rarely mentioned.

In 1759, Goldsmith wrote that it was "impossible to conceive the ignorance of those who take upon them the important trust of education".

Is any man unfit for any of the professions; he finds his last resource in setting up a school. Do any become bankrupts in trade, they still set up a boarding school, and drive a trade this way, when all others fail: Nay, I have been told of butchers and barbers, who have turned schoolmasters; and more surprising still, made fortunes in their new profession.

1

In the same essay, and in The Vicar of Wakefield and The Citizen of the World, Goldsmith looks scornfully at what is required of an usher, possibly from personal experience.

... lest the ignorance of the master be not sufficient, the child is generally consigned to the usher. This is commonly some poor needy animal, little superior to a footman either in learning or spirit, invited to his place by an advertisement ...

2

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1 The Bee, 10 November 1759, in Goldsmith, Collected Works, Oxford, 1966, vol. 1, p. 456.

2 ibid., p. 458. Compare Collected Works, vol. 4, p. 208; The Vicar of Wakefield, Oxford, 1966, pp. 107-8.



Similarly, in the introduction to A Poetical Essay on the Early Part of Education, 1785, the Rev. William Coke complains that too many schools are "under the government of mean and unprincipled men", who make their institutions "the retreat of profligacy from danger, and ignorance from indigence and want". It is not unknown "for servants to succeed their masters in these situations".<sup>1</sup> In 1830, Mrs. Hall's retired schoolmistress gets indignant about conditions in many private schools, under ill-qualified teachers.

"Nothing calls so loudly for reform as public schools; the ignorant and vulgar so frequently meddle with education, as the dernier resort of broken fortunes, that when individuals capable of performing their duty properly undertake it, they are undervalued, and confounded with illiterate pretenders. They manage these things better in France - there a person cannot open a 'Pension' without being examined by the authorities, who investigate his or her qualifications for so important a task." 2

A number of fictional teachers realise these generalisations in vivid colours; what differs is the emotional attitude of the author towards them. Fielding's Partridge may be shown with amused pity, but Smollett describes with disgust the fawning, unqualified master to whom Peregrine Pickle is sent, as

... an old illiterate German quack, who had formerly practised corn-cutting among the quality, and sold cosmetic washes to the ladies, together with teeth-powders, hair-dying liquors, prolifick elixirs, and tinctures to sweeten the breath. 3

Mr. Selkirĳ, in The Spiritual Quixote, had been a pack-carrying travelling Scotchman, but marrying a farmer's daughter with a little money, "had opened a shop, and set up a little school".<sup>4</sup> Tom Caxon, a light-hearted rascal in a novel by Henry Man, was a barber's son who left charity school to be a

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1 Rev. William Coke, A Poetical Essay on the Early Part of Education, Oxford, 1785, p. lviii.  
2 Anna Maria Hall, Chronicles of a School Room, 1830, pp. 217-8.  
3 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, p. 57.  
4 Richard Graves, The Spiritual Quixote, (1773) 1967, p. 347.

servant in a merchant's house, then an attorney's clerk, before being recommended as an usher to a schoolmaster, where he stayed until he got one of the maids into trouble.<sup>1</sup> When Anna is left an orphan at seventeen, and comes to Mrs. Mason seeking a way of supporting herself, the choice of teaching seems fortuitous. According to Mrs. Mason, "I happened to mention that we were in want of a school-mistress. She eagerly adopted the plan, and has persevered in it ..."<sup>2</sup>

Frances Darnford is just one of many fictional widows left without provision who turns to school-keeping. She puts up a notice, "A School for Female Children; where Reading, English, Writing, and all Kinds of Needlework, are taught in the best manner", and soon has thirty pupils.<sup>3</sup> In Edward, a school is taken over after the master's death by his widow's new husband, although he is a "tyrannical blockhead", totally unfit to be a schoolmaster.<sup>4</sup> The three successive mistresses appointed to the girls' school in Our Village had been nurse to a good family, widow of a gamekeeper and personal attendant to a lady. The third of these was successful, but Miss Mitford says of the first that "Nobody could well be more unfit for her station" and of the second that she had "a woeful ignorance how to set about it".<sup>5</sup> Three of the women who are described as becoming teachers in Annals of the Parish are a destitute lady with one eye, "a broken manufacturer's wife" and "the widow of a custom-house officer".<sup>6</sup> Examples like these concur in more graphic terms with generalisations like Tropp's on the reported qualifications of entrants to teaching in the opening years of the nineteenth century:

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- 1 Henry Man, Mr. Bentley, the rural philosopher, 1775, vol. 1, pp. 172-88.
  - 2 Mary Wollstonecroft, Original Stories from Real Life, 1788, p. 146.
  - 3 Clara Reeve, The School for Widows, 1791, vol. 1, pp. 23-4.
  - 4 John Moore, Edward, 1796, pp. 169-70, 181.
  - 5 M. R. Mitford, Our Village, (1819) 1904, pp. 282-6.
  - 6 John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (1821) 1967, pp. 48-9, 170-1.

The impression that emerges from the reports of inspectors on the antecedents of teachers in their districts is that the majority were men who had tried other trades and failed ... The amount of training received was small, and although some became competent and diligent teachers, all too often they were complete failures.

1

Of particular interest are the cases where authors directly or implicitly suggest their approval of teachers, usually for girls, who lack any formal qualification and are commended solely for some personal quality. Sarah Fielding's idealised Mrs. Teachum is the widow of a clergyman, who loses husband, both her daughters and her money: "Therefore, by the Advice of all her Friends, she undertook what she was so well qualified for; namely, the Education of Children."<sup>2</sup> Certainly the story shows Mrs. Teachum as a sensible and considerate woman, but it is hard to see how, before she began her career, all her friends could find her "so well qualified" except for the fact that she had had children of her own and had been "improved" by talking with her husband. In a sense, here as elsewhere (in Crabbe, for example), the need of a post that would support her seems to predict the qualifications needed to supply it. Girls straight from school themselves might take up education as a way of filling leisure time or as a career with such a comment as "All who knew her were persuaded that she was peculiarly fitted for such a task".<sup>3</sup> A "charitable gentleman" who has a chance meeting with a poor shepherd, fifty years old, can make him master of a Sunday School and his wife the mistress of a day school, because she is "not fit for hard labour, or any out-of-door work".<sup>4</sup> Some indication of the personal qualities thought appropriate appears in Sarah Trimmer's tale of Mrs. Fairfield, a charity-school girl, servant to a "benevolent lady", who marries an exciseman

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1 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, pp. 10-11.

2 Sarah Fielding, The Governess, (1749) 1968, p. 101.

3 See Jane West, The Advantages of Education, (1792) 1803, vol. 1, pp. 123-4; Mary Robson, The Orphan Girl, 1819, pp. 131-2.

4 Hannah More, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, Cheap Repository Tract, n.d. /?1810/ p. 31.



on her mistress's death and later opens a school. Her only training seems to have been reading a book called The Christian Schoolmaster, which receives a lengthy free advertisement. Sarah Trimmer's views are clear from her description of reactions to the school and from the terms which she uses to describe Mrs. Fairfield. A number of "reputable" parents are delighted at the prospect of having their children "under the tuition of one so well qualified for a schoolmistress", and what qualifies her is suggested by the words used of her: respectable, remarkable for her application, worthy, lived with great economy, patience and humility, naturally meek.<sup>1</sup> The elderly clergyman who is the supposed narrator of Annals of the Parish similarly says that Nanse Smith is "well cut out for her calling" of schoolmistress because, in his words, she is "a patient creature", submissive, innocent, undemanding and respectable.<sup>2</sup>

Particularly in the case of charity school teachers, it seems clear that the chief stress in selecting teachers was on "good character and religious knowledge".<sup>3</sup> The point is not only that men and women were idly recommended for teaching posts without any real consideration of their abilities, but that employers seemed frequently unable to judge whether or not a teacher would be suitable, to discriminate between different kinds of qualification. The conclusion of Maria Edgeworth's story "Mademoiselle Panache" has Lady S----- dismissing her governess in grief for the disaster that has overcome herself and her daughter. She exclaims in horrified regret:

"How could I choose such a governess for my daughter! Yet indeed," added her ladyship, turning to Mrs. Temple, "she was well recommended to me and how could I foresee all this?"

4

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- 1 Sarah Trimmer, Instructive Tales, 3rd ed., 1815, pp. 130-2.
  - 2 John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (1821) 1967, pp. 13-4, 43-5.
  - 3 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, p. 6.
  - 4 Maria Edgeworth, Tales and Novels, (1801) 1893, vol. 1, p. 410.

It is perhaps significant that the two characters in Jane Austen's novels who make a great deal of their ability to "place" governesses are both officious and absurd: Lady Catherine de Bourgh and Mrs. Elton.

Lady Catherine cannot contemplate the idea of a family brought up without a governess, and harangues Elizabeth on the subject.<sup>1</sup> Her convictions clearly go with an interest in adding to the supply and controlling it.

(Immediately before this discussion, Elizabeth had noted that "nothing was beneath this great Lady's attention, which could furnish her with an occasion of dictating to others".)<sup>2</sup> She remarks complacently:

"It is wonderful how many families I have been the means of supplying in that way. I am always glad to get a young person well placed out. Four nieces of Mrs. Jenkinson are most delightfully situated through my means; and it was but the other day, that I recommended another young person, who was merely accidentally mentioned to me, and the family are quite delighted with her. 3

The absurdity, of course, lies in the superficiality of all this: the conjunction of assertions of the importance of the governess rôle with the revelation that she is prepared to recommend people she has never met and about whom she knows hardly anything. The protestations cover a lack of concern for individuals and a contempt for those who fulfil the rôle: it is her own action that is all-important.

"Mrs. Collins, did I tell you of Lady Metcalfe's calling yesterday to thank me? She finds Miss Pope a treasure. 'Lady Catherine,' said she, 'you have given me a treasure.'" 4

The contrast between the lack of qualifications exhibited by many characters and the statements of qualifications which teachers should ideally possess is extreme. Earlier in the eighteenth century, in his influential book, The Christian School-Master, James Talbott had written that every potential teacher "should very seriously consider with himself, whether he is duly

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1 Jane Austen, Pride and Prejudice, (1813) 1932, pp. 164-5.

2 *ibid.*, p. 163.

3 *ibid.*, p. 165.

4 *ibid.*, p. 165.

qualified", and his criteria were, in order of priority, religion ("which in every English School-Master ought to be that of the Church of England"), morals, learning ("a competent knowledge of such things as he is required to Teach"), and having "a good Genius for Teaching".<sup>1</sup> He even touched on the "Age and Person" of the future schoolmaster:

... it is convenient that he should not be under the Age of 25 Years; that there should be no Deformity in his Person, nor Defect in his Speech: both which are liable to be Imitated (if not Ridicul'd) by children. 2

Unfortunately, when authors attempted to give concrete illustrations in literature of such admirable principles, their characters rarely come to life, they were too manifestly idealised. For example, there are the master and ushers of the school in David Fordyce's Dialogues Concerning Education, set in the Academy where the narrator, a new student, has come to be educated under the direction of Euphranor. An acquaintance, Sophron, says of the master:

He is a Man of superior Talents, very learned withal, and understands most of the ancient and modern Languages. To a profound Skill in Philosophy and the Mathematics he joins an elegant Taste in the classic Writers ... he has the Qualifications necessary for an able Divine, being deeply versed in Scripture, and in ecclesiastic as well as profane History ... he is likewise a Master in Life and Manners ... But his chief Excellency is, that his Example contains more persuasive and emphatic lessons than all his Precepts ... /etc./ 3

In James Elphinston's poem in four books, Education, 1763, there are some lively pictures of less desirable schoolmasters, but when he comes to describe his ideal it proves to be another lifeless assemblage of abstract qualities:

... Mine be the man who has not sprung by rote;  
Whom Learning boasts as critically known,  
Whom jealous Virtue vindicates her own;

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1 James Talbott, The Christian School-Master, 2nd ed., 1711, pp. 4-22.

2 *ibid.*, p. 23.

3 David Fordyce, Dialogues Concerning Education, 2nd ed., 1745, vol. 1, p. 15. Compare the discussion "Between Eugenio, a Moralist, and Horatio, Master of a Boarding-School near London" in James Forrester, Dialogues on the Passions, Habits and Affections peculiar to Children, 1748.



On whom the Graces wait, or grave or gay,  
 To double all his worth, and give his pow'rs their play.  
 In books and things divine and human taught,  
 In purest language pouring purest thought:  
 Of eye, sagacious embryo-parts to scan,  
 Of pow'r to perfect ev'ry pow'r in man.  
 Blest with a taste and talent to impart,  
 A master's firmness and a parent's heart;  
 By Nature and by Art ordain'd to rear,  
 To win by fondness, or compel by fear:  
 Still master of himself who others awes,  
 And by his life enforcing all his laws.  
 Such is the man that's born and bred for me:  
 Happy, my son, if such I find in thee!

1

The rhythmic monotony, the regular line-long units, the lack of vivid phrase or qualities realised in action combine to make this a dull blue-print, not a portrait.

In novels, also, the common tendency to describe bad teachers in the blackest terms is sometimes accompanied by a balancing attempt to show the occasional good one as highly qualified. Wilmot, the usher in The Adventures of Hugh Trevor, is described by Thomas Holcroft as "not only a good scholar and an amiable man but an excellent poet"; his relationships with his pupils were good and he was "assiduous to teach"; as well as the classics, French, Italian and German "were likewise familiar to him"; "among his other attainments" he "was a musician".<sup>2</sup> As was suggested in the previous chapter, these "model" teachers are presented as good in virtually every respect, though the qualifications chiefly insisted on are academic scholarship, piety, and appropriate qualities of character. Writers found it relatively easy to suggest academic and religious qualifications: a clergyman with a degree could be assumed to possess both. Thus the Doctor knows that parents will trust his Cambridge career: "Degrees successive ascertain'd his fame."<sup>3</sup>

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1 James Elphinston, Education, 1763, pp. 37-8.

2 Thomas Holcroft, The Adventures of Hugh Trevor, (1794-7) 1973, p. 61.

3 James Elphinston, Education, 1763, p. 33.

Mr. Allport is immediately acceptable as a tutor for Lady Selby's son Charles, because he is "a young gentleman brought up for the church, whose character and acquirements seemed eminently to fit him for the delicate and arduous office".<sup>1</sup>

The desirable qualities of character are inevitably harder to define and more open to disagreement. Authors like Fielding or Smollett can follow a list of strengths in certain areas with weaknesses in others, as though to imply that in a human world it is rare to meet men who demonstrate perfection in every respect. Such descriptions make a healthy contrast with the specifications of "ideal" teachers. Parson Adams, for example, thinks himself a great schoolmaster; his academic abilities and personal character are of the best, but he is handicapped by his innocent ignorance of the world. The description begins as glowingly as one of Fordyce's, but the ending undercuts what goes before.

Mr. Abraham Adams was an excellent scholar. He was a perfect master of the Greek and Latin languages; to which he added a great share of knowledge in the Oriental tongues, and could read and translate French, Italian and Spanish. He had applied many years to the most severe study, and had treasured up a fund of learning rarely to be met with in a university. He was besides a man of good sense, good parts, and good nature; but was at the same time as entirely ignorant of the ways of this world, as an infant just entered into it could possibly be. 2

Similarly, in Tom Jones, Thwackum is recommended to Mr. Allworthy by a friend on whose understanding and integrity he relies (though Fielding notes that "this friend had some obligations to Thwackum's family").

This Thwackum was fellow of a college, where he almost entirely resided; and had a great reputation for learning, religion and sobriety of manners. And these were doubtless the qualifications by which Mr. Allworthy's friend had been induced to recommend him. 3

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- 1 Barbara Hofland, Ellen the Teacher, /1814/ 1819, p. 28.
  - 2 Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, (1742) 1966, p. 14. By contrast, Mr. Barlow, a clergyman and scholar, feels himself "totally unqualified" to be a tutor because he has lived withdrawn from "the refinements of polite life". Thomas Day, The History of Sandford and Merton, (1783-9) Halifax, 1863, p. 19.
  - 3 Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, (1749) 1933, vol. 1, p. 84.

It does not take long for Allworthy to discover the weaknesses of personality from which his tutor suffers, he "never liked this man. He knew him to be proud and ill-natured", but nevertheless:

... he was at the same time an excellent scholar, and most indefatigable in teaching the two lads. Add to this, the strict severity of his life and manners, an unimpeached honesty, and a most devout attachment to religion. So that, upon the whole, though Allworthy did not esteem nor love the man, yet he could never bring himself to part with a tutor to the boys, who was, both by learning and industry, extremely well qualified for his office ...

1

This careful balancing of qualities, the emphasis of "though ... yet", "upon the whole", suggests that the notion of a teacher being "qualified for his office" is not as simple a matter as has been represented elsewhere, that it does demand judgment.

Smollett describes, how, when Peregrine Pickle is about to go to Winchester, his uncle appointed Mr. Jacob Jolter as tutor to accompany the boy. Jolter had been at school with the local parson,

... who recommended him to Mrs. Trunnion as a person of great worth and learning, in every respect qualified for the office of a tutor. He likewise added, by way of eulogium, that he was a man of exemplary piety, and particularly zealous for the honour of the church of which he was a member, having been many years in holy orders, tho' he did not then exercise any function of the priesthood ... otherwise, a man of good morals, well versed in mathematicks and school-divinity, studies which had not at all contributed to sweeten and unbend the natural sourness and severity of his complexion.

2

Judging from later events, it is not only the severity but the unworldliness of Jolter that causes problems, but nevertheless at the end of the book he is rewarded by Commodore Trunnion for the "care and discretion with which he had superintended the education and morals of our hero".<sup>3</sup> These three descriptions all follow a similar pattern, and the three men are all presented

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1 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 366.

2 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, p. 78.

3 *ibid.*, p. 356.



as having a reputation for scholarship, piety and morality, though with quite different human frailties from one another.

The general emphasis seems clear. Academic qualifications or abilities are frequently mentioned but rarely discussed. A graduate is, in that respect, automatically acceptable. Lower down the social scale, the village schoolmaster without a degree is still in a privileged position because he is the acknowledged intellectual leader of an uneducated group: "The village all declared how much he knew."

In arguing too, the parson owned his skill,  
For even tho' vanquished, he could argue still;  
While words of learned length, and thundering sound,  
Amazed the gazing rustics ranged around,  
And still they gazed, and still the wonder grew,  
That one small head could carry all he knew.

1

The actual ability to teach, to communicate knowledge, is comparatively little mentioned. Isaac Watts, in his posthumously published work, The Improvement of the Mind, did point out that some very learned men "have not the talent of communicating their own knowledge", and insisted that pedagogic skill was an essential qualification:

It is not sufficient that instructors be competently skilled in those sciences which they profess and teach; but they should have skill also in the art or method of teaching, and patience in the practice of it.

2

It is significant that not until later periods is this skill much mentioned as essential for a teacher, still less realised in action in the pages of a novel.

Presumably because of the emphasis in the eighteenth century on the inculcation of virtue as the chief end of education, moral character and influence are overwhelmingly the most frequently mentioned qualifications for a teacher, implied negatively as well as positively. At Westminster, Lord Stormer is successful academically but acquires all the fashionable vices, and Eliza Parsons exclaims: "Alas! how few are there equal to the trust of superintending the education and

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1 Oliver Goldsmith, "The Deserted Village", lines 211-6, Poems, 1966, p. 295.  
2 Isaac Watts, The Improvement of the Mind, (1741) Berwick, 1801, p. 60.

morals of a young man of fashion."<sup>1</sup> Clara Reeve emphasises the pernicious effects of an accomplished but unprincipled teacher. When Mrs. Darnford first goes as governess to the children of Lady Haughton she immediately finds the situation difficult because of their previous instructress.

The young ladies had been under the tuition of a French governess, who had taught them airs and graces, self-confidence and vanity; but they were ignorant of those graces which attend on Virtue and her pupils only. They had received no instructions relative to religion, or morality ...

Her pupils had liked Mlle. Bourdiere, of whom they said:

"... she played with us, danced and sang with us, and always spoke well of us; she taught us to make a little learning go a great way, and to display what we did know to advantage; she made us love her, and be satisfied with ourselves."

2

The same unfavourable comparison between social and intellectual graces and moral ones is shown in the description of a pert tutor, who had been "dragged out of a College-Garret at Thirty, and just seen enough of the World to make him impertinent and a Coxcomb".<sup>3</sup> Pupils will not learn even from the most distinguished scholars if such men are idle or casual. The chaplain who undertook the education of Edward Waverley around 1740, "was not only an excellent classical scholar, but reasonably skilled in science, and master of most modern languages". However, he was also "old and indulgent", he "had his own studies" and "a love of learned ease", which militated against his effectiveness.<sup>4</sup> Charles Lamb described the Rev. Matthew Field as a gentleman, a scholar and a Christian, but one whose indolent ways meant that his pupils made no progress.<sup>5</sup> On the other hand, the fact that Casimir Fleetwood's tutor is "not a man of genius" is quite outweighed by the fact that he has a quality "which is better than a mere poet: he was an honest man".<sup>6</sup>

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- 1 Eliza Parsons, The Errors of Education, Dublin, 1792, p. 21.
  - 2 Clara Reeve, The School for Widows, 1791, vol. 2, pp. 6, 11.
  - 3 Francis Coventry, The History of Pompey the Little, (1751) 1974, p. 47.
  - 4 Sir Walter Scott, Waverley, (1814) Edinburgh, 1897-87, pp. 11-13.
  - 5 Charles Lamb, "Christ's Hospital Five and Twenty Years Ago" (1820) in Elia, 1823, pp. 40-2.
  - 6 William Godwin, Fleetwood, (1815) 1832, pp. 5-6.

Such assumptions may help to explain why a religious stance, wholly real or partly assumed, seems a regular element - possibly a necessary qualification - in the lives of a number of the teachers in Crabbe's poems. The schoolmistress in The Parish Register, is "pious"; she brings the orphan child for baptism; she studies her Bible in the evening, and "solemn prayers the daily duties close". The Dame in The Borough lauds learning of a particular kind as essential: "'Tis with awe to look / In every verse throughout one sacred book ... " Ellen Orford sees her rôle as teacher, and the loss of it, as divinely ordained: her school is a "bless'd subsistence" bringing "heavenly hopes", she can "bless the Power who gave / Pains to correct us, and remorse to save", she teaches children "Upon their heavenly Parent to rely".<sup>1</sup> Particularly in the nineteenth century, the attention tends to shift towards the personal qualities of the teacher as the essential qualification. Dr. Elwin says of Selina Bloomfield that despite her many accomplishments, proficiency in music, drawing and dancing, fluency in French and Italian, she can only be a satisfactory schoolmistress if her personality changes:

" ... till you have patience to oppose to dullness, temper to meet indocility, and firmness to check idleness and forwardness, you are unqualified for the teacher of children." 2

At the very beginning of Mrs. Hofland's Ellen, the Teacher, Ellen is telling her mother, "I should like very much to be a teacher". When her mother replies that she is little aware of what is required of a teacher, Ellen responds by naming accomplishments:

"I must know a great deal more of my French, and music, and I must learn to draw and embroider ... I must read a great deal of history, and learn to reflect upon it, and write about it; and I must be perfect - quite perfect in my grammar, mamma, and write sensible letters ... " 3

Her mother points out that these accomplishments may be important, but the

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- 1 George Crabbe, Poetical Works, 1914, pp. 58, 178, 191.  
 2 Rachel Hunter, The Schoolmistress, 1811, vol. 2, p. 86.  
 3 Barbara Hofland, Ellen the Teacher, /1814/ 1819, pp. 1-3.



acquisitions which she means "apply to your temper and disposition; these are of the highest moment". At its most extreme, this concentration on character could replace all other qualifications entirely. Maria Edgeworth's Mrs. Villars, for instance, is introduced in terms which ignore the academic. She is a person, "whose accurate understanding, benevolent heart, and steady temper peculiarly fitted her for the most difficult, as well as most important of all occupations - the education of youth".<sup>1</sup>

In Elizabeth Sandham's The Boys' School, the story opens with an account of the master's qualifications.

Mr. Morton was every way qualified to keep a school: endued with patience and perseverance, he was good-natured, and possessed a steadiness of temper, which, whilst it excited the love of his scholars, obliged them to be obedient to his commands. His school was a private one for a limited number of boys; and, as he did not permit any person to assist him in the arduous task of their education, his whole time and attention were devoted to his pupils. He narrowly observed their different dispositions and tempers; and, while he slacked not his attention to their improvement in learning, he endeavoured to regulate their minds, to teach them to govern their passions, instead of allowing themselves to be governed by them; and guarded each boy from those errors to which his predominant inclination might lead him. 2

The stated qualifications are essentially moral rather than intellectual, or concerned with other interests and abilities, and his treatment of the boys throughout the book is seen in moral terms. His concern for character development involves treating them as individuals (there are only fourteen boys in the school). "Equal attention was paid to all ... he reprov'd and commended each as their conduct deserved."<sup>3</sup> Indeed, the book is almost wholly given over to reproof and commending; there is hardly any description of teaching in the academic sense. Here as elsewhere it seems assumed that pedagogic ability need not be illustrated in deciding that a person is "every way qualified to keep a school".

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1 Maria Edgeworth, The Parent's Assistant, (1796-1800) 1804, vol. 3, p. 3.  
2 Elizabeth Sandham, The Boys' School, /1800/, pp. 1-2.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 2.

## SALARY AND CONDITIONS

Teaching is always presented as an ill-paid occupation, often as a grossly under-paid one, by writers of the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Robert Lloyd, the poet who had been an usher at Westminster School, described his income as a "paltry stipend" in return for hard labour.<sup>1</sup> When actual salaries are mentioned, the normal range for an assistant seems to be about twenty to thirty pounds per annum, but it is the tone of the references, and the comments on conditions which are perhaps more revealing than the actual figures. Poor Partridge only manages by combining the post of schoolmaster with that of parish clerk and barber, and even then depends on an annuity of ten pounds from Mr. Allworthy.<sup>2</sup> When the Squire deprives him of this because of his supposed fathering of a bastard, "he had lost the best part of his income", soon loses his school as well, and is turned out by the parson from the office of clerk.<sup>3</sup> The need for a teacher to possess other skills is demonstrated by what follows. In his travels he serves two lawyers, sets up another school, is ruined by a law-suit, teaches in Cork, and becomes barber in Gloucestershire, where he meets Tom Jones again to become his personal servant. We are told that "besides his other trades, he was no indifferent taylor".<sup>4</sup> At the end of the book he is again set up in a school, but it is made clear that the happy ending for him depends much less on the position than on the fifty pounds a year which Jones settled on him.<sup>5</sup> Fleetwood's good tutor would have been left destitute had not his employer settled an annuity on him, which enabled him to live in "a narrow lodging in an obscure street of the metropolis".<sup>6</sup> Fielding ironically comments that

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1 Robert Lloyd, Poetical Works, 1774, vol. 1, p. 6.

2 Henry Fielding, Tom Jones, (1749) 1933, vol. 1, p. 41.

3 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 58 and vol. 2, p. 371.

4 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 326.

5 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 412.

6 William Godwin, Fleetwood, (1805) 1832, p. 16.

with all his qualifications, serving as curate and teacher, Parson Adams at the age of fifty was rewarded with a "handsome" income of twenty-three pounds per annum to keep himself, his wife and six children.<sup>1</sup> Jennings, the able usher in Peregrine Pickle, 1751, receives "the paltry consideration of thirty pounds a year" for the whole responsibility of educating the children in the school, since the master is incompetent.<sup>2</sup> Commodore Trunnion gives him "a handsome consideration", rather like tipping a servant, for undertaking the task of educating Perry.<sup>3</sup> Fanny Hill's father is a netmaker, earning a pittance, "which was not much enlarg'd by my mother's keeping a little day-school for the girls in her neighbourhood".<sup>4</sup> Mr. Vindex is imprisoned in the Fleet Prison as a bankrupt after the failure of his school.<sup>5</sup> Scott's Reuben Butler has to avoid paying a small fee for the privilege of passing through the city gates after they have closed, because even this amount is substantial "to a man so poor as Butler".<sup>6</sup> Offered ten pounds per annum, with board and lodging, to be a village schoolteacher, John Marshall returned home "as much elated as if I had been appointed a Teller of the Exchequer".<sup>7</sup> In verses written in 1802, but not then published, John Day revealed the range of occupations which a village schoolmaster might have to fulfil in order to earn his living:

I teach a School tho' 'tis but small,  
 And I the Sexton am withal,  
 As well as Parish Clerk;  
 A Ringer too, for Bells we've three ...  
 Perchance I'm call'd to make a Will,  
 Or some Indentures have to fill,  
 Or settle some dispute ...  
 Sometimes I'm sent for to survey  
 A piece of Ground where Corn or Hay  
 Had stood or standing were ...

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- 1 Henry Fielding, Joseph Andrews, (1742) 1966, p. 14.  
 2 Tobias Smollett, Peregrine Pickle, (1751) 1964, p. 57.  
 3 *ibid.*, p. 54.  
 4 John Cleland, Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure, (1749) New York, 1963, p. 4.  
 5 Henry Brooke, The Fool of Quality, (1766-70) 1906, p. 229.  
 6 Sir Walter Scott, The Heart of Midlothian, (1818) Edinburgh, 1870, p. 60.  
 7 John Marshall, The Village Paedagogue, Newcastle, 2nd ed., 1817, p. 95.



In Painting too I'm handy grown,  
 Some Churches long my Art has shewn,  
 And lesser Jobs no end;  
 To engrave on Stone at time delight ...  
 The Barber's craft in part fulfil,  
 Can poll a Head with nicest skill ...  
 Of Parish Taxes I'm Collector,  
 Chief Regulator and Inspector,  
 Book-keeper too am I;  
 Foreman of Jury twice I've been ...  
 In Harvest time, when hands are scarce,  
 Or Scythe or Sickle I embrace,  
 And join the Farmer's squad ...

1

The benevolent gentleman of Hannah More's tract may turn the shepherd and his wife into teachers, but he is also quick to tell the shepherd that he must continue his existing trade. They will only be paid "the usual price" he says, "for I am not going to make you rich, but useful".<sup>2</sup> One of the few girls presented as actually wanting to teach is Ellen, who goes to become a teacher in a school with about twenty girls, where it has been arranged that she will give her services in return for free board. To her delight, the generous Mrs. Saunderton tells her that she has been so much "better and more useful" than expected that she proposes -

"... adding a little stipend to your board: for the first two years of your residence with me I shall give you ten guineas a-year; for the two following, fifteen; and from that period, thirty guineas per annum."

At this, Ellen "gratefully" seizes the hand of her "benefactress" and kisses it "eagerly".<sup>3</sup> Miss Sabrina is thought to have done very well, because in addition to running a school she works hard and successfully as a dressmaker, and actually manages to save: "in the course of three years had ten pounds to put in the bank".<sup>4</sup> Crabbe's schoolmistress, Ellen Orford, is included in a section headed "The Poor of the Borough",<sup>5</sup> and indeed almost all the teachers he mentions are in financial difficulties. The repeated epithet used of the

1 V. N. Wright, John Day, A Village Poet, Sigglesworth, 1968.

2 Hannah More, The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain, [1810?] p. 31.

3 Barbara Hofland, Ellen, the Teacher, (1814) 1819, pp. 154-5.

4 John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (1821) 1967, pp. 49-50.

5 George Crabbe, The Borough, letter XX, Poetical Works, 1914, pp. 187-91.

village schoolmistress in The Parish Register is "frugal"; when Abel Keene gives up teaching for a clerk's stool, "half the labour brought him twice the pay"; the widow who keeps the dame school is "poor"; the day-school master lives in dread of "rent-day charges and of boalman's bills"; the generalisation about teachers is "their compensation small".<sup>1</sup>

The effect of these low salaries on recruitment was frequently acknowledged.<sup>2</sup> Goldsmith was one of a number of authors who argued that the only way to improve standards of teaching was to raise salaries to attract the able and to dismiss the unqualified: "In short, I would make the business of a school master every way more respectable, by encreasing their salaries, and admitting only men of proper abilities." He went on,

It is true we have already school masters appointed, and they have small salaries; but where at present there is only one school master appointed, there should at least be two; and wherever the salary is at present twenty pounds, it should be augmented to an hundred.

3

Thomas Sheridan similarly complained that the "wretched stipend", the "low prices at first established, and still continued, to the masters of schools", underlay the failings of the educational system. Low salaries and low status went together. He wrote that "larger wages are given to the men who break and train their horses and dogs, than to those who are to form their children".<sup>4</sup> Where conditions do improve for a fictional teacher, like Partridge, it is usually on the closing pages, where fantasy or wish-fulfilment takes over. Doctor Syntax can joyfully abandon his school and the "hard struggle how to live" for a living with over three hundred pounds per annum, and the rôle of tutor to the Squire's son.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Longfield, "a man of pale aspect" in a

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1 George Crabbe, Poetical Works, 1914, pp. 58, 192, 205, 206, 208.

2 See, for example, Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, pp. 8-9.

3 Oliver Goldsmith, The Bee, 10 November 1759, in Collected Works, 1966, vol. 1, p. 457.

4 Thomas Sheridan, A Plan of Education for the Young Nobility and Gentry of Great Britain, 1769, pp. 47-8.

5 William Combe, The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque, (1809) 1813, p. 273.

"decayed chair", teaching forty or fifty poor boys in a tumbledown cottage is translated to brand-new buildings and told, "You are to superintend these schools at a salary of three hundred a-year."<sup>1</sup>

With the nineteenth century came an increasing concentration on school-keeping as a business enterprise, dominated by the need to show a profit. Dr. Syntax continually complains about the financial problems of his school, which "brought but little gains, / And scarce repaid him for his pains ... / Syntax still was very poor."<sup>2</sup> In the face of rising expenses, he complains that it is madness to run such an establishment:

... when a man's the sport of Heaven,  
To keep a school the fellow's driven.

3

He tells the Provost of his Oxford college, a man with twelve hundred pounds a year, that Fortune has not dealt so kindly with him, living on thirty pounds a year.

"Alas! alas! I've play'd the fool;  
I took a wife, and keep a school;  
And, while on dainties you are fed,  
I scarce get butter to my bread."

4

At the beginning of the poem, "tir'd of Greek and Latin lore", Syntax laments alone:

Mutton and beef, and bread and beer,  
And ev'ry thing was grown so dear;  
The boys were always prone to eat,  
Delighting less in books than meat ...

E'en birch, the pedant master's boast,  
Was so increas'd in worth and cost,  
That oft, prudentially beguil'd,  
To save the rod, he spar'd the child.  
Thus, if the times refus'd to mend. (sic)  
He to his school must put an end.

5

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1 Charles Brooke, The Fool of Quality, (1766-70) 1906, p. 410.  
2 The Tour of Doctor Syntax in Search of the Picturesque, p. 114.  
3 ibid., p. 261.  
4 ibid., p. 36.  
5 ibid., p. 2. This edition gives a full stop after "mend".



Charles Lamb claimed that one of the great advantages of his old school lay in "the settled salaries of the masters", which in his "Recollections of Christ's Hospital", 1813, he said made them "totally free of obligation to any individual pupil or his parents".<sup>1</sup> He contrasted the system with that prevailing in other schools:

... where each boy can reckon up to a hair what profit the master derives from him, where he views him every day in the light of a caterer, a provider for the family, who is to get so much by him in each of his meals. Boys will see and consider these things; and how much must the sacred character of preceptor suffer in their minds by these degrading associations! The very bill which the pupil carries home with him at Christmas, eked out, perhaps, with elaborate though necessary minuteness, instructs him that his teachers have other ends than the mere love to learning, in the lessons which they give him ... 2

Lamb claims that "many preceptors" have acknowledged to him how destructive of social relationships between pupils and teachers the financial arrangements can be, emphasising that masters are not "disinterested pedagogues to teach philosophy gratis".<sup>3</sup>

One of the books which goes into most detail about comparative status and remuneration is Rachel Hunter's The Schoolmistress, 1811. When Selina Vernley undertakes the education of Mr. Biddulph's three girls, Dr. Elwin, who has made the arrangement, tells her, "You are to live on four hundred pounds per annum, and feed his three girls, as it seemeth good in your own eyes."<sup>4</sup> When the situation changes, she firmly declines Mrs. M--'s invitation to live under her roof and continue to teach the two younger girls for one hundred pounds per annum, "with the only condition of your finding your own washing, and not expecting the exclusive attendance of a maid-servant in your apartment". The tone of the invitation is haughty, and Mrs. M-- demands a prompt reply, "as there are three governesses who are waiting for

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1 Charles Lamb, Works, 1867, p. 514.

2 ibid., pp. 514-5.

3 ibid., p. 515.

4 Rachel Hunter, The Schoolmistress, 1811, vol. 2, p. 108.

my decision, each of whom are ready to engage themselves at fifty pounds per annum".<sup>1</sup> After this, Selina agrees to an invitation from certain ladies of the town to set up an establishment to teach ten girls, at sixteen guineas each per annum, "conditioning to supply the annual sum, in case the stipulated number failed. These terms admitted of no hesitation on our part."<sup>2</sup> She describes some of the "gratifications" of this "fatiguing occupation":

Behold me now presiding in my day-school, from nine to twelve, and from three to five, every day, with a cap of wisdom, and a sceptre of authority, necessary in the arduous undertaking of teaching, and "unlearning", to use a borrowed name for rectifying habitual errors. 3

At the end, she rejects an invitation to take up an appointment with Lord and Lady G--, because she does not wish to be "placed with the elevated in rank and fortune", but to remain in the "station" where she has been happy.<sup>4</sup>

Mrs. Ashburton, the teacher who acted as governess to six pupils at a time describes to Mrs. Hall, in her Chronicles of a School Room, 1830, the "awful responsibility" of thirty years' labour, which only left her with two hundred pounds. She says, "I did not commence the great business of education with the intention of trafficking in intellect, for the sole purpose of accumulating wealth." When Mrs. Hall remarks that she understands "that little money could be made by schools", Mrs. Ashburton replies:

"I believe there are but two ways of gaining even a very moderate income. Receiving high terms with the pupils, or condescending to the practice of little meannesses that wither the best feelings of the heart, and invariably render the governess an object of contempt to those who ought to look to her, not only for precept, but example." 5

Direct and indirect pressures are exerted by the community. Early in Annals of the Parish, Mr. Balwhidder records that when the schoolmaster is

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1 ibid., vol. 2, p. 128.

2 ibid., vol. 2, p. 133.

3 ibid., vol. 2, p. 133.

4 ibid., vol. 2, pp. 183, 187.

5 Anna Maria Hall, Chronicles of a School Room, 1830, pp. 7-8.

disabled by a stroke, the parish will not appoint a successor while he lives, "grudging the cost". When Nanse Banks is too ill to teach, she fears the prospect of going on parish relief. Few of the gentry are prepared to make any contribution when storms destroy the roof of the school-house and make the building "utterly uninhabitable".<sup>1</sup> John Marshall writes from his own experiences as a village schoolmaster about the way in which such a person is judged as an employee. When a man arrives in a village where a master is needed, he may imagine he can "commence his new career" immediately.

Too sanguine are thy hopes! The learned clerk,  
Or sage churchwarden, must in judgment sit  
On thy endowments; and, this ordeal past,  
For thy good morals vouchers they require,  
And sift, like wheat, thy temper and address.

Even when confirmed in his post, the master is subject to continual scrutiny: "The village gossips keep a watchful eye" on his habits, diet, beliefs and political opinions.

In blacksmith's shop the village Euclids meet,  
With mutual aid and friendly chalk essay  
To calculate thy income, and from thence,  
If oeconomic or profuse, to judge.

2

With such financial problems, the teacher's standard of living is inevitably shown as poor. Goldsmith's potential usher is warned that he can never succeed if he is reluctant to sleep three in a bed or if he has "a good stomach".<sup>3</sup> Tom Hood's Irish schoolmaster is shabbily dressed; his gown is patched, stained and full of holes; he has to grow vegetables during breaks from school; his house is a dilapidated "clay cabin".<sup>4</sup> Such a way of life may be presented with irony or scorn, or later in the period with a sentimental pity. A daughter writes home of the pathetic music master, who visits twice a week, and is cruelly ridiculed by one of the girls.

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1 John Galt, Annals of the Parish, (1821) 1967, pp. 13, 44, 67.

2 John Marshall, The Village Paedagogue, Newcastle, 1817, pp. 6-7.

3 Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, (1766) Oxford, 1966, p. 108.

4 Thomas Hood, Poetical Works, 1906, p. 61.



Our poor music-master is a constant butt for this lady's jokes, which, indeed, is very unfeeling, as he is in ill health, and looks unhappy. He has a large family to provide for, and very little employment; as there is another master in the neighbourhood who is said to teach in a more fashionable style ... He comes from several miles distance, twice a week; and by the time he has been with us an hour or two, he looks so fatigued and ill! and has, besides, such sad fits of coughing!

1

Crabbe is keenly aware of squalor in schools as elsewhere. One day-school master sits "wig awry" among the books "soil'd, tatter'd, worn and thrown in various heaps"; Reuben Dixon works in a "sty" surrounded by "noise and dirty and stench, and play, and prate".<sup>2</sup> The real revulsion, however, is less from conditions, financial worries and low status than from problems which are inherent in the work, particularly the relationship with the immature, the unintelligent and the troublesome. Reuben Dixon makes "vain attempts to keep the peace" among his "ragged lads", "their half-checked rudeness and his half-scorn'd pride".<sup>3</sup> The intelligent Leonard "loathes the station which he dares not leave", for "On vulgar lads he wastes superior parts". When he seeks consolation by reading poetry:

... with a heavy eye and ill-done sum  
No part conceived, a stupid boy will come;  
Then Leonard first subdues the rising frown,  
And bids the blockhead lay his blunders down;  
O'er which disgusted he will turn his eye,  
To his sad duty his sound mind apply,  
And vex'd in spirit, throw his pleasures by.

4

This section, in particular, piles up the antithetical epithets, balancing the teacher's deep skill, superior parts, proud mind, strong reason against vulgar lads, torpid brains, dull day, weary tasks, stupid boy, sad duty.

Alas! what grief that feeling mind sustains,  
In guiding hands and stirring torpid brains ...  
... Who thinks and reasons strongly: - hard his fate,  
Confined for ever to the pen and slate ...

5

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1 Mrs. A. Taylor and Jane Taylor, Correspondence Between a Mother and her Daughter at School, 1817, p. 106.

2 George Crabbe, The Borough, letter XXIV, Poetical Works, 1914, p. 206.

3 *ibid.*, p. 206.

4 *ibid.*, p. 207.

5 *ibid.*, p. 206.

A teacher is inevitably aware of being feared or disliked. From the pupils' point of view, he automatically seems "the tyrant stern or judge severe"; the girl at boarding school finds "Madam herself, and teachers, odious all"; the farmers' sons resent the time given to books, "and o'er a grammar waste their sprightly powers".<sup>1</sup> All are anxious for an end of schooldays:

All hardships over, which a school contains,  
The spirit's bondage and the body's pains;  
Where teachers make the heartless, trembling set  
Of pupils suffer for their own regret ...

2

Not only is the teacher's task laborious and resented by those who benefit from it, it is endlessly repetitive.

Set after set the lower lads to make  
Fit for the class which their superiors take;  
The road of learning for a time to track  
In roughest state, and then again go back:  
Just the same way on other traps to wait, -  
Attendants fix'd at learning's lower gate.

3

The actual work of teaching is virtually always described as burdensome and demanding endless patience: arduous and toilsome are the repeated epithets. Robert Lloyd, who went as an usher to Westminster School after leaving Oxford, wrote in "The Author's Apology" that the worst vengeance he could impose on an enemy would be to make him Usher in a school. The one idea appears in a variety of images. Teaching is -

... the toil  
Of working on a barren soil,  
And lab'ring with incessant pains  
To cultivate a blockhead's brains ...

Still to be pinion'd down to teach  
The syntax and the parts of speech;  
Or, what perhaps is drudging worse,  
The links, and joints, and rules of verse;  
To deal out authors by retale,  
Like penny pots of Oxford ale;  
- Oh! 'Tis a service irksome more  
Than tugging at the slavish oar.

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1    ibid., pp. 206-9.

2    ibid., p. 207.

3    ibid., p. 208.

Yet such his task, a dismal truth,  
Who watches o'er the bent of youth; ...  
No joys, alas! his toil beguile ...

1

At the beginning of his verse essay, Gibbons Bagnall involves the aid of Patience herself in his attempts "to sing the tutor's multifarious task".<sup>2</sup> People pity the well-born lady whose financial tragedy means that she "patiently labours" in school where she has "only the society of children", and is exhausted in the evening "after the toils of the day".<sup>3</sup> Mr. Rightway, a schoolmaster, agrees with the comment that, "it is an arduous task to become a preceptor, and requires the patience of a Job".<sup>4</sup> Charles Lamb writes of "the toilsome duties of their profession",<sup>5</sup> and says that "the modern schoolmaster is expected to know a little of everything".<sup>6</sup> When Ellen as a child expresses her wish to be a teacher, her mother warns her that "the task you now covet will be found so very arduous", that if she takes it up "you will have a very different perception of the occupation from that you have at present".<sup>7</sup> Goldsmith's ex-usher says of that period in his life,

"I was up early and late: I was brow-beat by the master, hated for my ugly face by the mistress, worried by the boys within, and never permitted to stir out to meet civility abroad."

8

At the end of the period, Carlyle's *Teufelsdröckh* describes his schoolmaster as "a downbent, brokenhearted, underfoot martyr, as others of that guild are".<sup>9</sup> The sense of isolation and the strain of maintaining the teacher's rôle over a prolonged period are the elements emphasised by Scott in the supposed person of Peter Pattieson, a village schoolmaster of the eighteenth century.

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- 1 Robert Lloyd, Poetical Works, 1774, vol. 1, pp. 4-6.
  - 2 Gibbons Bagnall, Education: an essay, 1765, p. 7.
  - 3 Mary Wollstonecroft, Original Stories from Real Life, 1788, pp. 146-9.
  - 4 W. F. Sullivan, The History of Mr. Rightway and his Pupils, 1816, p. 11.
  - 5 Charles Lamb, Elia, 1823, p. 46.
  - 6 *ibid.*, p. 119.
  - 7 Mrs. Hofland, Ellen, the Teacher, [1814], 2nd ed. 1819, p. 7.
  - 8 Oliver Goldsmith, The Vicar of Wakefield, (1766) 1966, p. 107.
  - 9 Thomas Carlyle, Sartor Resartus, (1833-4) 1896, p. 81.



He imagines the feelings of the master as school is dismissed in the evening,  
who

... stunned with the hum, and suffocated with the closeness of his schoolroom, has spent the whole day (himself against a host) in controlling petulance, exciting indifference to action, striving to enlighten stupidity, and labouring to soften obstinacy; and whose very powers of intellect have been confounded by hearing the same dull lesson repeated a hundred times by rote, and only varied by the various blunders of the reciters. 1

Even his pleasure in the classics has been contaminated by "connection with tears, with errors, and with punishment". The sheer pressure of numbers is often commented on. A father tells his two boys of misbehaviour and inattention at Christ's Hospital at the turn of the century, which the master could not prevent, since

... he had a great many to look after, and besides, as it was the custom for two of us to learn together, the master could not very distinctly make out whether we were learning our lessons or not ... 2

One of the most vivid pictures of a master who simply abandoned his professional duties is the one given by Charles Lamb of his own teacher, the Rev. Matthew Field, described in "Christ's Hospital Five and Thirty Years Ago" as a man who taught his hundred pupils hardly anything. "He came among us now and then, but often staid away whole days from us"; "He was engaged in gay parties, or with his courtly bow at some episcopal levée, when he should have been attending upon us"; "he had his private room to retire to, the short time he staid, to be out of the sound of our noise". Although as a boy he rejoiced in the freedom, the mature Lamb looks back more critically:

How things were suffered to go on thus, I cannot guess. Boyer, who was the proper person to have remedied these abuses, always affected, perhaps felt, a delicacy in interfering in a province not strictly his own. 3

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1 Sir Walter Scott, Old Mortality, (1816) Edinburgh, 1870, pp. 17-8.  
2 W. P. Scargill, Recollections of a Blue-Coat Boy, Swaffham, 1829, p. 91.  
3 Charles Lamb, Elia, 1823, pp. 41-2.

In Jane Austen's Emma there seems a gross disparity between the situation which Miss Taylor enjoyed for sixteen years as governess at Hartfield and the conditions which are anticipated for Jane Fairfax in a similar role. Possibly the difference is no greater than existed in actuality between positions available at that time. In the opening paragraph of the novel, the terms used to describe Miss Taylor's relationship with her pupil become increasingly intimate: "an excellent woman as governess", "little short of a mother in affection", "less as a governess than a friend", "the intimacy of sisters", "friend and friend very mutually attached", "beloved friend". This emotional intensification in a passage of just over twenty lines realises for the reader the developing position which Miss Taylor must have held in the household, manifestly affected by the absence of a mother and by the marriage of Emma's elder sister.<sup>1</sup> On Miss Taylor's wedding-day, the thoughts which pass through Emma's mind are full of grateful memories, but none of them shows any recollection of a teaching-learning relationship. The aspects of that "past kindness" which are remembered are playing with the five-year-old Emma, amusing her, nursing her through illnesses, being "a friend and companion such as few possessed", taking an interest in all the affairs of the family, and being concerned with all Emma's pleasures and schemes.<sup>2</sup> It may be dangerous to generalise about the conditions of governesses in the early nineteenth century from Miss Taylor's experience, since all the emphasis is on her rôle as companion rather than on her position as a teacher. More than once, mentions of Miss Taylor in the novel centre on the mutuality of her relationship with Emma. When she twits Mr. Knightley with thinking her "unfit for the office" of governess, and complains that he would not have "spoken a good word" for her if she had "wanted another situation", he retorts that indeed she was well fitted for marriage but "not at all for a governess".

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1 Jane Austen, Emma, (1816) 1933, pp. 5-6.

2 *ibid.*, p. 6.

"You might not give Emma such a complete education as your powers would seem to promise; but you were receiving a very good education from her, on the very material matrimonial point of submitting your own will, and doing as you were bid ... "

1

By contrast, the fate anticipated for Jane Fairfax is likened to that of a nun renouncing the world or a victim of the slave trade, ensnared by "offices for the sale - not quite of human flesh - but of human intellect".<sup>2</sup> The superbly ironic discussion between Jane and Mrs. Elton must not be taken too seriously. At this stage, Jane presumably believes that Frank will save her from the intellect peddlers, and she is deriving a certain amount of gentle fun from teasing her companion.

"You may well class the delight, the honour, and the comfort of such a situation together," said Jane, "they are pretty sure to be equal ... "

3

The undertone, however, is serious, when she speaks of the "misery of the victims" or of the mortification being greater through comparison in the houses of the rich. It is an additional irony that, when under pressure in the secret engagement, Jane finally agrees to go as governess to one of Mrs. Elton's acquaintances. The realities of the proposed situation have to be decoded from Miss Bates's gushing version of Mrs. Elton's information: "charming woman - most superior ... delightful children ... replete with comfort ... so liberal and elegant ... elegant sweet children ... It will be nothing but pleasure, a life of pleasure."<sup>4</sup> Emma's reactions can be gauged from her later horror at the situation,<sup>5</sup> and from her reply to Miss Bates's enthusiasm over the salary.

"Ah! madam," cried Emma, "if other children are at all like what I remember to have been myself, I should think five times the amount of what I have ever yet heard named as a salary on such occasions, dearly earned."

6

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1    ibid., pp. 37-8 and cf. p. 192.

2    ibid., pp. 165 and 300.

3    ibid., p. 301.

4    ibid., pp. 380-2.

5    ibid., p. 397.

6    ibid., p. 382.



This period of less than forty years is of the greatest significance in the history of the literary presentation of teachers. In part this reflects the fact that these years between the first parliamentary grant for education in 1833 and the Elementary Education Act of 1870 were marked in England by a whole series of educational developments. Education was continually in the news, a major subject for debate, and it would have been difficult for responsible writers not to react to this. The period saw a number of enquiries and commissions, the coming of school inspections, the opening of training colleges for teachers, the widening of educational provision for the poor, the creation of the Education Department, the reform of endowed schools and major developments in public schools brought about by men like Arnold and Thring, the foundation of the Governesses' Benevolent Institution, the coming of the revised code and payment by results, and the spread of the examination system. The sense of differences between the remembered past and the present, that in education " ... all that is changed now!" runs through Fitzgerald's Euphranor<sup>1</sup> in mid-century.

In part, the period is important because of a parallel and related development in imaginative writing about education. Schools and teaching became more frequent as topics, teachers began to appear as important and central characters in novels, major authors made significantly more use of teacher characters, and the school story proper became a popular form. Particularly from the mid-century onwards, works with the word school in the title became common. In the fifties alone, to name books that will be mentioned here, there was not only Tom Brown's Schooldays, but Langley School,

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1 Edward Fitzgerald, Euphranor, A Dialogue on Youth, published anonymously in 1851, and in revised editions 1855 and 1882, the latter subtitled "'Tis Forty Years Since".

My Schools and Schoolmasters, The Grammar School Boys, School Experiences of a Fag, Daddy Dacre's School, and a number of others that named particular establishments. Outside that decade came a host of lesser-known works with titles like School-boy Reminiscences, My School-boy Days, School-boy Life and Incident, Old Schoolfellows, Four Schoolfellows, The Two School Girls, and School-girl Life and Incident. These changes are not to be explained by the simple hypothesis that more authors of this period were writing from first-hand experience of teaching. Of those whose careers can be traced, only ten out of about seventy were teachers as compared with eight clergymen, ten engaged in the law, three in the services, seven in business, five in politics, and so on. There may be increasing indications of writing from experience, not only in major novelists like Anne and Charlotte Bronte, but in the works of authors like George Griffith, A. R. H. Moncrieff, D'Arcy Thompson, Mortimer Collins, Barbara Hofland or Elizabeth Sewell. The important shift, however, is in the increased range and depth of educational interest shown by serious authors who were not teachers: Matthew Arnold, Charles Dickens, George Eliot, Elizabeth Gaskell, Charles Kingsley, W. M. Thackeray, Anthony Trollope and others, as well as prolific popular writers like Harrison Ainsworth, Wilkie Collins, Mrs. Henry Wood and Charlotte M. Yonge. There is a qualitative as well as a quantitative change in writing about schools and teachers. It is certainly true that more books contain teacher characters and that they play larger parts. Even in books which do not feature teachers as such, like Lewis Carroll's Alice stories, stock notions of teachers and teaching may underlie the narrative. Indeed, one of the great pleasures for children is the way in which the solemn processes of the schoolroom are undermined in Carroll's fantasy. In Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, 1865, she is shown going through the process of "saying lessons", in which multiplication tables and geographical data stubbornly refuse to go right, being lectured to by the Mouse on English history, being ordered to recite by the Caterpillar, and having the Mock Turtle's school education described to her in a long series

of puns.<sup>1</sup> In the later Through the Looking Glass and What Alice Found There the Red Queen, with her instructions and examinations, manifests the child's eye view of the strict schoolmistress, and was apparently said by Carroll himself to be "the concentrated essence of all governesses!".<sup>2</sup>

Although standard caricatures are still common during this period, teachers are seen in a greater number of basic roles, they are presented by some authors with increasing subtlety and complexity, and a few are shown as human beings with an existence that is not limited to teaching. After the mid-century, indeed, some authors begin to question the accuracy of previous literary presentations of teachers, to attempt to disentangle "popular notions" of "fiction" from "reality" and "fact". For example, Berkeley Aikin writes a preface criticising the lack of truth in novels "purporting to portray the governess life", which convey "fancy" rather than "life". Her own work, she claims, reflects "real existence", the unexaggerated "bare facts" coming from ten years of study.<sup>3</sup> In Warp and Woof, four years later, Ursula Fletcher asks the two Miss Layels, who have both been governesses, to explain "how much is fact and how much is fiction in the popular estimate of that position". When they ask her what she thinks the stock associations of governesses are, she goes on:

"They are always under suspicion; they are regarded as menials; they are under-paid; they are overworked; they are condemned to a life of isolation; they are sneered down, snubbed, bullied, harassed and finally starved; as a class, they are worse off and worse used than any other set of women under the sun. That, I take it, is the common view of governesses." 4

This leads to a dozen pages of discussion of the governess's life, in which Miss Kitty says that much of the outcry over grievances is cant, and that the real case has been "damaged by overstatements and misrepresentations".

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1 Lewis Carroll, The Annotated Alice, ed. Martin Gardner, 1965, pp. 38, 46-7, 69-72, 127-130.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 206.  
3 Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, pp. v-vii.  
4 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 86.



A Book About Dominies, 1867, in one chapter anticipates Ian Hay's The Lighter Side of School Life by examining the notions of teachers as they appear to those "who have dipped into stories of school life", and relating them to "actual" examples of his acquaintance.

I believe that the rude popular idea of a dominie is somewhat vague, a wig and a loud voice, with a tendency to quote Greek and Latin, being his only recognisable qualifications.

1

After his sketches of heads and assistants in public and private schools, Moncrieff writes:

These are the types of dominie whom we meet with in story-books. Do we meet with them in real life? Not often, I think. I, who have known many dominies, have found them to be much the same as other men, of many classes and characters, wise and foolish, grave and gay, good, bad, and indifferent.

2

What are these "types" or "popular ideas" of teachers which some authors, at least, felt were becoming dominant? From the sample of some hundred works in which teachers take large or small parts, certain recurrent figures do appear. There is more variety than there was in the years to 1833, they awaken less simple responses, and a number of characters are less easy to categorise. In general, most teachers of this period are still broadly comical or tyrannical, but these groups can be subdivided more accurately according to their emotional loading. A flogging schoolmaster can be hated and feared as a bully, accepted as a natural enemy of his pupils or admired as a rational disciplinarian. Some of the figures which teachers cut are new ones, and the representation of some of the standard rôles seems to shift and develop in mid-century. The remainder of this chapter is divided into sections dealing with those types that emerge from the sample as commonest and most important. Teachers are considered here as floggers, natural enemies, and justified disciplinarians, as crammers, as figures of fun and of pathos, as moral influences and as human beings who are seen as individuals not wholly subordinated to their teaching rôle.

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book About Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 178.  
2 Ibid., p. 183.

## THE TEACHER AS FLOGGER

Thackeray breaks off at the beginning of the second chapter of Vanity Fair to mention an old gentleman of sixty-eight who once said agitatedly at breakfast, "I dreamed last night that I was flogged by Dr. Raine." Thackeray adds that, "Dr. Raine and his rod were just as awful to him in his heart, then, at sixty-eight, as they had been at thirteen."<sup>1</sup> The teacher with his birch or cane made a lasting impression in more than one way, and it was one that many writers remembered when they came to describe such a figure. When Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid talks of fetching Tom a schoolmistress, he is automatically frightened at the idea, "for he thought she would certainly come with a birch-rod or a cane".<sup>2</sup> Although there are plenty of pictures of the teacher as beater throughout the period, there is a significant shift in the emotional presentation somewhere about the time of Tom Brown's Schooldays, 1857. Nearly all the physical bullies, the sadists - and those on whom a just retribution falls - occur in books published before that time. Although flogging remains a common element in later books, it is seen much more as a necessary, though painful, deterrent, as a moral force or as an element in character training. Rather than gaining satisfaction, the teacher is more likely to remark, "This will hurt me more than it hurts you".

Quite apart from the fact that all three of them are famous floggers there are a number of points of similarity between three schoolmasters who appeared in novels published early in this period, within six years of each other: Root, Squeers and O'Gallagher.<sup>3</sup> Each of them is shown as a coarse, ill-educated, unattractive looking figure, who gains an emotional satisfaction from beating boys; each is a performer with his own rhetorical style, who

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1 W. M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, (1847-8) 1963, p. 18.

2 Charles Kingsley, The Water Babies, (1863) 1920, p. 219.

3 Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, 1836; Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, 1838-9; Frederick Marryat, Percival Keene, 1842.

enjoys the ritual and the cowering audience for his words; each is presented in an ambivalent way, so that the reader is alternately (or simultaneously) horrified and amused; each meets with deserved retribution. The first two authors also insist on the 'fact', the 'truth', of the picture. Root and Squeers are seen as representatives of a class. This particular emphasis is absent from Marryat's novel.

The boardingschoolmaster in Rattlin the Reefer, 1836, is presented as an ignorant bully, whose only pedagogic office seems to be flogging. He is "the truculent rod-bearing, ferula-wielding Mr. Root", "a most cruel tyrant", a "flint-hearted pedagogue"; virtually always armed with a cane, a birch, or "a tremendous whip".<sup>1</sup> Since Howard's book is written in the first person, on the borderlines of fiction and autobiography, the view of Root is essentially that of one of his victims:

I was flogged full, and I was flogged fasting; when I deserved it, and when I did not; I was flogged for speaking too loudly, and for not speaking loudly enough, and for holding my tongue. Moreover, one morning I rode the horse without the saddle, because my face was dirty, and the next, because I pestered the maid-servant to wash it clean. I was flogged because my shoes were dirty, and again flogged because I attempted to wipe them clean with my pocket-handkerchief. I was flogged for playing, and for staying in the schoolroom and not going out to play. The bigger boys used to beat me, and I was then flogged for fighting. It is hard to say for what I was not flogged.

2

By the age of twelve, Ralph was "almost insensible to bodily pain by frequent magisterial and social thrashings".<sup>3</sup>

In Root, as later in Creakle, there is a sinister disparity between the voice and the physical aggression. Root was a "very robust ... powerful" man, but with a "shrill girlish voice, that made him, in the execution of his cruelties, actually hideous".<sup>4</sup> Howard detected the element of pleasure in the man's infliction of punishment. Although the way in which he presents

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1 Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, (1836) 1971, pp. 32, 36, 50, 62.

2 *ibid.*, p. 36.

3 *ibid.*, p. 54.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 35-6.



this suggests that he felt that the idea might not be readily accepted at the time, the notion runs through his language: sensual enjoyment, ample amusement, epicure, luxury:

I believe, and I make the assertion in all honesty, that he received a sensual enjoyment by the act of inflicting punishment. He attended to no department of the school but the flagellative. He walked in about twelve o'clock, had all on the list placed on a form, his man-servant was called in, the lads horsed, and he, in general, found ample amusement till one. He used to make it his boast that he never allowed any of his ushers to punish. The hypocrite! theepicure! he reserved all that luxury for himself. 1

The actual beatings themselves are generally presented in a detached, almost amused, tone. When Root flogged, "He certainly wrote a strong, bold hand, in red ink, not easily obliterated." Beatings are described as "assiduous". Pupils "suffered themselves to be horsed, and took their one and two dozens with edification and humility". A blow with a cane is described as "one of the most hearty con amore swingers that ever left a wale behind it".<sup>2</sup> Despite the distancing effect of this style, the total effect is a horrifying picture of Root's régime, where Ralph is eventually flogged into serious illness. Howard's direct address to the reader in general, and parents in particular, indicates a moral judgment, a warning, and an awareness of the correlation between violent teachers and violent reprisals.

Even now, I look back to those days of persecution with horror. Those were the times of large schools, rods steeped in brine (actual fact), intestine insurrections, the bumping of obnoxious ushers, and the 'barring out' of tyrannical masters. A school of this description was a complete place of torment for the orphan, the unfriended, and the deserted. 3

The ensuing rebellion, the barring-out and the fight between teachers and pupils are virtually inevitable.

It is in the presentation of Root's manner of speech that he is made to appear ludicrous as well as horrifying, particularly in the contrast of

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1 *ibid.*, p. 36.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 45, 72, 54, 117.

3 *ibid.*, p. 37.

registers between natural and assumed or to fit different audiences. He shifts from indignant, natural speech to the elevated manner he thinks appropriate for a headmaster and when parents or guardians appear, his speeches are full of hypocritical assurances of "how much we love the little dear", who has actually been brutally ill-treated.<sup>1</sup>

Squeers is similarly presented in a two-sided way, as a comic figure as well as a brutal one. The demon-king gusto does not diminish the horror of his school, but it does produce an ambivalent reaction in the reader.

Dickens's favourite device in the early scenes when Squeers appears is to juxtapose brutal or mercenary behaviour with protestations of professional or moral concern. Having knocked about one little boy and threatened to murder him, Squeers abruptly changes with the arrival of a gentleman to assure the boy, now "my dear child", that he will have a father and mother in Mr. and Mrs. Squeers.<sup>2</sup> While devouring his own beef and hot toast, he can lecture the boys - "Conquer your passions, boys, and don't be eager after vittles" - and apostrophize the twopennyworth of watered milk that is going to be breakfast for five of them.

"Ah!" said that gentleman, smacking his lips, "here's richness! Think of the many beggars and orphans in the streets that would be glad of this, little boys. A shocking thing hunger is, isn't it, Mr. Nickleby?"

3

Once returned to Dotheboys Hall, he can talk to Nicholas of "the first class in English spelling and philosophy" and his principles of "experiments in practical philosophy" while setting the pupils to work as servants, window-cleaning, weeding, rubbing down the horse and drawing water.<sup>4</sup>

Dickens himself points out this two-sidedness in the man, contrasting it with the way in which his wife "openly and fearlessly" bullies and extorts:

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 56, 42.

2 Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, (1838-9) 1950, p. 32.

3 *ibid.*, p. 45.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 90-1.

Squeers covered his rascality, even at home, with a spice of his habitual deceit; as if he really had a notion of some day or other being able to take himself in, and persuade his own mind that he was a very good fellow.

1

These pretensions, which run through the school's advertisement, are also frequent in his mouth. Having reached an unscrupulous arrangement with Mr. Snawley to take that gentleman's two step-sons off his hands with no questions asked, significantly asserting that, "They have come to the right shop for morals, sir", the schoolmaster goes straight on to ask the man to serve as a reference.

"Then, as we understand each other," said Squeers, "will you allow me to ask you whether you consider me a highly virtuous, exemplary, and well-conducted man in private life; and whether, as a person whose business it is to take charge of youth, you place the strongest confidence in my unimpeachable integrity, liberality, religious principles, and ability?"

"Certainly I do," replied the father-in-law, reciprocating the schoolmaster's grin.

2

He assures a stranger he meets on the coach that his six nephews could be accommodated at Dotheboys Hall "in an enlightened, liberal, and moral manner".<sup>3</sup> Even his wife is always presented in a glowing light: "as partial to that lad as if he had been her own", "a mother to them lads, and a blessing, and a comfort, and a joy to all them as knows her".<sup>4</sup>

Squeers's punishments have more to do with his mood than with the offence. When he is feeling vexed at the failure of prospective customers to appear, he rounds on a diminutive boy,

... to see whether he was doing anything he could beat him for. As he happened not to be doing anything at all, he merely boxed his ears, and told him not to do it again.

Shortly afterwards, a sneeze from the boy gives Squeers an excuse to knock him off the trunk and back on to it with blows to the head.<sup>5</sup> When Mrs. Squeers can't find the spoon, Smike is struck by her husband, and when the boy

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1    ibid., p. 87.

2    ibid., p. 35.

3    ibid., p. 49.

4    ibid., pp. 36, 435.

5    ibid., pp. 31-2.



suggests correctly that it might be in her apron pocket, he is boxed by the lady herself and threatened with a "sound thrashing".<sup>1</sup> Displeased because Bolder's father was short in his payment, Squeers immediately finds an excuse to cane the boy "until his arm was tired out".<sup>2</sup> Angry because Smike appears to have escaped, he thrashes another little boy simply for saying, "Please, sir, I think Smike's run away, sir."<sup>3</sup> In the climactic scene when he proposes to flog Smike within an inch of his life, the mood is less one of anger than of anticipated pleasure. Dickens stresses how Squeers "feasted his eyes", on the captured culprit, "trembling with delight"; his "gloomy satisfaction", "triumphant glance", "diabolical grin".<sup>4</sup> The sense of enjoyment is very like Root's in Howard's novel.

The pattern of a tyrannical, flogging schoolmaster and an ingenious pupil bent on revenge in Captain Marryat's Percival Keene, 1842, seems indebted to literary models, especially to such eighteenth century works as Smollett's and Henry Brooke's The Fool of Quality, or later works like Edward Howard's Rattlin the Reefer, 1836, with the publication of which Marryat was associated. When the narrator asks why he is being taken to school, Ben tells him that it is "to get a little learning, and a good deal of flogging, if what they say is true!".<sup>5</sup> It proves so. Thadeus O'Gallagher is known as "a very severe master", "a most formidable person", a "savage pedagogue" with a "diabolic" expression and "the smile of a demon".<sup>6</sup> There are repeated animal images: he looked "like a wild beast", his eye is "that of a tiger's at his meal", his mouth resembles "the grinning of a hyena".<sup>7</sup> He had the same gusto in flogging, and in talking about it, as Squeers. He describes in detail and with demonstration the use of ruler, ferule and birch.

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1     *ibid.*, p. 86.

2     *ibid.*, p. 93.

3     *ibid.*, p. 148.

4     *ibid.*, pp. 152-3.

5     Frederick Marryat, Percival Keene, (1842) Boston, 1898, p. 17.

6     *ibid.*, pp. 17, 18, 28, 32.

7     *ibid.*, pp. 20, 33.

He is for ever threatening what he calls "a blow-up": "I'll skin you alive as they do the eels", "I'll flog ye till you're as thin as a herring", "I'll give you a receipt in full", "see if I don't flay you alive".<sup>1</sup> As with Squeers, the punishments depend little on actual crimes or misdemeanours but much more on how the teacher is feeling. At times there is an elaborate display of courtesy, but more often the boys are addressed as spalpeen, animal, ignoramus, guilty thief, dirty blackguard, little monster of iniquity, imp of abomination,<sup>2</sup> with other rhetorical flourishes, before he proceeds to execution. By contrast, he has a strong sense of the dignity of his own position, as "your preceptor, a classical scholar, and a Milesian gentleman to boot".<sup>3</sup>

The essential elements are so frequently repeated that, apart from details, the schoolmaster figures in many minor novels are essentially interchangeable: unthinking beaters, at once terrifying and absurd, provoking resentment and sometimes violence from those who suffer under them. Sam Smyth's supposed memoir indicates that ushers were actually known as canes in the thirties and forties.<sup>4</sup> At Rotherwick School, the chief daily duty of one of the servants is manufacturing birch rods, a skill of which he is proud.

"Here's a rail beauty!" he would exclaim, eyeing one of his own productions with a scientific look, "jist try the handle on him - firm but springy - spreads out like a fantailed pigeon - beautiful, isn't it? I'll pound him to draw blood first cut."

5

The morning routine has fifty or sixty boys, who are "shown up" by masters for various offences, being birched in front of the others, each passing on to the next the piece of india-rubber on which they bite.<sup>6</sup> In a rebellion, all

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 19, 23, 31, 32.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 18, 19, 23, 29, 32.

3 *ibid.*, p. 28.

4 J. T. J. Hewlett, Peter Priggins, Paris, 1841, p. 119.

5 *ibid.*, p. 191.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 193-4.

the windows in the school are broken, and all the furniture is smashed, but as soon as discipline is restored over fifty boys are "severely flogged, in media scholae".<sup>1</sup> Thackeray repeatedly attacks the conventional association of education and flogging in English public schools in The Irish Sketch Book. In Ireland, boys could be humanely educated, " - not brutally, as some of us have been, under the bitter fagging and the shameful rod", being "flogged into Latin and Greek at the cost of two hundred pounds a year". He refers to the image of Eton boys "putting their posteriors on a block for Dr. Hawtrey to lash at; and still calling it education".<sup>2</sup> The overall impression for the reader of these books seems to be one of almost unrelieved brutality, presented in different terms but conveying one message: that beating is the schoolmaster's stock remedy for every misdemeanour, failure to learn or moral lapse. Writers increasingly suggest that as a method it is inefficient and unjust as well as brutal.<sup>3</sup> "The Schoolmaster's Motto" according to Hood, in a poem of that name, is an ironic assertion of beating for all those who "deserve" it: "Palmam qui meruit ferat". The boys are thrashed for leering at the girls' school, failing to learn, fighting with others, attempting to run away, drawing the French master or laughing when the pedagogue falls over:

Why, you rascal! you insolent brat!  
 All my talking you don't shed a tear at,  
 There - take that, Sir! and that! that! and that!  
 There! - "Palmam qui meruit ferat!"

4

It is not only men who administer beatings. Mrs. Crabtree, a severe governess-figure, whips Harry and Laura "almost every morning". When visiting children become disorderly, she produces a tawse and threatens one boy that she will thrash him "round the room like a whipping-top". Mrs. Crabtree claims that she must "do her duty" to make the children good, "though she were first

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1 *ibid.*, p. 226.

2 W. M. Thackeray, The Irish Sketch Book, (1843) 1896, pp. 328-30.

3 See, for example, J. A. Froude, Shadows of the Clouds, 1847, pp. 36-7;  
 W. M. Thackeray, Dr. Birch and his Young Friends, (1849) 1900, p. 83;  
 D. W. Thompson, Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, (1864) [1912], pp. 19-20,  
 206-8, 216, 233.

4 Thomas Hood, Poetical Works, 1906, pp. 284-5.



to flay them alive".<sup>1</sup> Sir Edward seems to approve of her severity, and when the virtuous Frank is too old for "nursery discipline", it is assumed that he then "must be flogged at school, till he goes to sea",<sup>2</sup> where presumably flogging will continue. The author's attitude is critical: "In those days it had not been discovered that whipping is all a mistake, and that children can be good without it."<sup>3</sup> Although she has children as young as two years old, Miss Tickletoby warns them that if they do not learn she has a cane in her cupboard, and Thackeray comments:

With regard to her educational system, it is slightly coercive. She has none of the new-fangled notions regarding the inutility of corporal punishments, but, remembering their effects in her own case, does not hesitate to apply them whenever necessity urges. 4

When Miss Scatcherd picks on pupils at Lowood School in her punitive way, she generally prefers to make an ignominious exhibition of them, but she also administers public birching of girls.<sup>5</sup> In another girls' school, the pupils' shoulders are "lacerated with a whip of knotted cords".<sup>6</sup>

The "superannuated old Grinder of savage disposition" who flogs Robin Toodle finds - like Creakle - that "chubby little boys" exert a "perfect fascination" over him and his cane.<sup>7</sup> Leigh Hunt tells a string of stories of Boyer thrashing pupils, and in terms that recall Dickens on Squeers says that they will "relieve the reader's indignation by something ludicrous in their excess".<sup>8</sup> Doctor Flogwell carries his birchings to such a point that

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1 Catherine Sinclair, Holiday House, (1839) Edinburgh, n.d., pp. 4, 31-3.

2 ibid., pp. 3-4.

3 ibid., p. 4. A similar sense that corporal punishment is "almost out of date now" is expressed in Edward FitzGerald, Euphranor, 1851, Selected Works, 1962, p. 66.

4 W. M. Thackeray, Miss Tickletoby's Lectures on English History, 1842, in Contributions to "Punch", 1898, p. 10.

5 Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, (1847), Oxford, 1969, pp. 58, 60-1, 86.

6 Mortimer Collins, The Vivian Romance, 1870, vol. 1, p. 205.

7 Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, (1846-8), Oxford, 1974, p. 70.

8 James Leigh Hunt, Autobiography, (1850, revised 1859) 1948, p. 68.

the boys mutiny and during the barring-out "the Doctor's head was broken by an article of crockery-ware hurled at him by one of the malcontents". The same novel contains an attack on the "degrading" public floggings with the birch at Eton.<sup>1</sup> Vindex Brimblecombe, though in a novel set in an earlier period, is a great wielder of the rod who is laid flat by a blow from a pupil's slate.<sup>2</sup>

The major flogging teachers of the last twenty years of the period tend to be subtly different from the group previously examined. Creakle, Pringle and Rawson are equally prompt to wield cane or birch, but their authority is less in doubt. For Pringle and Rawson, flogging is chiefly a state occasion, a staged production with accompanying ceremonial, not haphazard laying about. The emotional tone is consistent: these men are not simultaneously terrifying and absurd. The reader is not meant to laugh; their violence is not expiated by any retribution falling on them. The reader is seriously being urged, often by direct address as well as by the thrust of the action, to condemn the methods as well as the men who employ them.

In his sketch on "Our School", Dickens described the ignorant master he himself had known as a boy, and who may have provided the basis for Creakle, the ignorant bully of David Copperfield, 1849-50.

The only branches of education with which he showed the least acquaintance, were, ruling, and corporally punishing. He was always ruling ciphering-books with a bloated mahogany ruler, or smiting the palms of offenders with the same diabolical instrument, or viciously drawing a pair of pantaloons tight with one of his large hands, and caning the wearer with the other. We have no doubt whatsoever that this occupation was the principal solace of his existence.

3

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1 Charles Savile, Leonard Normandale, 1850, vol. 1, pp. 42, 48-9.

2 Charles Kingsley, Westward Ho!, (1855) 1926, pp. 27-8.

3 Charles Dickens, Household Words, No. 81, 11 October 1851, pp. 49-50. The relationship with Wellington House Academy is discussed in Philip Collins, Dickens and Education, 1963, pp. 11-14.

Creakle himself is rapidly sketched in with bold strokes: the whispering voice, the angry face, the fulfilled promise of being a Tartar, and that love of beating chubby boys. He only appears significantly on about a dozen pages, his violence meets with no reprisals and he disappears from the book when David leaves his school, except that he resurfaces implausibly at the end as a magistrate and penal reformer. Compared with Dotheboys Hall, the regime is softened by the other teachers and by the tender-hearted Mrs. and Miss Creakle, but the man himself is not comic as Squeers is. In fact, Creakle's power is never seriously questioned; he has a kind of symbolic or mystic force. In the lonely school at the end of the holiday, David awaits with "foreboding apprehensions" the arrival of "the awful Mr. Creakle". The note of frightened reverence, as before a deity, runs through the language. When David is first taken to see his master, he can take in nothing and nobody else because his "presence ... so abashed me". When Creakle enters the classroom, there is a sudden hush as he stands "looking round upon us like a giant in a story-book surveying his captives". David recalls their servile fear of him: "Miserable little propitiators of a remorseless Idol, how abject we were to him!" Even when they are in the playground and he in his house, they are "fascinated" by him, aware of his "sacred" presence, and ready to react with an "imploring and submissive expression" if he should near the window. When there is trouble in the schoolroom, Creakle suddenly appears "in the midst of us", with a paralysing effect: "I saw a rigidity come upon the whole school as if they had been turned into stone!"<sup>1</sup>

Creakle is hardly seen engaged in any teaching activity except threatening or executing corporal punishment. Boys are told to have their teeth filed, to beware of a Tartar's determination, to take care, to come fresh up to their lessons, to regard the cane and the way it bites.<sup>2</sup> Dickens writes

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1 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) [1947], pp. 105-6, 107, 115, 116, 117, 125.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 107, 108-9, 115.



of his enjoyment, his delight, his inability to resist the fascination of cutting at the boys with his cane, "which was like the satisfaction of a craving appetite". The images stress the arbitrary nature of his punishment:

... he laid about him, right and left, every day of his life, charging in among the boys like a trooper, and slashing away, unmercifully.

Half the establishment was writhing and crying, before the day's work began ...

David watches him ... in a dread desire to know what he will do next, and whether it will be my turn to suffer, or somebody else's.

One afternoon, when we were all harassed into a state of dire confusion, and Mr. Creakle was laying about him dreadfully ...

1

Creakle's cutting, scoring, biting, beating, caning, rulering, red ridge-raising and the boys' reciprocal rubbing, weeping, writhing, smarting, rouse the indignation of the mature David as he looks back on his childhood. The importance he attaches to the role of schoolmaster may be rhetorical, but the emotion comes through clearly enough.

I am sure when I think of the fellow now, my blood rises against him with the disinterested indignation I should feel if I could have known all about him without having ever been in his power; but it rises hotly, because I know him to have been an incapable brute, who had no more right to be possessed of the great trust he held, than to be Lord High Admiral, or Commander-in-Chief - in either of which capacities it is probable that he would have done infinitely less mischief.

2

Later in the novel, when he rides past Salem House again, "I would have given all I had, for lawful permission to get down and thrash him, and let all the boys out like so many caged sparrows."<sup>3</sup> But this is one of the novels where the schoolmaster does not get thrashed.

In Perversion, Mr. Pringle has none of the vividness of Dickens's bullies; he hardly exists as an individual; he is a machine for judging and punishing.

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1    ibid., pp. 112, 115, 116, 130.

2    ibid., p. 116.

3    ibid., p. 331.

When Charles Bampton accidentally injures another schoolboy in a fight, the master sentences him with little attempt to enquire into the rights and wrongs of the matter.

He was condemned to suffer the extreme penalty of the law - in other words, to be flogged the next morning; and he was to spend the night in the black-hole, which was furnished with a bed, in order that great offenders might there undergo solitary confinement, a favourite punishment with the head-master.

1

When the boy runs away, but is recovered, the incensed Mr. Pringle denounces him, and after a day of solitary confinement he is led out before the school by the junior usher for "the old and barbarous custom of public flogging". The headmaster describes the boy's crimes, and then produces the rod "a weapon of really formidable character" made according to traditions which went back to the days of good King Edward, the founder.<sup>2</sup> Six strokes were the ordinary punishment, "a dose of some stringency, considering that the blood was drawn at every stroke".

But in the present instance twelve strokes were deemed to bear a more fitting proportion to the magnitude of the offence; and they were all deliberately inflicted, with an interval of half-a-minute between every two, to give additional time for reflection. Charles rose from the block writhing with pain and shame.

3

The emphasis has shifted from the teacher's brutality to the pupil's sufferings, from capricious injustice to a self-perpetuating tradition of laws and punishments. The reader is encouraged to condemn the system rather than the individual master. Later in the period, the caning headmaster is frequently shown as misguided rather than brutal, believing that education is impossible without corporal punishment. Writers often seem to assume that readers will join them in condemning such flogging as an inefficient aid to learning.

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1 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 1, pp. 26-7.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 45.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 46.

Harrison Ainsworth, for example, is cooler than Dickens or Conybeare:

The Rev. Abel Cane, under whose care I was first placed, was a sound, classical scholar, but a severe disciplinarian. He was one of those who believe that a knowledge of Latin and Greek can be driven into a boy, and that his capacity may be sharpened by frequent punishment. Under this impression he was constantly thrashing us. In his drawer he had several canes of various lengths, and of various degrees of thickness, tied with tatching-end to prevent them from splitting, and for all these he found employment ... Some boys were so frightened that they couldn't learn their tasks at all, and others so reckless of the punishment which they knew must ensue, whether or not, that they intentionally neglected them ... I do not recollect that the castigation did them any good, but the very reverse.

1

The implication that floggers are a throw-back to a previous stage of education, and one that cannot be seriously justified, is even clearer in The Trials of the Tredgolds, 1864, where Dutton Cook writes that, "Of old, the only qualification expected from a schoolmaster was, that he should know how to cane ...".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Rawson of Burchell Hall (yet another punning title) exemplifies this in the novel. The very poplars outside the school writhe palely, "just as the schoolboys inside the house did when they were being caned ...".

He had faith in, and respect for, only one system of education; and that was - severe caning. The rod was with him the be-all and the end-all of tuition ... generally, it may be said that Dr. Rawson regarded education as a thing to be driven into the student, like a nail, by hard hammering.

3

He thrashes boys for dirtying the doorsteps, for smoking, for possessing cards, for helping the painters or for fighting the sons of noblemen, quite indiscriminately. Noel, one of the pupils, remarks that, "there generally is a good lot of licking going on", and that the Doctor "hits precious hard when he canes, and that's pretty often".<sup>4</sup> Noel eventually runs away from school

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1 W. Harrison Ainsworth, Mervyn Clitheroe, (1858) /1879/, p. 10.  
2 Dutton Cook, The Trials of the Tredgolds, 2nd ed., 1864, vol. 1, p. 6.  
3 ibid., p. 9.  
4 ibid., pp. 5, 10, 29, 137, 102, 100.



"striped with long livid weals", after making the mistake of getting into a fight with the Hon. Clement Buckhurst, and being told by Dr. Rawson, "that he would flog my evil passions, my wickedness, out of me; and that he'd cane me, morning, noon, and night, till I was a better boy ...".<sup>1</sup>

The evil characters of this book, like the head of Fordyce and Fordyce, are those who express approval of corporal punishment in conventional clichés:

"I have nothing indeed to say against the use of the cane, even the frequent use of it. I could never see the superior advantages of those 'moral punishments,' foolish people are so fond of canting about. I know I was well caned myself as a boy, and I've no doubt it did me a great deal of good ... Discipline must be maintained ... " 2

A similar pleasure in the idea of flogging always seemed associated with school in the speeches of adults in P. H. Fitzgerald's Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869. The dentist tells the boy, "You should be sent to school and well whipped!".<sup>3</sup> The Rev. Mr. Bickers also advises school, because, "they'll take it out of him there, never fear".<sup>4</sup> His tutor, Mr. Blackstone, says that what the boy needs is "a good caning twice a day", and adds, "If I had you at a school, sir, I should flog you while I could stand over you."<sup>5</sup>

It is significant that when Kingsley, in his fantasy The Water Babies, 1863, sets out to attack floggers, his prescription for them is yet more flogging. His retributive figure, Mrs. Bedonebyasyoudid, not surprisingly thought by Tom to be "a little spiteful", is presented as a caricature of the omniscient, punitive teacher:

And she had on a black bonnet, and a black shawl, and no crinoline at all; and a pair of large green spectacles, and a great hooked nose, hooked so much that the bridge of it stood quite up above her eyebrows; and under her arm she carried a great birch-rod. 6

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1 ibid., pp. 131, 138.  
2 ibid., p. 173.  
3 P. H. Fitzgerald, Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869, p. 52.  
4 ibid., p. 236.  
5 ibid., p. 247.  
6 Charles Kingsley, The Water Babies, (1863) 1920, pp. 193-4.

In her work of dealing with those who ill-use children, she calls up "all the cruel schoolmasters - whole regiments and brigades of them" and sets to work on the "best" part of the day's work.

And she boxed their ears, and thumped them over the head with rulers, and pandied their hands with canes ... and at last she birched them all soundly with her great birch-rod and set them each an imposition of three hundred thousand lines of Hebrew to learn by heart before she came back next Friday. And at that they all cried and howled ...

1

The following sections will consider how these shifting views of the teacher as flogger became codified in the image of ritual warfare, with boys and masters as "natural" enemies", and how they were balanced by a new image of the teacher as a justified and respected disciplinarian.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 200-1.

## THE TEACHER AS NATURAL ENEMY

The image of school as a battleground where masters and pupils fight on opposite sides is a common one at this period, but the intensity of the warfare varies greatly, as can be seen by comparing the novels mentioned in the last section with others later in the period. In the tradition of Peregrine Pickle and The Fool of Quality, the earlier stories which show the teacher as a tyrant also show him suffering an equally violent retribution. Because of his brutality he is viewed with real hatred, and the impression seems to be that all things are permitted in war. From the 1850s onward, though, the image which begins to form is of a ritual antagonism, less warfare than a game in which both sides accept the same rules. Tom Brown's view of the staff as "honourable enemies", of an inevitable struggle between teachers and taught, is to become the dominant tradition in the second half of the nineteenth century and later. These two interpretations of "enemy" can best be explained by examples.

In Howard's Rattlin the Reefer, Root's bullying and thrashing, culminating in forbidding the long-anticipated Guy Fawkes fireworks, leads to a barring-out, and a full-scale fight between boys and masters. The narrator himself scores a direct hit on Root with an inkpot, and in the fracas "his nose spouted blood, his eyes were blackened, and those beautiful teeth, of which he was so proud, were alarmingly loosened".<sup>1</sup> Other teachers have snuff forced into their eyes, are flung on the floor and kicked, and are laid out by a blow from the celestial globe. Quite apart from the lengthy description of the barring-out, there are a number of individual examples of the ways the boys torment their teachers. One under-usher is threatened with being burned like Guy Fawkes, and when he is bumped instead "bore it like a stoic". The eavesdropping headmaster one night has his newly-

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1 Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, (1836) 1971, p. 66.



powdered head "immovably fixed" to a bedstead "by the application of a half-pound of warm cobbler's wax". Mr. Riprapton is assaulted by a large slate smashed into his teeth, and is tricked into getting his wooden leg stuck in the clay, where he is ridiculed by the boys.<sup>1</sup>

In Percival Keene, the narrator, incensed by the fact that O'Gallagher steals his sandwiches for lunch as well as flogging him, decides on a subtler revenge on his teacher. He asks Captain Bridgeman, "What can I put into the sandwiches so as to half kill him?"<sup>2</sup> The doctor prescribes a heavy dose of calomel, and as the taste is disguised by mustard, the master wolfs down the sandwiches as before. During the afternoon session his pain and suffering are described vividly, but with no sympathy: the impression is clearly that he deserves this.

"Ah! he begins to feel it now," thought I; and sure enough he did; for the pain increased so rapidly that he lost all patience, and vented his feelings by beating with his ruler, on the head, the whole class of boys standing up before him, till one or two dropped down, stunned with the blows. At last he dropped the ruler, and, pressing both hands to his stomach, he rolled himself backwards and forwards, and then twisted and distorted his legs till he could bear the pain no longer; and he gave vent to a tremendous Irish howl - grinning and grinding his teeth for a few seconds, and then howling again, writhing and twisting in evident agony - while the perspiration ran off his forehead. 3

When the neighbours summon a doctor, he is able to purge O'Gallagher of the calomel, but his illness is so severe that he could not leave his room for three days, or return to school for a week. The narrator's reaction is simply one of "delight" at a "successful" trick, and he spends the teacher's absence "plotting still further mischief".<sup>4</sup> When school reopens he sticks the master to his seat with cobbler's wax, daubs the handles of birch and cane with bird lime, puts dead cats under the master's seat, replaces all the ink with water ("which put him to no little expense") and rubs his handkerchief

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 67, 78, 118-122.

2 Frederick Marryat, Percival Keene, (1842) Boston, 1898, p. 30.

3 *ibid.*, p. 32.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 32-3.

with cow-itch. Throughout, the emphasis is on the reciprocal nature of beating and ingenious revenges. Flogged daily, "my mind was ever at work upon some mischief, in the way of retaliation"; "I took my flogging ... as a matter of course, quite satisfied with the exchange"; "I was fully enabled to pay off my worthy pedagogue for all that I was indebted to him."<sup>1</sup> The final revenge comes when O'Gallagher confiscates the boys' fireworks and puts them under his own seat. The narrator buys quarter of a pound of gunpowder at lunchtime, and makes a train to the charge which he prepares in the middle of the fireworks. Even he is somewhat alarmed at the force of the explosion, which throws the teacher to the ceiling and blows out all the windows.<sup>2</sup> All of this is broad cartoon humour; it depends on not seeing the teacher as a human being, but as a caricature whose sufferings cannot be taken seriously; the events themselves lack plausibility.

Dickens is more realistic in Nicholas Nickleby, by putting retribution in the hands of the vigorous and incensed young usher. It would be difficult to imagine any pupil in the Squeers régime retaining enough spirit to rebel. When Smike is dragged back for punishment, the most the "boldest" boys dare is "to steal looks at each other, expressive of indignation and pity".<sup>3</sup> In the theatrical scene which follows the animosity between Squeers and Nicholas is built up to the point where the master lashes the young man across the face with his cane. Nicholas seizes the weapon, "beat the ruffian till he roared for mercy", and flung him down so that he lay stunned, a "happy termination". Nicholas's action is motivated less by his own treatment at the hands of Squeers than by his concern for the "miserable lad" Smike and the "dastardly cruelties practised on helpless infancy".<sup>4</sup> The use of the master's own cane, to give him a taste of his own medicine, is what delights

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 36-7.

3 Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, (1838-9) 1950, p. 153.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 153-5.



John Browdie. Significantly, however, at the end of the novel, after Squeers's downfall, John reproves the pupils for literally and metaphorically doing the same to Mrs. Squeers, by forcing brimstone-and-treacle down her throat.<sup>1</sup>

It is striking that such violent revenges seem largely to disappear from the later novels of the period. There are, of course, stories of pranks against teachers, but no dramatic confrontations in which the master gets permanently worsted. A milder image is created, not of ogres, who have to be overthrown, but of a natural struggle between boys and all teachers. When Tom Brown loses his good character, "the masters' hands were against him, and his against them. And he regarded them, as a matter of course, as his natural enemies".<sup>2</sup> His great friend East sees school in clear terms of "us" and "them"; "a fair trial of skill":

"... like a match at football or a battle. We're natural enemies in school - that's the fact. We've got to learn so much Latin and Greek, and do so many verses, and they've got to see that we do it. If we can slip the collar and do so much less without getting caught, that's one to us. If they can get more out of us, or catch us shirking, that's one to them. All's fair in war but lying." 3

Dutton Cook similarly describes as "natural" the warfare between boys and ushers, "because youth is always in violent opposition to its instructors".<sup>4</sup> If a master is lenient, then boys will see how far they can go; if he is strict, then they will try to get their own back. The impression of a state of balance between opposing forces is given in Harrison Ainsworth's description of Cottenborough Free Grammar School, where the Rev. Abel Cane is a severe disciplinarian.

Notwithstanding our dread of him, we used to play Mr. Cane a great many tricks. We notched his canes so that they split when he used them; put gravel into the keyhole of his drawer; mingled soot with his ink; threw fulminating balls

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1 *ibid.*, p. 826.

2 Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays, (1857) [1923], p. 145.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 291-2.

4 Dutton Cook, The Trials of the Tredgolds, 2nd ed., 1864, pp. 8-9.



under his feet; and even meditated blowing him up with gunpowder. An adventurous youth essayed the effect of a burning-glass on his ear, but was instantly detected, and called round for punishment. Another tried to throw the rays from a bit of looking-glass into his eye, and shared the same fate. With all his discipline, if our dreaded master were called out of school for a few minutes, the greatest row would commence.

1

When two Etonians meet, years after leaving school, they turn immediately to reminiscences of beatings they had experienced, and revenges which they took on masters: letting sparrows loose in school so that they extinguished all the candles, filling a master's pew with cockchafers, throwing books at Keate when he showed a turn of "despotism", and the great "booing".<sup>2</sup> The impression is created of ritual confrontation, in which the weapons are corporal punishment on one side and practical jokes on the other.<sup>3</sup>

Indeed, as the period goes on, there are increasing numbers of cases in which pupils are shown as behaving badly, and tormenting teachers who have done them no harm, or even have shown them kindness. Here the teachers are not shown as villains or figures of fun; the reader's sympathies are engaged on their side. The term "bullying" is sometimes used of boys' treatment of masters, rather than the other way round. This is a recurrent topic in Farrar's novels, but it does not only occur there. The children put in the charge of Clara Mordaunt when she first becomes a governess are said by the porter to be "the very dickins for mischief", and to have worried her predecessor "worse nor ever a cat did a rat!". The three girls prove noisy, quarrelsome and impolite. Arabella screams, "I hate governesses, and won't see her!". Laura smashes the china so that the governess will have to pay for it, and in their quarrels over food the three bring table and dinner to the ground, covering themselves with vegetables and gravy.<sup>4</sup> The sufferings

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1 W. Harrison Ainsworth, Mervyn Clitheroe, (1858) /1879/, p. 10.  
2 Charles Rowcroft, Confessions of an Etonian, 1852, vol. 3, pp. 51-2.  
3 For example, Hugh Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters, (1852) 1860, pp. 143-5, and Charles Savile, Leonard Normandale, 1850, vol. 1, pp. 32-40.  
4 Marguerite Gardiner, The Governess, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 6-7, 23, 27, 33-5.

of the master who is well-qualified and kindly but incapable of keeping order are summed up by George Melly in his picture of Mr. Saxon.

Mr. Saxon, being unable to make his authority felt, was himself completely at the mercy of some of the bigger boys, who bullied him in every conceivable way. 1

Later in life, the narrator recalls with shame, "how I joined against him with his enemies and nearly drove him mad with persecution".<sup>2</sup> Mr. Cotton is another kindly teacher treated as a general "laughing stock", attacked by pupils, bitten and hit with slates, fooled into rushing to the aid of non-existent pupils in distress, and drenched with water or mud from pots balanced on doors.<sup>3</sup> At another school, boys were "cruel and cowardly" in their scornful maltreatment of the unfortunate ushers.<sup>4</sup> In a third, a kind and well-intentioned master has a rotten apple thrown in his face, and the matter never seems to be pursued.<sup>5</sup>

To sum up, it seems that simplistic views in the eighteenth century tradition of brutal teachers bringing upon themselves violent revenges increasingly give way during this period to a more complex analysis of the problems of discipline in a school and of the relationship between different kinds of staff policy and pupil behaviour. In Schooldays at Saxonhurst, for example, written by P. H. Fitzgerald near the end of this period, there is a detailed examination of the way in which ill-feeling between masters and boys can build up until the whole school is involved and there is a real possibility of disaster. Fitzgerald ironically likens the early stages of trouble to those of the French Revolution: "There was the same weakness and toleration in authority, at the wrong time; the same vigour and severity, also at the wrong time."<sup>6</sup> When the ring-leaders of one offence refuse to give themselves

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1 George Melly, School Experiences of a Fag, 1854, p. 53.

2 *ibid.*, p. 68.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 25-7.

4 Dutton Cook, The Trials of the Tredgolds, 2nd ed., 1864, pp. 8-9.

5 Mrs. Henry Wood, Orville College, (1867) 1899, pp. 128-32.

6 Schooldays at Saxonhurst by 'One of the Boys', (1867) Edinburgh, 1868, p. 149.

up, general punishments are introduced. The staff are divided between those who want to make an example of one boy and those who urge "mild counsels". School food becomes the next issue. In a demonstration the boys all refuse the hated soup, and someone removes the volumes from which improving readings are given at lunchtimes. The angry Principal uses the word "stealing", and "Who stole the books?" becomes a chant of protest. "In this state of things, it was plain we were hurrying on to revolution."<sup>1</sup> More mass punishments and even more large-scale demonstrations lead to the point where the wrong boy is expelled. Fitzgerald, in his lengthy account, makes it clear that no individual is wholly culpable. The system itself, the myth of "natural enemies", the way the masters and pupils react under pressure, and the lack of any consistent policy, are all to blame.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 182.



## THE TEACHER AS JUSTIFIED DISCIPLINARIAN

By no means all teachers who employ cane or birch in this period are presented as the brutal enemies of their pupils. The term "justified disciplinarian" is meant to apply to those figures, shown with approval by their authors, who make deliberate decisions about appropriate punishments in order to achieve good results for individuals - their learning or their character - or for the school community as a whole. Although the influence of Tom Brown's Schooldays, 1857, was perhaps the most significant single reason for a shift in literary attitude towards the teacher as dispenser of punishment, there were of course earlier books which attributed beating to shrewd judgment rather than to sadism. Most of them presented this at the level of abstract argument or theory; Mr. Midshipman Easy was rare in depicting in some detail a schoolmaster violently treating a boy, and justifying this.

The emphasis of the early pages of this novel seems to be on the necessity of punishment to ensure discipline, both in the satirical style with which his father's theoretical dislike of corporal punishment is undermined when he himself suffers at Johnny's hands and in the way in which Mr. Bonnycastle overcomes the spoilt boy's misbehaviour. He assures parents that he does not use the birch, but does not inform them that this is because he prefers the cane.

"My dear Middleton, I can produce more effect by one caning than twenty floggings. Observe, you flog upon a part the most quiescent; but you cane upon all parts, from the head to the heels. Now, when once the first sting of the birch is over, then a dull sensation comes over the part, and the pain after that is nothing; whereas a good sound caning leaves sores and bruises in every part, and on all the parts which are required for muscular action. After a flogging a boy may run out in the hours of recreation, and join his play-mates as well as ever: but a good caning tells a very different tale; he cannot move one part of his body without being reminded for days by the pain of the punishment he has undergone, and he is very careful how he is called up again." 1

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1 Frederick Marryat, Mr. Midshipman Easy, (1836) Boston, 1896, pp. 18-9.

The teacher, described by Marryat as the "beau-ideal of a preceptor",<sup>1</sup> argues throughout in terms of cool expediency. The images he uses of his new pupil, and of his proposed treatment, indicate that he sees teaching as similar to training wild animals: he will lick the cub into shape, "vivify that rude mass", turn the brute into a reasonable being, conquer him, break him in.<sup>2</sup> In this belief he canes Johnny into obedience and submission: "You must do as you are bid, or else you will have more beating."<sup>3</sup> The notion that fear of punishment is the only rational motive is frequently repeated: "strong measures" are essential.

"I never yet found fear to fail ... "

Mr. Bonnycastle at once perceived that it was no use coaxing our hero, and that fear was the only attribute by which he could be controlled.

Pain and hunger alone will tame brutes, and the same remedy must be applied to conquer those passions in man which assimilate him with brutes.

Mr. Bonnycastle perceived that he had conquered the boy by one hour's well timed severity.

4

Such a simplistic statement of the ends justifying the means is uncommon, but a number of books introduce teachers who would reject random flogging with horror, but still see corporal punishment as necessary for dealing with moral offences and deliberate disobedience. Joseph Primer, for example, is said to be a strict disciplinarian, but one who makes little use of punishment in school. For other offences he is sterner. When two boys have been fishing in the squire's pond, and one falls in and tries to conceal the offence, Primer denounces them at length before the school - for poaching ("a direct violation of the law of God"), ingratitude to Mr. Wilmot ("I did think that his property would have been safe from depredation") and falsehood ("There is no worse crime of which a boy can be guilty than lying.") The untruthful boy has

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1 *ibid.*, p. 18.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 18-19.

3 *ibid.*, p. 21.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 18-23.



inflicted on him "a very severe flagellation", and both boys are confined to the school grounds for three weeks. Gresley does feel it necessary to add later that "a regular public flogging was an unusual occurrence at his school" and near the end of the book the Archdeacon says to the schoolmaster:

"I am no advocate for frequent punishment, as I know very well that you are not, Mr. Primer. I do not like to see a master walk about the school with a cane in his hand, using it on every slight occasion, and often in a pettish, passionate manner ... At the same time it is very desirable that he should have a cane or a rod in reserve, to use on any grave occasion, especially one of moral turpitude or wilful delinquency."

1

In his first teaching post at Acorn House, Sam Smyth finds himself in difficulties with ill-controlled boys who refuse to do their work. When he threatens one of them, the lout draws a knife and Sam is obliged to use his stick. "I then seized him by the collar, and gave him a sound thrashing; which winded me, crippled him, and destroyed the bamboo."<sup>2</sup> Unofficially the Headmaster approves of this, but in order to please fee-paying parents his official line is to advertise "no corporeal punishments". The new teacher's reaction to this is: "How you can teach boys without punishing them with a stick I can't imagine,"<sup>3</sup> and it is clear that the author's sympathies are with him, rather than with the equivocating Headmaster.

One of the debates in Harriet Mozley's The Fairy Bower, 1841, is about the nature and purpose of punishment. Miss Newmarsh is opposed to flogging, and believes that in Dr. Barker's experiments school boys did better when shown "kindness and reasonable treatment" rather than being "frightened and beaten into deceit and disobedience". Mr. Everard, on the other hand, fears that boys who are not flogged will be fit for the gallows because

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1 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, pp. 147-8, 159, 243-4. There are other discussions of the place of corporal punishment in Harriet Martineau, The Crofton Boys, 1841, pp. 124-5, 146-51; E. Ward, Boys and their Rulers, 1853, pp. 48, 84; George Melly, School Experiences of a Fag, 1854, pp. 106-8.

2 /J. T. J. Hewlett/, Peter Priggins, 1841, p. 122.

3 ibid., p. 123.



"they will burst with pent up folly and evil". Both sides in the debate are obsessed with the need for strict control. Dr. Barker's plan is based on the premise that boys do most harm when on their own in playtime, and his remedy is to prevent unsupervised contact, which has meant employing extra masters, one to each ten boys, who are with them day and night.

... his object is to discourage talking entirely among the boys, and to make them feel instead a confidence and love towards their teachers, who are constantly with them ...

The regime had been in action for three-quarters of a year, and according to Miss Newmarsh, speaking without any apparent irony:

"... it has answered beyond our most sanguine hopes, for before he came the school had got into a dreadful state of insubordination among the individuals; in less than a month the reformation was most signal, and now the boys are in the quietest state possible, and many of them in a very interesting frame of mind." 1

Mr. Everard is not the only one to think that discipline depends on flogging. The boy George explains to the girls that "no Latin was ever learned without being well beat in, and either you have been beat or you don't know", and he scorns the girls' governess who "does not approve of punishments; she says she teaches 'all by love'".<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Ward hopes that Newton Grey will not be sent to Dr. Barker's, as Miss Newmarsh urged, "for flogging is the only thing for that boy," indeed, "he ought to be flogged every day within an inch of his life!". Miss Newmarsh is shocked that a mother should speak like this, but Mrs. Ward says, "If you had been a mother, and plagued as I have been by unruly boys, you would think with less horror of flogging."<sup>3</sup>

Arguments like these are frequently concerned with expediency rather than with principle. When Leander Castleton is going up to Eton, his father warns him against unpunctuality, for which he may be flogged - a punishment which is "disgraceful" as well as "painful". He himself had been flogged at Harrow, and disapproves of the punishment, but seems to accept that it is

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1 Harriet Mozley, The Fairy Bower, 1841, pp. 51-6.

2 *ibid.*, p. 30.

3 *ibid.*, p. 161.

inevitable: "I suppose no other mode of correction can be found that is so handy and gives so little trouble."<sup>1</sup> When two Etonians meet years later they still recall with fascination the illustrious occasion "when sixty fellows were flogged all in the same day in one prodigious flagellation by the unconquerable Keate,"<sup>2</sup> and they drink the master's health. The General in Daddy Dacre's School, 1859, believes in traditional discipline reinforced by punishment, and likens the situation in school to that in the army, where unquestioning obedience is required.

"Our schools, Peggy, require discipline. Just imagine what a folly it is to substitute reasoning for flogging, and see what must follow; conceive my standing at the head of my division, and calling up Private Jones, or Smith, to be reasoned with!"

3

Tom Brown's Schooldays, 1857, presents nothing new in the way of argument; the novelty is in emotional tone. As well as developing ideas of the cane as moral reformer, there is the insistent suggestion that beating is an essential part of a boy's boarding school education: a preparation for the world, an exhilarating spice of danger, and a fair exchange for the contravention of rules. Learning to take a thrashing, like learning to fight with fists, is presented as part of the character training of a gentleman. It does not really matter if the wrong people get caned; this will prepare them for the injustice of the greater world, Hughes seems to say. In a riotous call-over before a shortsighted master, mischief-makers escape, the innocent are beaten, and events continue "much like the big world, punishments lighting on wrong shoulders, and matters going generally in a queer, cross-grained way, but the end coming somehow, which is, after all, the great point".<sup>4</sup> This tone, apparently approving rather than wry, runs through most accounts of punishment at Rugby. The accounts are never detailed; there are no descriptions of the sights and sounds of a flogging, or a boy's feelings during it,

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1 Charles Rowcroft, Confessions of an Etonian, 1852, vol. 1, p. 31.

2 *ibid.*, vol. 3, p. 52.

3 Mrs. S. C. Hall, Daddy Dacre's School, 1859, p. 157.

4 Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays, (1857) 1923, p. 89.



as there were in books referred to earlier in this chapter.

Most frequently the impression given is of a kind of ritual game, boys against masters (and against gamekeepers and magistrates and other upholders of order), in which any boy is in honour bound to break rules and to accept cheerfully the ensuing punishment if caught. Because this is the dominant pattern only rare boys, isolates, will not conform to it. So, when occupation of a large desk is forbidden by the master, "This, of course, was a challenge ... " Tom and East, discovered breaking the rule, are "ignominiously drawn out, and caned over the hand", but "as they only shared the fate of some three-fourths of the rest of the form, this did not weigh heavily upon them".<sup>1</sup> When the town is put out of bounds, the boys make for it "for no earthly pleasure except that of doing what they are told not to do". Caught by a master and sent to the Doctor, they accept their thrashing as a consequence, but resent the fact that the master had not sent those of his own pupils he caught to the Doctor for similar treatment. "The flogging did them no good at the time, for the injustice of their captor was rankling in their minds."<sup>2</sup> The implication seems to be that in retrospect, or on other occasions, flogging does do them good. On another occasion, when he is caught poaching by a keeper, Tom accepts the flogging cheerfully once he knows that East's rod will not be confiscated, and he and the keeper "become sworn friends".<sup>3</sup> After he accepts Arthur as a charge, one of the things Tom regrets is losing his part in those skirmishes against the law and the flogging which seems to put a seal on them. He watches a group of friends go off,

... bound for some jolly lark not quite according to law, and involving probably a row with louts, keepers, or farm-labourers, the skipping dinner or calling-over, some of Phoebe Jennings's beer, and a very possible flogging at the end of all as a relish.

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1    ibid., pp. 143-4.

2    ibid., p. 184.

3    ibid., p. 183.

4    ibid., p. 226.



This light-hearted boy's view of flogging as a matter of course, or even as a relish, does not entirely disguise its rôle as one of authority's ultimate sanctions. As time goes by, the Doctor seems aware that the repeated flogging of boys like Tom and East "for some foolish, thoughtless scrape" has lost its effect, and he has to threaten them with the possibility of expulsion.<sup>1</sup> In switching from the boys' view to the master's, Hughes is anxious to justify the Doctor's choice of appropriate punishments. At this point he is shown as being concerned with the boys' moral influence: "In another year they may do great harm to all the younger boys."<sup>2</sup> On the same occasion, he is shown as ordering "a good sound thrashing" for another boy, who has been found guilty of bullying. He does not wish to expel the culprit, for he believes there is some good in him, but he believes that "severe physical pain is the only way to deal with such a case"... Hughes says that he is aware that "wiseacres" may disapprove, but argues in simple terms, like Marryat's, that the treatment worked.

... years afterwards, that boy sought out Holmes, and thanked him, saying it had been the kindest act which had ever been done upon him, and the turning-point in his character; and a very good fellow he became, and a credit to his School.

3

A rather less favourable view of the connection between beating and moral reform at Rugby was given later by Clough. Uncle says to nephew in the Epilogue to Dipsychus, 1865, apropos of Arnold, "Why didn't he flog them and hold his tongue? Flog them he did, but why preach?" and complains that he attacked offences, "not as offences - the right view, - against discipline, but as sin, heinous guilt, I don't know what beside!"<sup>4</sup>

Whereas Hughes talks about flogging, but never shows his masters actually involved in the act (almost the only described violence is the isolated occasion when the

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 185-7.

2 *ibid.*, p. 187.

3 *ibid.*, p. 186.

4 A. H. Clough, Poems, Oxford, 1974, pp. 293-4.

Doctor gives a boy a box on the ear),<sup>1</sup> Farrar describes such episodes in some detail. Whereas Hughes presents punishment essentially from the boys' point of view, and as a minor incident in school life, Farrar's stance is essentially that of a teacher, and punishment is a much more significant element. The notion of punishment as a moral force is insistent.

Questions of discipline and punishment fill a significantly large part of the pages of Eric, from the howls of beaten children which he hears as a small boy while passing the "Latin school" to the fears of public birching and expulsion which cause him to run away from Roslyn School.<sup>2</sup> Moral and disciplinary judgments are seen as virtually identical; the breaking of school rules is viewed as a moral lapse, and punishment is a necessary duty of the teacher if he is to prevent a boy's moral degeneration. When Dr. Rowlands announces that some guilty boys have not been detected and punished, he says,

"I am sorry for it for their sakes; they will be more likely to sin again. In cases like this, punishment is a blessing, and impunity a burden."

3

It is ironic that, despite all the punishing that goes on, so many boys go to the bad.

Following the Little by Little process of the title, the catalogue of crimes and punishments is organised in successive stages. At first, the misdeeds are those of the classroom: Barker is caned on the hands for his failure in construing Caesar, and is publicly caned by the headmaster for annoying Owen, who "tells tales"; Eric is given "five hard cuts on either hand" on the unfounded suspicion that he has been using a crib, and is later given a passage of Horace to write out five times, is kept in on half-holidays for extra lessons and is caned by Mr. Gordon for a series of disasters in one lesson.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Tom Brown's Schooldays, p. 145.

2 F. W. Farrar, Eric, (1858) Edinburgh, 1909, pp. 6, 329.

3 ibid., p. 227.

4 ibid., pp. 21-2, 30-1, 41-3, 52-4.



The next stage is concerned with school offences outside the classroom. Dr. Rowlands gives Eric his first flogging for laughing in chapel (or, as the Head puts it, "making yourselves merry in that sacred place with the personal defects of others"). His next beating from the Head is for "the utmost disorder in the dormitories" after lights out. Mr. Gordon sets him ~~to~~ to write out the fourth Georgic for repeated disobedience in using a study from which he has been excluded; Mr. Rose also finds him disobedient and impertinent, and when he uses his cane, Eric snatches it and breaks it.<sup>1</sup>

The third and gravest stage deals with offences beyond the limits of the school itself: the smoking, the night-time breaking of bounds to get beer, for which Wildney is flogged by Mr. Rose; the party at the Jolly Herring disturbed by Mr. Gordon, for which the culprits are birched; the stealing of the pigeons; and the threat of public expulsion, converted to flogging and gating, for Eric and Wildney after they have been "detected in a sin most disgraceful and most dangerous" - getting drunk on brandy.<sup>2</sup>

For the masters, moral execration and physical punishment generally seem to go together. They speak "with a curl of the lip", or an "affectation of disgust", or "imperious disdain".<sup>3</sup> Mr. Gordon breaks out to Eric, "You have lost my confidence for ever. I despise you."<sup>4</sup> The most fully developed scene of this kind is the one where Mr. Rose deals firmly with the incident when Brigson organises a plot for the boys to pelt their master with crusts of bread after tea. It is not enough for this boy to be naughty, he also has to be a liar and a coward, awkward and clumsy, and with a "repulsive countenance". The denunciation of him is insistent. Mr. Rose thinks him "an ulcer to this school" and calls him "liar and tempter"; he speaks "with strong contempt", "ringing scorn" and "fiery indignation". Brigson's fellow

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 58, 104, 108-9, 220.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 136-9, 204-8, 217, 282.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 21, 41, 53.

4 *ibid.*, p. 53.



pupils "cursed him in their hearts"; they see him as a "stupid, clumsy, base compound of meanness and malice"; they view him with "disgust and contempt" (terms which are repeated); and they give him, "three groans, hoots and hisses for a liar and a coward".<sup>1</sup>

The description of the flogging given to Brigson concentrates on the boy's reactions in a markedly different way from passages in Nicholas Nickleby or Rattlin the Reefer. Instead of arousing the reader's sympathy for the victim, Farrar concentrates on showing him as a coward who gets his just deserts. The master is not a bully but a moral reformer (an emphasis which is intensified in the illustrated editions of the book).

Corporal punishment was avoided with the bigger boys, and Brigson had never undergone it before. At the first stroke he writhed and yelled; at the second he retreated, twisting like a serpent, and blubbering like a baby; at the third he flung himself on his knees, and as the strokes fell fast, clasped Mr. Rose's arm, and implored and besought for mercy.

"Miserable coward," said Mr. Rose, throwing into the word such ringing scorn that no one who heard it ever forgot it. He indignantly shook the boy off, and caned him till he rolled on the floor, losing every particle of self-control, and calling out, "The devil - the devil - the devil!"

2

The furious beating which Brigson receives seems merited less by what he has actually done on this occasion than by the person he is, and the desire to destroy his influence over others. Mr. Rose had previously been gentle and kindly,

But his authority was established like a rock from that night forward. No one ever ventured to dispute it again, or forgot that evening. Mr. Rose's noble moral influence gained tenfold strength from the respect and wholesome fear that he then inspired.

3

Significantly, Farrar shows on several occasions that punishment by the staff unleashes hatred and sometimes violence by other boys on the culprit. Barker is not only flogged and expelled, he is made to run the gauntlet of the whole school. Unforgiven, he is a boy whose "fate no one pitied, and whose name

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1    ibid., pp. 236-41.

2    ibid., p. 239.

3    ibid., p. 240.

no one mentioned without disgust".<sup>1</sup> After his beating, Brigson is treated with "the most unmitigated disgust and contempt ... alone and shunned" by the other boys.<sup>2</sup> When three boys are expelled from St. Winifred's, they take with them "the contempt and almost the execration of the great majority of the school".<sup>3</sup> In this way, the whole community is seen as endorsing the punishment inflicted by masters.

There are several indications in Eric that members of staff may not have the same standards, and that punishments may have differing effects on individual boys. Mr. Rose and Mr. Gordon, for example, behave differently when they find Eric using a classroom other than his own.<sup>4</sup> On another occasion after the Headmaster has caned Duncan and Eric, Farrar adds this comment:

Corporal punishment, however necessary and desirable for some dispositions, always produced on Eric the worst effects. He burned not with remorse or regret, but with shame and violent indignation ...

5

In St. Winifred's, four years later, Farrar's treatment of school discipline seems to have shifted. Caning goes on frequently, but is in the hands of monitors. Members of staff employ a carefully graded series of punishments adapted to different offences. In this book, Farrar is not afraid to show that masters can lose control of themselves, or be injudicious in their treatment of offenders. Mr. Paton strikes a boy in a "flash of rage" which he later regrets, there is an effective analysis of his misreading of a boy's character at a critical moment, and elsewhere there is a reference to his "error of judgment" in "making no allowances for new methods".<sup>6</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 132-3.

2 *ibid.*, p. 240.

3 F. W. Farrar, St. Winifred's, (1862) /1910/, p. 286.

4 F. W. Farrar, Eric, pp. 108-9.

5 *ibid.*, p. 104.

6 F. W. Farrar, St. Winifred's, (1862) /1910/, pp. 59, 47-9, 42.



In this book, as in Eric, however, it is made clear that discipline has to be maintained, and the implication seems to be that ultimately this relies on the threat of flogging and expulsion. Leniency, like Mr. Noel's when a new teacher, is fatal: his "inexperience, and the very kindness which led him to relax the existing discipline ... tempted the boys to unwonted presumption".<sup>1</sup> In his house, and in the school at large, "all rules were set at defiance with impunity".<sup>2</sup>

Similarly, even the kindly régime at Old Styles's has to be maintained by the presence of a whipping block. When Styles himself is ill, discipline rapidly deteriorates because the second usher is "a muff"; "We did as we liked with him; and whenever there was a row, the senior fellows thought nothing of shying their Caesars at his head!"<sup>3</sup> Dr. Brabazon uses his birch only as a kind of symbolic threat, to preserve order:

The formidable weapon, meant to inspire wholesome awe, had never been used within the memory of the oldest boy: very rarely was it taken from its receptacle to be held in terrorem over the different desks ...

4

When the Rev. James Ashurst arrives as master of a rather run-down county grammar school, he finds the boys "unaccustomed to any discipline", and undergoes temporary unpopularity because of the sternness and "bodily punishment" he has to employ to bring matters under control.<sup>5</sup>

A. R. H. Moncrieff refers more than once to boys' natural respect for masters who are strict disciplinarians. He recalls one of his own teachers who was "harsh, capricious, unrelenting".

He made no allowances; he punished without discrimination - as often unjustly as justly. Well, we did not exactly love this man; but we revered him. We took all his harshness and cruelty as a matter of course, and fed with thankfulness upon the rare crumbs of human kindness which

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1 *ibid.*, p. 241.

2 *ibid.*, p. 250.

3 Henry Spicer, Old Styles's, 1859, p. 277.

4 Mrs. Henry Wood, Orville College, (1867) 1899, p. 43.

5 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, pp. 25-6.



from time to time he flung us. We believed in him then,  
and such is the force of custom that some of us believe  
in him to this day.

1

A master must be "cruel only to be kind",<sup>2</sup> like the teacher known as "Stiff Dick", described in such terms as inexorable, an object of terror, immovable, hard and cold. The boys fear him "as a good disciplinarian and successful teacher",<sup>3</sup> and for Moncrieff the two clearly go together. In his own ideal school he would have few laws, but would insist that they were rigorously obeyed.

If a boy obeyed me, well and good; if he did not, he should be punished; if that had no effect on him, he should leave the school.

4

In general, the picture given of corporal punishment in these sketches is of a necessary constraint, accepted by the pupils. Boys have more common-sense than their parents.

And, if they do wrong, and get flogged, they take it as a matter of course, with more or less contrition, and not raise a cry about punishment being "degrading" and "brutalizing," and so forth, as certain of their elders do.

5

The decadence of modern young men is demonstrated partly by their craving for fashionable clothes, and partly by their reluctance to be flogged.<sup>6</sup> He even writes a whole chapter in praise of his well-used strap, which he calls "Lion".<sup>7</sup> He disapproves of the vogue for abandoning corporal punishment, and indicates his feelings in such phrases as:

There is nothing I like better than to see a boy trying to bear a flogging well.

I find it necessary to make them fear me first, and then take my chance of their love afterwards.

the strap is a wholesome medicine.

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- 1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, pp. 3-4.
  - 2 ibid., p. 29.
  - 3 ibid., pp. 184-5.
  - 4 ibid., p. 176.
  - 5 ibid., p. 32.
  - 6 ibid., p. 41.
  - 7 ibid., pp. 70-83.

How I have enjoyed making a cowardly bully or a selfish liar howl with rage and pain before his half-pleased, half-awed companions!

1

Although Hughes, Farrar and others treat the topic in different ways, and although they attribute different purposes to flogging, the significant common factor is acceptance of the master's right, even his duty, to punish in this way. The Rev. Abel Cane is described as a ferocious beater, but, looking back on his schooldays, the boy whose sufferings are described says, "I hated him cordially then; but I learnt to like him afterwards, and now I lament in him the lost friend."<sup>2</sup> Dr. Bray tells the narrator, in terms like Dr. Johnson's, that his classical knowledge is all due to Mr. Cane: "A good flogging is like exercise to the body, it gives you an appetite for study."<sup>3</sup> In The Beauclerks, Father and Son, 1867, punishment is presented as a sanction which boys who have "earned" it readily accept. Dobson reports cheerfully on how, during the floods, he was "flogged for being nearly drowned". Dr. Armstrong had threatened to beat boys who went out and got wet, and -

"I did get wet through, body and soul; and it took three-quarters of an hour before I was brought to; and the next day I got six cuts."

4

It is the honourable thing for boys to own up to their misdeeds, and when Frank does so, and is flogged, "the Doctor never forgot him, and bore him especial favour ever afterwards".<sup>5</sup> There is much painful beating, by cane and strap, at Saxonhurst, but the narrator describes it as "quite harmless" and even "civilised".<sup>6</sup> References like these look forward to the later developments in fiction where the cane is seen as a kind of bond between teacher and pupil, and "taking a beating" the essential mark of manhood.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 72, 74, 78, 79.

2 W. H. Ainsworth, Mervyn Clitheroe, (1858) /1879/, p. 11.

3 *ibid.*, p. 77.

4 Charles Clarke, The Beauclerks, Father and Son, 1867, vol. 1, p. 8.

5 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 39.

6 /P. H. Fitzgerald/, Schooldays at Saxonhurst, Edinburgh, /1867/ 1868, p. 48.

## THE TEACHER AS CRAMMER

During this period, there emerges a new image of the academic teacher as an inhuman crammer, concerned to force pupils on regardless of their ability or their all-round development. Dickens, of course, in Dombey and Son and Hard Times is the author chiefly responsible for this, but he is preceded and followed by others. The uncritical view of the model pupil as one stuffed with miscellaneous information is reflected in the prize-giving scene of Holiday House, 1839. Frank, "the best scholar" in the school, receives a whole series of prizes, for Greek, Latin, Geography, Algebra, Mathematics, and even for good conduct. One of the other boys says of him admiringly that, "Frank Graham deserves any reward, because he learns his lessons so perfectly, that he could not say them wrong even if he wished!"<sup>1</sup> The master's delight in such a pupil implies a view of teaching that is evaluated in terms of how much is committed to memory. So a new headmaster in another book is soon busy: "All day long he was engaged in drill-drill-drilling the boys ..." <sup>2</sup> J. A. Froude described the process in the mechanistic images that were to become standard. He wrote of the "unhealthily precocious" talent of Edward, "most unwisely pushed forward and encouraged by everybody, by teachers and schoolmaster, from the vanity of having a little monster to display as their workmanship".<sup>3</sup> The father is equally concerned that his son should "get on" and be "successful". All other aspects of development are subordinated to the bookish:

Of course, if a boy knew half the Iliad by heart at ten, and had construed the Odyssey through at eleven, all other excellences were a matter of course ...

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- 1 Catherine Sinclair, Holiday House, (1839) Edinburgh, n.d., pp. 239-40.
  - 2 J. T. J. Hewlett, Peter Priggins, 1841, p. 214.
  - 3 Zeta, Shadows of the Clouds, 1847, p. 25.
  - 4 ibid., p. 26.



In Cleverness, 1858, a moral tale written against the educational forcing of able children, Mrs. S. C. Hall describes the children's new "classical and scientific" tutor as "a hard stern man, with an iron constitution". He is happy with Alfred because the boy delights in learning, "and he thought how fine it would be to see him carry the highest honours at Oxford".<sup>1</sup>

His tutor felt towards this wondrous boy as a skilful mechanist would towards an automaton, upon the construction of which he had expended an existence. 2

Alas, despite the Doctor's warnings about "forcing", Albert dies, his strength "destroyed by over-mental exertion".<sup>3</sup>

This repeated depiction of one kind of teacher as "mechanist" or "workman" producing an "automaton", a little "monster", is developed much further by Dickens. Dombey and Son is, in a sense, a novel about contrasting environments, and Doctor Blimber is almost inseparable from his "establishment". Not only is he never really described outside it; his ethos animates it and those in it. Indeed, because of the prevailing mechanistic images, it is almost as though the school itself has a character, and the Doctor, Miss Blimber and Mr. Feeder are servo-mechanisms to it. When Toots returns, he finds it wholly unchanged; he hears and sees "the old boys, at their old lives in the old room on the old principle!".<sup>4</sup> Even when Blimber retires it is made clear that the school will continue exactly as before. As Squeers capitalised on one kind of demand, so Blimber profits from another, which integrates him with the major themes of the novel: the obsessions with status and with efficiency. Mr. Dombey approves of Blimber's establishment both because it is expensive and exclusive and because it is concerned with the speedy acquisition of knowledge, the qualification for a profitable career.

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1 Mrs. S. C. Hall, Cleverness, 1858, pp. 14-5.

2 *ibid.*, p. 28.

3 *ibid.*, p. 42.

4 Charles Dickens, Dombey and Son, (1846-8) 1974, p. 556.

Two different attitudes to education are summed up in Blimber's rhetorical question and Paul's answer:

"Shall we make a man of him?" repeated the Doctor.

"I had rather be a child," replied Paul.

1

Mr. Dombey has already expressed fears that his six-year-old son is falling behind others of his age; he can hardly use the words "child" or "childish" except in a pejorative sense; he assures Paul, "You are almost a man already," as they arrive at the school, and his parting words are, "and you'll soon be grown up now!". His wish to speed maturity is echoed by the Blimber establishment. For the Doctor, all boys are "young gentlemen"; he "regarded the young gentlemen as if they were all Doctors, and were born grown up"; and the repeated image which Dickens uses is one of forcing fruit and vegetables before their time.<sup>2</sup> Apart from this central image of forcing in a great hot-house, where "Nature was of no consequence at all",<sup>3</sup> the images used of teaching and learning are those of predominantly mechanical and lifeless processes. The Doctor looks at Paul as at "some choice little animal he was going to stuff"; Mr. Feeder is described as "a kind of human barrel-organ, with a little list of tunes at which he was continually working, over and over again, without any variation", "grinding" it to the pupils; and Cordelia as an "artificial Bogle, stuffed full of scholastic straw", one "dry and sandy with working in the graves of deceased languages".<sup>4</sup> As for the boys, "The studies went round like a mighty wheel, and the young gentlemen were always stretched upon it"; they are "grinding in the mill of knowledge"; ten of them are being force-fed with "a supply of learning for a hundred".<sup>5</sup> The house itself, with its "scholastic and studious" appearance, is dominated by the relentless ticking of the great clock in the hall, and even the furniture

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1    ibid., p. 145.

2    ibid., pp. 140-9, 167.

3    ibid., p. 142.

4    ibid., pp. 146, 143, 151, 162, 143.

5    ibid., pp. 162, 556, 142.

is set out in rows "like figures in a sum".<sup>1</sup> Lifelessness spreads through Blimber's emphasis on appropriate social style: the artificiality of the meals, the solemn walks with the doctor, the periods of liberty in which "nothing happened so vulgar as play",<sup>2</sup> the stately party, and even the end of term:

Any such violent expression as "breaking up," would have been quite inapplicable to that polite establishment. The young gentlemen oozed away, semi-annually, to their own homes; but they never broke up. They would have scorned the action.

3

In the same novel, the Doctor's counterpart for younger children is Mrs. Pipchin. The heavy irony in Dickens's presentation of this lady is grounded in the juxtaposition of everybody's praise of her as admirably qualified with his own commentary and choice of imagery which shows her as an instinctive child-hater. To Mrs. Chick she is a most "judicious" person to engage in "the bodily and mental training" of Paul; she has "for some time devoted all the energies of her mind, with the greatest success, to the study and treatment of infancy"; her "management of children is quite astonishing". In more impersonal terms, Dickens reports that she was "generally spoken of as a 'great manager' of children" and that she was held to be "quite scientific in her knowledge of the childish character".<sup>4</sup> This paragon turns out to be an unattractive, elderly widow, whose establishment is run on penal lines.

This celebrated Mrs. Pipchin was a marvellous ill-favoured, ill-conditioned old lady, of a stooping figure, with a mottled face, like bad marble, a hook nose, and a hard grey eye, that looked as if it might have been hammered at on an anvil without sustaining any injury.

5

Virtually everything which the few children do is based on Mrs. Pipchin's management principle: "to give them everything that they didn't like, and

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1    ibid., pp. 555, 143.

2    ibid., p. 156.

3    ibid., p. 181.

4    ibid., pp. 98-103.

5    ibid., p. 100.



nothing that they did ...". She is much given to moral tales in which naughty children come to sticky ends. Miss Pankey is sentenced to solitary confinement, and threatened with never going to Heaven for daring to sniff before visitors. Because the girl is afraid of sleeping alone in the dark Mrs. Pipchin forces her upstairs to a solitary room, and goes in to shake her when she cries. Master EBitherstone is smacked whenever Mrs. Pipchin herself starts to nod, and on Sundays he is made to sit erect between services "neither moving hand nor foot". There is a daily routine of shampooing and salt water, from which the children return "very blue and dejected".<sup>1</sup> Dickens describes Mrs. Pipchin as "a bitter old lady", an "ogress and child-queller". Everything about her is forbidding, gloomy and sterile. In her black bombazeen, "her presence was a quencher to any number of candles". Even the soil around her house is "more than usually chalky, flinty and sterile", and the never-used front parlour contains writhing cactuses in pots.<sup>2</sup> In a typical contrast between organic and mechanistic images, Dickens sums up her system as being: "not to encourage a child's mind to develop and expand itself like a young flower, but to open it by force like an oyster ...".<sup>3</sup> With her maxim of "keep 'em at it", it is not surprising that she finds Doctor Blimber's "an excellent establishment ... very strictly conducted ... nothing but learning going on from morning to night".<sup>4</sup>

Hard Times repeats in a different setting some of the educational themes of Dombey and Son; indeed, Philip Collins has called M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild "a poor man's Blimber".<sup>5</sup> The emphasis falls more on the ideas themselves, embodied in the whole novel, than on the particular personalities that express them. M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild has only a tiny part in the narrative, and even there he is a shadowy figure. The general attack on unimaginative and premature cramming

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1    ibid., pp. 102-3.

2    ibid., pp. 100-101.

3    ibid., p. 103.

4    ibid., p. 140.

5    Philip Collins, Dickens and Education, 1963, p. 144.

is related to a series of more specific, inter-related satiric assaults: on the tenets of Benthamite utilitarianism, on the regulations and examinations for certificated teachers, on the Department for Practical Art, on the debased versions of Pestalozzi's object lessons, and on the post-Edgeworth attempts to suppress fairy tales and nursery rhymes.<sup>1</sup>

The reader never directly encounters M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild teaching or hears any words that he speaks. He is called on in the second chapter to give his first lesson, but the information that he "began in his best manner" immediately leads into a description of the manner of his training and Dickens's rhetorical flourishes: "Ah, rather overdone, M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild", "Say, M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild ... dost thou think ...?" Later Sissy tells Louisa of a series of incidents where her human sympathies made it impossible for her to understand the teacher's statistical approaches. Again M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild is ironically mediated through Sissy's certainty that she is stupid and that Mr. and Mrs. M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild "know everything". Apart from this, the teacher returns from time to time as a generalising, symbolic figure, not as an individual.

The M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild school was all fact, and the school of design was all fact, and the relations between master and man were all fact, and everything was fact ...

... the craving grew within them for some physical relief ... some occasional light pie in which even M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild had no finger ...

Bring to me, says M<sup>o</sup>Choakumchild, yonder baby just able to walk, and I will engage that it will never wonder ...

2

It is almost as though the deadening weight of abstraction, the inhuman insistence on fact, has swallowed up the man himself as a human being.

A similar point is made explicitly about the Headmaster in the opening pages of Guy Livingstone, 1857. "The everlasting grind at the educational

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1 These are briefly documented by Collins pp. 144-59 and J. A. Carter Jr. "Dickens and Education: The Novelist as Reformer", 1956, Ch. VI.

2 Charles Dickens, Hard Times, (1854) 1955, pp. 8, 56, 23, 25, 49.

tread-mill had worn away all he might once have had of imagination ..."<sup>1</sup>

Charles Kingsley, in The Water Babies, 1863, adapted Dickens's style rather ponderously, particularly to attack the effects of "payment by results" introduced through the Revised Code of the previous year. The Tomtoddlies, all heads and no bodies, awaiting the Examiner-of-all-Examiners, Cousin Cramchild, the unimaginative Professor Pthmlnsprt and the stock knowledge of the Government pupil-teacher, are all aspects of his unremitting attack on "these enlightened new times" in which children "are taught to know a little about everything, and to know it all ill".<sup>2</sup>

Applying the thumb-screw is the image George Eliot chooses to describe the teaching of the Rev. Walter Stelling in The Mill on the Floss, 1860. Stelling is presented as an essentially unimaginative man, "unaware that education was a delicate and difficult business", who believes that he is doing his best for his pupil, but makes no attempt to adapt curriculum or method to him. Whatever a boy's powers, capabilities and interests, they must be developed by instilling Euclid and the Eton Grammar into him.

This, he considered, was the only basis of solid instruction; all other means of education were mere charlatanism and could produce nothing better than smatterers ...

Mr. Stelling was not the man to enfeeble and emasculate his pupil's mind by simplifying and explaining, or to reduce the tonic effect of etymology by mixing it with smattering, extraneous information such as is given to girls. 3

When Tom's essentially practical mind proves incapable of coping with the abstractions of theorems and irregular verbs, Stelling assumes indifference and obstinacy, and concludes that application must be improved by sternness.

... Mr. Stelling was convinced that a boy so stupid at signs and abstractions must be stupid at everything else, even if that reverend gentleman could have taught him everything else. It was the practice of our venerable ancestors to apply that ingenious instrument, the thumb-screw, and to tighten and tighten it in order to elicit

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1 /George Alfred Lawrence/, Guy Livingstone, 1857, p. 13.

2 Charles Kingsley, The Water Babies, (1863) 1920, p. 151.

3 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, pp. 149-50, 152.



non-existent facts; they had a fixed opinion to begin with, that the facts were existent, and what had they to do but to tighten the thumb-screw? In like manner Mr. Stelling had a fixed opinion that all boys with any capacity could learn what it was the only regular thing to teach; if they were slow, the thumb-screw must be tightened, the exercises must be insisted on with increased severity, and a page of Virgil be awarded as a penalty, to encourage and stimulate a too languid inclination to Latin verse.

1

Stelling's own image for the process is of ploughing and harrowing the mind, so that it can bear fruitfully whatever intellectual seeds are planted there:

It was his favourite metaphor, that the classics and geometry constituted that culture of the mind which prepared it for the reception of any subsequent crop.

As George Eliot coolly observes, though, change the metaphor and the appropriateness of the behaviour is immediately called into question. Think of the brain as "an intellectual stomach", and Tom is being fed an academic diet "in order to remedy a gastric weakness which prevented him from digesting it ...".<sup>2</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 182-3.

2 *ibid.*, p. 151.

## THE TEACHER AS FIGURE OF FUN

Although some teachers are presented as stock figures of fun in this period, these form a smaller proportion than previously, and they are rarely seen in such simple terms. More frequently, good and bad qualities are linked, or a figure that is ridiculed by other characters in the book is presented for the reader's sympathy or understanding, rather than for straightforward mockery. Two comic schoolmistresses created by Dickens at different stages in his career serve to demonstrate this development in style.

Miss Tomkins, headmistress of Westgate House Establishment for Young Ladies, is a conventional comic spinster figure. As soon as Miss Smithers screams that there is a man behind the door, Miss Tomkins "retreated to her own bed-room, double-locked the door, and fainted away comfortably". She is shown as commanding her army of three teachers, five female servants and thirty boarders from the rear, in "a forest of curl-papers", and displaying an indescribable "intensity" of "horror" at the notion that there could be such a thing as a man on her premises.<sup>1</sup> Not only is Miss Tomkins a two-dimensional, farcical figure, she is not realised in any sense as specifically a teacher; she could equally well be any spinster in a female community. By contrast, thirty years later, Miss Twinkleton is more fully realised as a human being, with good qualities as well as absurdities, and the humour in her presentation is grounded in her rôle of schoolmistress.

Keeper of the Seminary for Young Ladies in The Mystery of Edwin Drood, Miss Twinkleton is chiefly characterised by an element of professional sham. Not only does she herself become a more "sprightly" figure in the evenings, addicted to the gossip which she so sternly condemns in her pupils, her whole language is a kind of pretence. Rose discovers that when Miss Twinkleton

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<sup>1</sup> Charles Dickens, The Pickwick Papers, (1836-7) 1948, pp. 222-5.

reads, she does not do it "fairly". "She cut love scenes, interpolated passages in praise of female celibacy, and was guilty of other pious frauds."<sup>1</sup> The school itself is given her own special terminology. What would normally have been called the school-room, "in the patrician language of the head of the Nuns' House, was euphuistically, not to say round-aboutedly, denominated 'the apartment allotted to study'". What had previously been known as "the half" "was now called, as being more elegant, and more strictly collegiate, 'the term' ...". Even the bills are handed over with an air that suggests that they are "something in the nature of a delicate and joyful surprise". School food is "a liberal and nutritious, yet plain and salutary diet".<sup>2</sup> When Miss Twinkleton talks, everything is distanced and blurred through a haze of language, sprinkled with quotations and incomplete references which lead away from the topic rather than towards it. Nevertheless, her school is essentially a happy one, her ostentatious chaperoning of Rose is endearing rather than oppressive, and she is clearly liked by her pupils.

Some features of Miss Twinkleton may have been suggested by Thackeray's Miss Pinkerton, another of that gallery of comically imposing directors of ladies' seminaries, viewed with awe by her pupils and by her admiring sister Jemima. "Majestic" is the repeated term used ironically of her by Thackeray, "austere and god-like", "the Semiramis of Hammersmith".<sup>3</sup> Like Miss Twinkleton, she is realised chiefly through her written and spoken style of language, which is strangely inflated and imposing for one who terms herself "the friend of Doctor Johnson".<sup>4</sup> For her a bow-pot must be called a bouquet, "'tis more genteel", a letter is a "billet", and even in private her sister is always formally addressed as Miss Jemima. Her opening words in the novel are, "Have you completed all the necessary preparations incident to Miss Sedley's

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1 Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, (1870) Oxford, 1972, pp. 201-2.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 65, 111, 113, 199.

3 W. M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, (1847-8) 1963, pp. 11-15. Miss Pinkerton was herself anticipated by the same author's comic elderly spinster school-mistress in the pages of Punch, Miss Tickletoby.

4 *ibid.*, p. 11.



departure, Miss Jemima?"<sup>1</sup> and her epistolary style, as shown in letters to Mrs. Sedley and Mrs. Bute Crawley, is even more orotund.<sup>2</sup> Thackeray writes of her formal speech of farewell to Amelia that:

... it was intolerably dull, pompous, and tedious; and having the fear of her schoolmistress greatly before her eyes, Miss Sedley did not venture, in her presence, to give way to any ebullitions of private grief.

3

This fear which Miss Pinkerton arouses is largely based on bluff, as is demonstrated by the ease with which young Becky Sharp overcomes her. That farewell, of which Thackeray writes that "it was a little battle between the young lady and the old one, and the latter was worsted,"<sup>4</sup> is just the last in a series of encounters. The "majestic", "Minerva"-like Miss Pinkerton may claim that for thirty-five years she has never met anyone "who has dared in my house to question my authority"; that authority crumbles, and she is forced to remove the rebel.

Worthy Miss Pinkerton, although she had a Roman nose and a turban, and was as tall as a grenadier, and had been up to this time an irresistible princess, had no will or strength like that of her little apprentice, and in vain did battle against her, and tried to overawe her.

5

Most of the straightforwardly absurd teacher figures presented in this period make only a very brief appearance. Generally they are ushers or assistant masters. Near the end of this period, A. R. H. Moncrieff was to write that if the stories told about ushers in fiction were true, it was a mystery how vacancies in the profession were ever filled. "One would think there are not enough spiritless scarecrows in Britain to teach its middle-class youth."<sup>6</sup> The usher, he maintains, is "uniformly presented" as a young man in seedy clothes, who has seen better days, is snubbed by pupils and master, has to carry out menial duties like cleaning the boots, is tormented by

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1 *ibid.*, p. 11.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 12, 97.

3 *ibid.*, p. 15.

4 *ibid.*, p. 16.

5 *ibid.*, p. 23.

6 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 182.

practical jokes, and is mocked to his face. "Under these circumstances it is truly miraculous that the unhappy usher does not forthwith make away with himself ..."<sup>1</sup>

The narrator of Edward Howard's Rattlin the Reefer, 1836, remarks airily that during his three years at one school he can only remember one good usher "out of thirty or forty that came and went".<sup>2</sup> The tone of amused contempt for these creatures runs through the individual character sketches, and the generalisations about ushers. All are shown as somehow ridiculous at Root's school. There is the "lanky, sneaking, turnip-complexioned under usher who used to write execrable verses to the sickly housemaid", is so poor that he has to borrow from the girl, and is a "baby" who is terrified of the boys. Arriving at his next school, the first thing Ralph hears is "one of those under-toned, gerund-singing voices, that my instinct told me to be an usher's". This "wretch", Mr. Saltseller, "lost his situation just at the precise moment that the housemaid lost her character". Mr. Sigismund Pontifex escapes by marrying an elderly maiden lady of property. Finally there is the wooden-legged usher Riprapton, "the cleverest, most impudent, rascally, agreeable scoundrel, that ever swindled man or deceived woman". Even he, the most dynamic, ends absurdly stuck in the mud by his wooden leg, and threatened by the boys with being made a cock-shy.<sup>3</sup>

Hugh Miller describes the varying problems which different schoolmasters provided for the subscription school at Cromarty early in the nineteenth century. One was clever, but got drunk every time he received an instalment of his salary, and remained so until all the money was spent. Another was "steady and thoughtful, and withal a painstaking teacher", but had to resign his charge after theological doubts affected mind and body. The third, another

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 182-3.

2 Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, (1836) 1971, p. 87.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 67, 83-8, 91-4, 115-7, 122.

licentiate of the church, was

... a person of a high, if not very consistent religious profession, who was always getting into pecuniary difficulties, and always courting, though with but little success, wealthy ladies, who, according to the poet, had "acres of charms".

1

The masters of Old Styles's school form another set of caricatures in a sub-Dickensian style (some of the sketches which form the book were originally published in Household Words). The narrator's reaction to his first two encounters with the staff is that the master "might have hired a brace of clowns from the next village with equal advantage, and perhaps on easier terms".<sup>2</sup> Mr. Thummles was obsessed with his fictitious noble descent, discounted his family of drysalters and affected the manners and dress of an earlier time.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Boreham, who looked like Dr. Johnson and "dressed as closely as possible after the style of his great prototype", left to marry a dressmaker.<sup>4</sup> The second master was a rough ex-sailor, and the second usher a "muff", incapable of keeping order.<sup>5</sup> The third master, Mr. Black, was a "grotesque little manikin", suffering from curvature of the spine. "Upon my honour, he was like nothing so much as a pair of kitchen-tongs, topped with a human head of more than ordinary size."<sup>6</sup>

Certain major figures of the next period are anticipated by individuals in this one, particularly after the middle of the century. For example, the notion that foreign teachers are almost automatically funny, foreshadowed by earlier comments on ridiculous or affected French governesses,<sup>7</sup> becomes a convention after 1870. In the 1860s, though, Moncrieff had recorded that traditionalists like himself "... have a great prejudice against foreign teachers, and not without reason".<sup>8</sup> He gives an example of one such man,

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1 Hugh Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters, (1852) 1860, p. 129.

2 Henry Spicer, Old Styles's, 1859, p. 103.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 105, 157.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 175, 277.

6 *ibid.*, p. 235.

7 For example, Elizabeth M. Sewell, Amy Herbert, (1844) 1846, vol. 1, p. 165.

8 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 180.



who despises his English colleagues for their insularity, is full of theories but weak in practice, and is always wanting to borrow money. Another French master, Monsieur Bernard, has the marks that are to become conventional: odd clothes, erratic English, and an excitable temperament. He wears a neckcloth, "to which starch was unknown", swathed about his neck, and fastened with a brooch of imitation diamonds, even in the hottest weather.

To say that his knowledge of English was merely imperfect would be too indulgent a compliment, it being very much akin to the language in which the British sailor converses with the Chinese ... He used at times to lose temper, and to make me a long, impassioned, chaleureux discourse, as if he were in a pulpit. He used gestures and a variety of tones ...

1

Another figure to become stock is the backward-looking, aging, incompetent master of a school. Assuring the reader, with tongue in cheek, that such a state of affairs could only have existed in the educational dark ages before the time of writing, George Eliot characterised the unreformed country grammar school as one where,

... two or three boys could have, all to themselves, the advantages of a large and lofty building, together with a headmaster, toothless, dim-eyed, and deaf, whose erudite indistinctness and inattention were engrossed by them at the rate of three hundred pounds a head - a ripe scholar, doubtless, when first appointed, but all ripeness beneath the sun has a further stage less esteemed in the market.

2

The Rev. James Ashurst's good qualities as the new master of Helmingham Grammar School are thrown into relief by the brief description of his predecessor, Dr. Munch:

... as bad a specimen of the old-fashioned, nothing-doing, sincecure-seeking pedagogue as could well be imagined; a rotund, red-faced, gouty-footed divine, with a thick layer of limp white cravat loosely tied round his short neck, and his suit of clerical sables splashed with a culinary spray; a man whose originally small stock of classical learning had gradually faded away, and whose originally large stock of idleness and self-gratification had simultaneously increased.

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1 P. H. Fitzgerald, Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869, pp. 103-4.  
2 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 182.  
3 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, p. 19.

Dr. Hoxton is the headmaster of Market Stoneborough grammar school in The Daisy Chain, shown in the book on more than one occasion as jumping to the wrong conclusions about events in the school. Dr. May complains about him:

"It is a mockery, as I have always said, to see that old fellow sit wrapped up in his pomposity, eating his good dinners, and knowing no more what goes on among his boys than this umbrella!"

1

The assumption that author and reader will share a simple view of a wholly ludicrous teacher is gradually replaced by a more indulgent balancing of comic and admirable qualities, or by presenting conflicting judgments. Such a kind of double focus can be seen in Charlotte Bronte's The Professor, 1857. The ushers, Vandam and Kint, are not only seen in different ways by Crimsworth and Pelet, they are also seen in two different lights by Crimsworth himself. His sympathy for their honesty, industry, and poor working conditions, is balanced by something approaching contempt for their unimaginative natures and the way in which they are prepared to accept the situation.<sup>2</sup>

Sometimes the reader is unsure whether to view such teachers with amusement, pity or contempt. For example, Mr. Carnaby is simultaneously absurd in his romantic poses, pathetic in his pretensions and despicable in his manner towards his pupils, alternately sly and neglectful.<sup>3</sup> A timid English usher who lapses into torpor after lunch, and spends the afternoon munching nutmegs, awakens the reader's sympathy as well as his laughter.<sup>4</sup> Miss Winter, a daily governess, is conscientious and well-meaning, but also ridiculous in her prim, stiff manner and her uneasy lack of knowledge in "the higher branches of arithmetic".<sup>5</sup> In his description of "Our School", Dickens presents the Latin master as

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1 Charlotte M. Yonge, The Daisy Chain, (1856) 1901, p. 204.

2 For example, Charlotte Bronte, The Professor, (1857) 1975, pp. 58, 77-8.

3 Harriet Martineau, The Crofton Boys, (1841) 1865, p. 132.

4 E. Ward, Boys and their Rulers, 1853, p. 14.

5 Charlotte M. Yonge, The Daisy Chain, (1856) 1901, pp. 1 and 58.

... a colorless doubled-up near-sighted man with a crutch, who was always cold, and always putting onions in his ears for deafness, and always disclosing ends of flannel under all his garments, and almost always applying a ball of pocket-handkerchief to some part of his face with a screwing action round and round. He was a very good scholar, and took great pains where he saw intelligence and a desire to learn: otherwise, perhaps not. Our memory presents him (unless teased into a passion) with as little energy as color - as having been worried and tormented into monotonous feebleness - as having had the best part of his life ground out of him in a Mill of boys.

1

Mr. Poulter, the village schoolmaster at King's Lorton, had been a soldier in the Peninsular War, and is employed by Mr. Stelling to drill Tom. He lives largely in the rosily remembered world of martial exploits, and his great pride is in his sword exercises, but despite his martial spirit, he

... was no longer personally formidable. He had rather a shrunken appearance, and was tremulous in the mornings, not from age, but from the extreme perversity of the King's Lorton boys which nothing but gin could enable him to sustain with any firmness.

2

Mr. Henry Dow, a mathematics teacher, is imposed on by the older boys. P. H. Fitzgerald describes him in Schooldays at Saxonhurst as "an ascetic-looking man, always trying to see something with difficulty through his glasses" and as "a profound mathematician". The boys would press this "very amiable, but trusting professor" to take them on a long walk to a neighbouring town, where the party would scatter, "the amiable and good-natured professor being purposely asked for an explanation of an abstruse mathematical question, which he was only too delighted to give", but which made him blind to the disappearance of the boys in the direction of a dinner at the local inn.

His simple nature was always ready to accept the assumed curiosity of the merest urchin about his "higher curves" as quite genuine; and he would try and explain the science clearly, to the great delight of the malicious bystanders.

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- 1 Charles Dickens, Household Words, No. 81, 11 October 1851, p. 51.
  - 2 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 184.
  - 3 P. H. Fitzgerald, Schooldays at Saxonhurst, /1867/ Edinburgh, 1868, pp. 255-6.



Mr. C. is "too much of a genius" to be a schoolmaster, given to "high-flown discourses" or to reciting his own poetry, while the pupils amuse themselves and pay no attention.<sup>1</sup> The master who teaches science at one day school, a man repeatedly described as "amiable", is an innocent enthusiast who encourages any pupils who show an interest, but whose experiments usually end in violent explosions or complete failure.<sup>2</sup>

Although such characters as these are primarily comic, the balancing of qualities makes categorisation difficult. In particular, it is interesting that in some cases the emphasis seems to be shifting towards the appropriateness for a teacher of certain characteristics. The implication is that qualities good in themselves - amiability, good-nature, genius, enthusiasm - may, in the absence of others, be a disadvantage in school.

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1967, pp. 187-8.  
2 P. H. Fitzgerald, Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869, p. 239.

## THE TEACHER AS FIGURE OF PATHOS

Charles Dickens, the most prolific and the most influential portrayer of teachers, seems to draw heavily in his early novels on the models established in the previous hundred years. The shift he gives is in the emotional intensity; an intensity which applies not only to the way they are realised by the author but also to the response which is predicted for the reader. His comic figures are more ludicrous, his bullies more terrifying, their cruelties realised not from the outside but through the eyes of victims or horrified onlookers. One particularly Dickensian development is to take a figure that in other circumstances would be shown as ludicrous, and to shift the presentation to stress the element of pathos. Although, in their different ways, Marton, Mell and Strong could all be seen as absurd, the reader's sympathy is engaged on their behalf. They develop from the Pauper Schoolmaster in Sketches by Boz; we may not admire them, but we do feel sorry for them.

It is in this shifted focus that these characters of Dickens differ from those other figures of pathos, the protagonists of governess novels, in the tradition extending from The Governess, 1839, through works like Amy Herbert, 1844 and Anne Sherwood, 1857. There is no balancing sense of the comic or the absurd in these women; the pathos is unremitting and at times maudlin; the reader is invited to identify masochistically with the heroine's sufferings. The concentration here on teachers in school, though, should not obscure the fact that tutors and governesses are also shown as essentially pathetic. The humble, uncomplaining figure struggling to provide for a needy family appears in a number of works. Although both of them escape by marriage, the two governesses in John Halifax, Gentleman are both called repeatedly the "poor governess". Jessop at the Bank tells John that Miss Silver is "a good daughter, who teaches in Norton Bury anybody's children for any sort of pay,

in order to maintain an ailing mother".<sup>1</sup> Beneath her reserve there is consciousness of her ambiguous position and reticence about her origins. John says to Phineas, "Poor thing! - she has evidently not been used to kindness."<sup>2</sup> Dickens's Bradley Headstone may have been in Fitzgerald's mind when he stressed the anxious respectability and the labours of Mr. Blackstone, the new tutor.

A small spare man, smaller chested, with orange-coloured hair, and whiskers that "seemed made of coca-nut fibre. The most precise of men, not yet a clergyman, but to be one; full of a strong sense of duty and office and responsibility, and who, we knew, had supported two elderly and useless sisters, by his own over-worked brain. So had he laboured on through his college, so laboured up to his degree, and was now labouring on to a curacy, always respectable, never failing to be neat and scrupulous, in his frock-coats. He had a neat little house in some suburb, where "the tuitions" found meat and found drink, and clothes and comforts for himself and for his sisters. 3

When Dickens describes Mr. Marton in The Old Curiosity Shop, he seems to take most of the familiar details from the traditional image of the village schoolmaster, giving them a slightly idealising gloss, but with this particular emotional emphasis on pathos. Marton never really convinces as man or as teacher. He embodies stock qualities - virtuous, poor, lonely, old, sad - and is repeatedly associated with settings and events that suggest the past, solitude and death. The impression is created from the first glimpse that Nell and her grandfather have of him:

There was but one old man in the little garden before his cottage ... He was a pale, simple-looking man, of a spare and meagre habit, and sat among his flowers and beehives, smoking his pipe, in the little porch before his door ... thoughtful and silent ... He had a kind face. In his plain old suit of black, he looked pale and meagre. They fancied, too, a lonely air about him and his house, but perhaps that was because the other people formed a merry company upon the green, and he seemed the only solitary man in the place. 4

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1 D. M. Craik, John Halifax, Gentleman, (1856) /1898/ p. 359.

2 *ibid.*, p. 369.

3 P. H. Fitzgerald, Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869, p. 245.

4 Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, (1840-1) 1951, p. 182.



Dickens normally refers to him thereafter as "the old schoolmaster" or, more frequently, "the poor schoolmaster"; the man's name is hardly ever used. The words and phrases that are used to describe his speech and actions in those final pages of Chapter 24 all reinforce the impression: with a sigh, kindly, earnestly, gently, carefully, slowly, with something of sadness in his voice and manner, wistfully, very gently, mournfully.<sup>1</sup> One of the chief ingredients of the pathos which surrounds him is the intensity of his relationship with his "favourite scholar", who is dying at the time when Mr. Marton is introduced to the novel. He says to Nell,

"That I should love him is no wonder, but that he should love me -" and there the schoolmaster stopped, and took off his spectacles to wipe them, as though they had grown dim.

2

The emotional death-bed scene marks another stage in the teacher's progressive isolation. The schoolmaster bids farewell to Nell with the words, "I am quite a solitary man now."<sup>3</sup> When they meet again, he tells her that his love for the boy now seems to have been transferred to her, and proclaims his simple unworldly sincerity.

The plain, frank kindness of the honest schoolmaster, the affectionate earnestness of his speech and manner, the truth which was stamped upon his every word and look, gave the child a confidence in him, which the utmost arts of treachery and dissimulation could never have awakened in her breast.

4

The child-like simplicity of the man, his unworldly goodness, is the quality Dickens emphasises throughout. There is no development; he is exactly the same at the end of the novel as earlier. In the final summing-up of what happened to the characters, Mr. Marton is swiftly and characteristically despatched.

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1    ibid., pp. 182-5.

2    ibid., p. 184.

3    ibid., p. 195.

4    ibid., p. 344.

The young brother, or the single gentleman, for that designation is more familiar, would have drawn the poor schoolmaster from his lone retreat, and made him his companion and friend. But the humble village teacher was timid of venturing into the noisy world, and had become fond of his dwelling in the old churchyard. Calmly happy in his school, and in the spot, and in the attachment of Her little mourner, he pursued his quiet course in peace; and was, through the righteous gratitude of his friend - let this brief mention suffice for that - a poor schoolmaster no more.

1

In Dickens's memories of his own schooldays, he recalled a pathetic usher who may have provided some of the details for Mr. Mell. The portrait in "Our School" ends characteristically with the repeated exclamation: "Poor fellow!"

The usher at our school, who was considered to know everything as opposed to the Chief who was considered to know nothing, was a bony, gentle-faced, clerical-looking young man in rusty black. It was whispered that he was sweet upon one of Maxby's sisters ... But, we all liked him; for he had a good knowledge of boys, and would have made it a much better school if he had had more power. He was writing-master, mathematical master, English master, made out the bills, mended the pens, and did all sorts of things ... He was rather musical, and on some remote quarter-day had bought an old trombone; but a bit of it was lost, and it made the most extraordinary sounds when he sometimes tried to play it of an evening. His holidays never began (on account of the bills) until long after ours ... Poor fellow! ... He has been dead these twenty years.  
Poor fellow!

2

Mr. Mell, the junior assistant master at Salem House, is a similar figure of pathos: poor, good-natured, kindly and with endearing foibles (like his bad playing of the flute) he is ill-treated by Creakle and unjustly dismissed for having a mother in an alms-house. His appearance and behaviour are not prepossessing:

I forgot to mention that he would talk to himself sometimes, and grin, and clench his fist, and grind his teeth, and pull his hair in an unaccountable manner. But he had those peculiarities.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 553.

2 *Household Words*, No. 81, 11 October 1851, p. 51.

3 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, (1849-50) [1947], p. 106.

However, David rapidly came to like him: "He was never harsh to me", he "had a liking for me that I am gratified to remember", the new master "never took the pains with me ... that Mr. Mell had taken".<sup>1</sup> It is significant that the first real indication given to readers that Steerforth is not the character young David thinks is his systematic disparagement of Mell, and that Mell's dismissal comes about, in part at least, while he is trying to shield David from Steerforth's influence. In an implausible ending to the novel, it is suggested that Mell, having acquired a doctorate and a wife and family in the interim, has become headmaster of a school in Australia. Even less plausible is the notion that he would have named the school after Dr. Creakle's establishment (Colonial Salem-House Grammar School, Port Middlebay).

Although David's second school is clearly an idealised one, to contrast with Creakle's, Dr. Strong himself is another figure of pathos. Whereas it is virtually impossible to consider Dr. Blimber in isolation from his establishment, Dr. Strong seems to have almost no real connection with his school. The attention is centred on his marriage, and hardly at all on his function as a teacher. The same generalised approval is loaded on him as on his establishment; he is "the idol of the whole school". The careless eccentricity of the Doctor's first appearance is thereafter constantly qualified by approving comments and epithets: "amiability and sweetness", "the kindest of men", "fatherly, benignant", "benevolent", "impressive and affecting dignity", "fidelity and generosity", "the sweetness of his temper, the placid kindness of his manner, and his benevolent solicitude", "calm and patient", "gentleness ... dignity", "tenderly ... mildly".<sup>2</sup> Typically, he is "The good Doctor", who behaves "in the perfect goodness of his nature". Nearly everybody speaks well of him: "one of the gentlest of men", and David

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1    ibid., pp. 106, 121, 130.

2    ibid., pp. 265, 267, 277, 278, 593, 700, 701, 704-5, 737-8, 747-9.



had "a great attachment" and "reverence" for him.<sup>1</sup> However, these qualities are hardly the ones associated with an effective headmaster. The goodness is an unworldly one: there are frequent references to his simplicity, his "smile of simplicity and gentleness", which can be his "complacent smile", his "simple honesty".<sup>2</sup> There is reservation in Mr. Wickfield's praise that the Doctor is "the least suspicious of mankind", in the awareness that his planned Dictionary will never be finished, in the mistakes he makes in playing cards, in his insensitivity to other people's feelings, most of all his wife's, and in the almost symbolic friendship with that other unworldly figure, Mr. Dick.<sup>3</sup> Neither of the two stock rôles which he is called on to play, the trusting old husband with the young wife, or the absent-minded scholar, seems to be appropriate for a man who is also alleged to be the headmaster of a successful boys' school. Whereas in novels of an earlier period a man in his situation would probably have been a figure of fun, Dickens presents him rather sentimentally as a sympathetic character. The trick is achieved by suggesting briefly that his trustingness and affection for his pupils result in a corporate protective loyalty to him. Although they smile at his foibles and his Dictionary dream, they are very conscious of supporting his reputation and, for example, of protecting his gullible generosity from beggars and vagabonds.<sup>4</sup> Without showing the process in action, Dickens writes of the school with vague approval:

It was very gravely and decorously ordered, and on a sound system; with an appeal, in everything, to the honour and good faith of the boys, and an avowed intention to rely on their possession of those qualities unless they proved themselves unworthy of it, which worked wonders.

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- 1    *ibid.*, pp. 282, 699, 269, 317, 326.  
2    *ibid.*, pp. 267, 281, 287, 294, 699.  
3    *ibid.*, pp. 269, 277, 283, 287, 744-54, 294.  
4    *ibid.*, pp. 276-7.  
5    *ibid.*, p. 276.

Philip Collins has pointed out that the picture of the school is so vague indeed that it is quite impossible to say with any certainty what kind of school it is, public, grammar or private.<sup>1</sup> The images which realise it are stock ones that look forward to the Greyfriars world of The Magnet: courtyard, rooks, cathedral towers and bells, old trees, smooth grass and walled gardens.<sup>2</sup>

Although these three, Marton, Mell and Strong, are presented for the reader's sympathy, it is doubtful whether that reader will form a higher opinion of teachers as a result. The overall impression is of naivety, isolation in a private world, and incapacity for dealing with young people. In a sense, the fact of having the task is one of the misfortunes for which they win our sympathy. The instinct that our reactions are being manipulated is intensified by the happy outcomes arranged for Marton and Strong.

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1 Philip Collins, Dickens and Education, 1963, p. 117.

2 David Copperfield, pp. 265, 269, 326.

## THE TEACHER AS MORAL INFLUENCE

What of the good teachers? There are still examples of those exemplary figures seen in the previous period, who have little quality of life about them, and are described in the glowing terms of an obituary notice.

Miss Mitford's description of the Doctor at Belford Regis, for example, sees him as possessed of all the necessary qualities, and handsome and popular as well. She sums up:

Benevolence was, after all, his prime characteristic. Full of knowledge, of wisdom, and of learning, an admirable schoolmaster, and exemplary in every relation of life, his singular kindness of heart was his most distinguishing quality.

1

Even his wife has to be "sweet and excellent", pure, simple, kind, true, motherly, sympathetic and beautiful.

Some figures are not even developed as far as this, but are commended in a brief, honorific phrase: "the kindest master"; teachers "so kind" who "taught us so nicely"; "just such a master as it was good for little boys to be under"; "the good mistress" and "the worthy master".<sup>2</sup> A particular aspect or incident showing concern for pupils may be isolated as a mark of quality. When a boy is injured "Mr. Tooke never left him all day". A schoolmistress greets new pupils "with some gingerbread and kissed us both; she was good nature incarnated". Dr. Blamire's school is a real "home" to each boy. Mr. Franklin, an accomplished scholar, chooses to work in a school for poor children and sits up every night "practising round-hand in a copy-book" to make his writing easier for the pupils. Dr. Brabazon is not aloof, but greets each boy returning from holidays "with a hearty smile and

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1 Mary Russell Mitford, Belford Regis, (1835) 1846, pp. 133-4.

2 Thomas Maude, The Schoolboy, 1836, p. 14; Agnes Strickland, Tales of the Schoolroom, /1835?/, p. 53; Harriet Martineau, The Crofton Boys, (1841) /1865/, p. 291; Julia Corner, The Village School, /1848/, p. 10.



outstretched hands".<sup>1</sup> During this period there are not infrequent references to intense affection by pupils for their teachers; an emotion distinct from the respect and admiration of earlier years. Amy Herbert is overwhelmed with joy when she learns that the governess, Emily Morton, will be able to remain and teach her. As the two embrace, she tells Miss Morton, "You know I would never have you go away from me; I would have you live with me always and I would love you ..."<sup>2</sup> When Old Styles enters the school-room,

... a murmur of acclamation, spreading like lightning from desk to desk, swelled in an instant to a general shout. The entire school, as by a simultaneous impulse, started to their feet, and three such cheers as I have never heard before or since shook the very plaster from the walls.

3

Sometimes, indeed, the exclamations of affection and praise seem to rest upon no firmly demonstrated qualities, or even to over-rule damaging weaknesses. Significantly, the strongest expressions of regard for the "dear old" or "good old" master are always retrospective; their motivating force is an intense remembered or imagined relationship between the narrator and the teacher described. In the formless novel by Henry Spicer just quoted, the only linking theme is this relationship between the author and the teacher who, in the last sentence of the book, is said to be, "the dearest friend now left me in the world".<sup>4</sup>

Kind, good Old Styles! If it were any consolation to his oppressed mind to know, that, without relaxing in the duty of a master, he had attached us to him by the ties of an almost filial affection - that comfort he certainly possessed. The secret of this regard lay in the confidence we had in him. He was a just man. Keeping his own passions under the strictest control, and observing the most rigid faith in all engagements, declared or implied, he never suffered an act of unfairness or oppression to pass

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1 The Crofton Boys, p. 184; George Griffith, The Life and Adventures of George Wilson, a Foundation Scholar, 1854, p. 4; Mrs. S. C. Hall, Daddy Dacre's School, 1859, p. 2; P. H. Fitzgerald, Schooldays at Saxonhurst, (1867) 1868, pp. 266-7; Mrs. Henry Wood, Orville College, (1867) 1899, p. 3.

2 Elizabeth M. Sewell, Amy Herbert, (1844) 1846, vol. 2, p. 214.

3 Henry Spicer, Old Styles's, 1859, pp. 140-1.

4 ibid., p. 343.

without reprehension or punishment ... Old Styles,  
had a remarkable, almost intuitive, perception of  
character - a rare and useful gift.

1

Even more strikingly, the praise of D'Arcy Thompson serves to introduce  
a series of statements that might objectively be thought grounds for  
condemnation of a teacher.

And Burney - dear old Burney, as we used to call our  
Head-master - how feeble would be any words to describe  
our fondness for that dear, white head! The Doctor  
was a noble type of the old-fashioned English Head-master.  
He had a loathing for all scientific study; was utterly  
ignorant of modern languages ... English literature of the  
day to him was non-existent ... All information, historical  
antiquarian, geographical, or philosophic, as connected  
with the classics, he regarded with contempt ... The boys  
of the Under School feared him as a strict and severe  
disciplinarian.

2

Although it may be revealed in very different ways, the chief criterion  
for praise of a teacher at this time is virtually always moral influence and  
strength of character. One schoolmaster, writing in praise of another, sums  
up his personality thus: "By his noble presence, and the unseen force of his  
character, he could maintain the strictest order in classes numbering above a  
hundred pupils."<sup>3</sup> The judgment and treatment of misdemeanours is the  
commonest indicator of force of character, and situations are often heavily  
contrived to this end. Faced with a boy who has got into debt, Mr. Tooke  
leads him through earnest discussion to the decision to earn the necessary  
money by re-papering Widow Murray's parlour, writing out the tables of rules  
for classrooms and covering and cataloguing the school's library books.<sup>4</sup>  
The Cherry-Stones, or Charlton School, 1851, centres on a boy's theft of  
cherries from a neighbouring orchard, and the seven stones which seem to  
haunt him until he confesses his sin. Dr. Young, the admired headmaster,  
appears throughout in a heavily moralising role, obsessively concerned with

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1 *ibid.*, p. 311.

2 D. W. Thompson, Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, (1864) /1912/, pp. 45-6.

3 *ibid.*, p. 42.

4 Harriet Martineau, The Crofton Boys, (1841) /1865/, pp. 274-9.

intellectual and moral testing, followed by appropriate prizes and punishments. The closing pages of the book are, in effect, a sermon, the peroration of which is:

"Remember, also, that a slight deviation from that one path, will if persisted in, lead you as far from the true end of your journey, as though you had never trodden in the right path at all."

1

There are many scenes of guidance, reproof and encouragement, and in these, school misdeeds are repeatedly identified with sin, which carries the heaviest consequences. No breaking of rules can be called trivial. The oppressive moralising can be indicated by a selection of the words Dr. Young uses in talking to Edward Sharpe and Harry Mertoun in a single scene:

"unworthy ... offence ... unfair, if not dishonest ... overwhelm ... unworthy artifice ... unfeeling ... serious offence ... very, very wrong ... mistaken kindness ... sin ... unhappiness ... shame ... warning ... temptation ... confessed ... forgiveness ... displeasure ... pardon ... penitence ... humbly on your knees ... thoughtlessness ... unkindness ... guilt ... repentance ... good out of evil ... fall into sin ... conscience ... petty temptations ... violating small duties ... trifling act of disobedience".<sup>2</sup>

Pushed to its limits, such an obsession with the potentially damaging effects of the tiniest slip can lead to a desire to keep children from the corruption of the world. Grace Harvey, the idealised young teacher of Kingsley's Two Years Ago, 1857, is a girl of strong religious beliefs. When first introduced, she is telling her scholars a parable-like story about death, ending with the words:

"If we will only be good we shall go up to Jesus, and be beautiful angels, and sing hymns. Would that it might be soon, soon; for you and me, and all!"

3

Her children are represented as "innocents", "whom she taught by love and ruled by love ... punishing, when she rarely punished, with tears and kisses".

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1 William Adams, The Cherry-Stones, 1851, p. 143.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 141-3.

3 Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago, (1857) 1900, p. 38.



To make them as happy as she could in a world where there was nothing but temptation, and disappointment, and misery; to make them "fit for heaven," and then to pray that they might go thither as speedily as possible, this had been her work for now seven years ...

1

Such a view of good teachers as engaged in a ceaseless struggle for the souls of their pupils was given its most popular expression in the novels of F. W. Farrar. To take a single example from those books, the superiority of Mr. Rose over Mr. Gordon is rooted solely in these terms. Mr. Rose is "not so brilliant in his acquirements, nor so vigorous in his teaching"; clever boys are not so inspired by him intellectually. These unfavourable comparisons, however, are outweighed by the fact that he was "a far truer and deeper Christian" than Mr. Gordon; subjected to trials, his "fine character had come out like gold from the flame"; he lived "in and for the boys alone, and his whole life was one long self-devotion to their service and interests".<sup>2</sup> This concern for the boys - shown in action when he deals with such situations as smoking, impertinence, bullying and indiscipline - is explicitly a moral and religious one. The only reward Mr. Rose seeks is the knowledge that he has been "instrumental in saving one of his charge from evil, or turning one wanderer from the error of his ways". His contacts with boys out of school offer him "an opportunity of instilling many a useful warning".<sup>3</sup> In one heavily loaded summing-up, Farrar recalls how much Mr. Rose has done for the boys in his care:

Many a weary hour had he toiled for them in private, when his weak frame was harassed by suffering; many a sleepless night had he wrestled for them in prayer, when, for their sakes, his own many troubles were laid aside. Work on, Walter Rose, and He who seeth in secret will reward you openly! but expect no gratitude from those for whose salvation you, like the great tender-hearted apostle, would almost be ready to wish yourself accursed.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 43.

2 F. W. Farrar, Eric, or Little by Little, (1858) Edinburgh, 1909, p. 74.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 74-5.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 231-2.

During the period under review, this concern for moral influence seems wholly to replace the principle advanced by some earlier writers that a virtuous character itself was the essential - possibly the only - vital qualification for a teacher. Indeed, there are novels which show undeniably good men who are unsuccessful as schoolmasters and whose influence on the pupils is bad. Mr. Wentworth was "a truly good, kind man," and the master of another school was "sweet tempered ... conscientious, a scholar and a gentleman," but in their establishments "all went wrong," and small boys suffered "diabolical tortures".<sup>1</sup> The essential test is the moral tone of the school.

The weakness of these noble images of good teachers, in the pages of Martineau, Adams, Kingsley and Farrar, is that although they may have been influential in their time, they fail to convince now. The situations too often seem contrived, there are too many direct interventions by the author, and the unrelieved moral earnestness of the characters seems unlikely to have achieved the influence on boys that is asserted. Even before 1870, one teacher-author was mocking the implausibility of such stereotypes of the "good" public school master as presented in fiction:

... nearly always represented as an earnest and boyish young clergyman of unexceptionable morals and manners, and of strong opinions of the kind known as muscular Christian. He is addicted to playing cricket with the boys, and has favourites among them, whom he invites into his private room for confidential chats. He has a great horror of everything deceitful, and a sharp eye for all sorts of boyish tricks, not to speak of a preternaturally quick ear for false quantities ... if he is half as perfect as he is painted, he must indeed be a most estimable and amiable individual. 2

By contrast, in the novels of Charlotte Bronte, George Eliot and Thomas Hughes, teachers appear who have an idealising gloss thrown over them, but who are still seen as human beings. Their concern for pupils is more practical, does

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 283-4 and George Melly, School Experiences of a Fag, 1854, pp. 31-2, 54.

<sup>2</sup> A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 180.



not claim so much. The description of Miss Temple, the Superintendent teacher of Lowood School in Jane Eyre, 1847, was apparently recognised as being based on Miss Ann Evans, who was Superintendent of Cowan Bridge School when the Brontes attended it. Jane's first meeting with her suggests a striking personality: Miss Temple "impressed me by her voice, look, and air ... " Helen Burns says of her, "Miss Temple is very good, and very clever: she is above the rest, because she knows far more than they do."<sup>1</sup> It is not simply her knowledge, but her care and kindness which win the devotion of the girls: her practical concern for a new girl, her determination that the pupils should be adequately fed despite the displeasure of Mr. Brocklehurst, keeping up their spirits on a wintry walk, giving Jane and Helen tea in her room, working all day in the sick-room during the typhoid infection.<sup>2</sup> What might have turned into sentimental affection is restrained, however, by the superintendent's manner, described in words like grave, refined, stately, serenity, refined propriety. Jane's strong feelings for her teacher are therefore kept in check by a stronger force that she twice calls awe, and which remained even in maturity.<sup>3</sup>

Bartle Massey in Adam Bede has many of the features of the stock village schoolmaster: a solitary bachelor figure, old and lame, known throughout the neighbourhood as a representative of learning, grey-haired and bespectacled, industrious in his unchanging schoolroom and his spotless living quarters. He is not a pathetic figure, however. His personality is a strong one, and he sees purpose and satisfaction in his work. The characteristic most insisted on by George Eliot is the over-riding of a naturally impatient temperament by a teacher's sympathetic concern for his pupils. On his first appearance in the novel, George Eliot describes him with his night-school

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1 Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, (1847) Oxford, 1969, pp. 47, 57.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 47, 53, 69, 84-5, 89.  
3 *ibid.*, pp. 47, 52, 53, 85.



adult pupils:

The face wore its mildest expression: the grizzled bushy eyebrows had taken their more acute angle of compassionate kindness, and the mouth, habitually compressed with a pout of the lower lip, was relaxed so as to be ready to speak a helpful word or a syllable in a moment. This gentle expression was the more interesting because the schoolmaster's nose, an irregular aquiline twisted a little on one side, had rather a formidable character; and his brow, moreover, had that peculiar tension which always impresses one as a sign of a keen impatient temperament ... 1

Thereafter his "intimidating", "ominous" impatience with idle pupils, with opinionated adults and with the frailties of women is revealed in his style of speech: "a bitter, high-pitched tone", "more severe than usual", "with some bitterness", "in a rasping tone of reproach", "excited and angry", "contemptuously", "with a tone of sarcastic consolation", "sneeringly", "with an air of disgust".<sup>2</sup> This manner is balanced by his sympathetic concern for those in difficulties or distress: "his eyes shed their mildest and most encouraging light", "kindly", "tenderly", "in a gentle tone; strangely in contrast with his usual peremptoriness and impatience of contradiction".<sup>3</sup> This last phrase indicates that the teacher's manner is the superimposed one, as does the series of negatives which describe his attitude towards his adult learners,

... the only pupils for whom he had no severe epithets, and no impatient tones. He was not gifted with an imperturbable nature, and ... patience could never be an easy virtue to him ... 4

Bartle Massey has a simple faith that his teaching will be of moral and social significance to his pupils. Things might have turned out differently for Adam, he tells Mr. Irvine, if only he had had enough time for the "higher branches" of mathematics.<sup>5</sup> He demands rhetorically of Adam, "Where's the

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1 George Eliot, Adam Bede, (1859) 1901, pp. 349-50.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 354-61, 517, 795-6.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 350-3, 358, 695-6.

4 *ibid.*, p. 353.

5 *ibid.*, p. 633.

use of all the time I've spent in teaching you ... if you're not to get for'ard in the world?" When the young man leaves, the schoolmaster looks after him thinking, "You wouldn't have been what you are if you hadn't had a bit of old lame Bartle inside you."<sup>1</sup>

Miss Garth, the teacher and governess of No Name, 1862, is consciously written against type by Wilkie Collins. At her first appearance, he comments:

This was evidently not one of the forlorn, persecuted, pitiably dependent order of governesses. Here was a woman who lived on ascertained and honourable terms with her employers - a woman who looked capable of sending any parents in England to the right-about, if they failed to rate her at her proper value.

2

Miss Garth is a north-countrywoman, "hard-featured", with a "masculine readiness and decision of movement", "obstinate honesty of look and manner", and an "air of habitual authority". Grey-haired and just over forty, she speaks her mind bluntly. When Mr. and Mrs. Vanstone have to leave for some weeks, she briskly takes charge of the household. After her normal functions as governess have ended, she retains her "friendly authority" over the two daughters in a "half-jesting, half-earnest manner". Having known sufferings in her own youth, she manages to break the news to the daughters that they are fatherless, and to sustain them in financial disaster. She offers them a home in her sister's school where once she had taught herself. Her offer to help them to "earn their own independence" turns out to mean, in Norah's case, that she too will become a governess.<sup>3</sup>

The teacher-author of A Book about Dominies, 1867, shows a two-sided attitude towards his pupils and his relationships with them. On the one hand there is his assertion that in different posts he has not encountered the dislike or disrespect commonly said to be the lot of the usher.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 368-9.

2 Wilkie Collins, No Name, (1862) 1967, p. 5.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 16, 77, 119.



It is a mistake to suppose that boys generally look down on their teachers ... Even an under-master may generally make himself well enough respected by his pupils, if he likes ...

1

When writing of boys he has known, he sees them through a golden haze of nostalgia: some boys, he says, "I not only love but respect"; there have been boys "to whom I could pay honour and reverence"; "Yes, I often feel myself humble and base-minded in the light of the pure and generous thoughts of boyhood".<sup>2</sup> On the other hand, he is conscious of the distance which a teacher needs to retain; he is a believer in the sanctions of corporal punishment; that he is able to look affectionately at boys depends to a degree on his strictness with them.

... there are very few men who have other than a kindly feeling towards their old tyrants. I believe that only bad men look back with hate upon the strictest of school-masters.

3

He tells a story about his holiday acquaintance and friendship with a boy who later came to his school, and comments: "Henceforth our intimacy was at an end."

Some modern dominies profess to be always on the most friendly terms with their boys; to be brotherly counsellors, not dread rulers to them. This may be well; but I doubt I am an old-fashioned dominie; I cling by old traditions. I am willing to be a friend to my pupils, but with a distant and lofty friendship. I must feel myself, and make them feel, that I am exalted above them. I cannot play cricket with them lest they should mark my scores, and suspect that I am a fallible being.

4

The desire to be seen as lofty, exalted, infallible fits oddly with the other mood of feeling humble and respectful towards his pupils. There is a sense here of the tension between two models of the teacher's rôle. Moncrieff is anxious to be the guide and counsellor, which depends on a degree of intimacy and friendship with his pupils, but he finds it hard to reconcile

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, pp. 11-12.  
2 ibid., pp. 58-9.  
3 ibid., p. 123.  
4 ibid., pp. 137-8.



this with the rôle of instructor, which demands that he should be an authority and a disciplinarian.

The increased emphasis on moral influence through knowledge of a pupil and a sound, developing relationship with him, seems to have been given impetus - like so much else - by Tom Brown's Schooldays. The essential shift is away from teachers whose moral worth and influence is asserted externally by the author and towards those in whom it is revealed through actual contacts with pupils, and often seen through their eyes.

The Doctor in Tom Brown's Schooldays is revealed by degrees as he might have been to an actual pupil. Tom learns about him first through the eyes of others: the guard on the coach, old Brooke, younger boys in the school. He hears of his sternness about dangerous pranks and of his reforming zeal. He sees him as a distant figure, watching the rugby match, turning a blind eye on the excitement of singing night, preaching in chapel. It is significant that in that scene Arnold is shown not as a remote figure in the pulpit but as a companion to his boys - "one who was fighting for us and by our sides", a "fellow soldier" - and it is suggested that his influence was rooted in this.<sup>1</sup> Tom's first personal contact with the Doctor is in a human rather than a pedagogic context. With two others he is sent to the Doctor for being late back from hare-and-hounds. They find him laughing with his children, making a boy's sailing boat. He greets them understandingly, listens to their story, and despatches them unpunished to clean up and have tea.<sup>2</sup> Each incident thereafter seems chosen to display him as understanding individuals and their situations, adapting treatment appropriately to each, using events to achieve his purposes for pupils and for the school as a whole. He speaks quite differently to Martin, to young Brooke and to East, but each respects his guidance. In particular, of course, there is the diagnosis of Tom's problems which Arnold shares with the young master, the decision to put Arthur in his

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1 Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays, (1857) [1923], p. 126.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 136-7.

care, and all that follows. Characteristically, Tom suspects that the Doctor knows about his bird-nesting expeditions ("What didn't the Doctor know? And what a noble use he always made of it!"),<sup>1</sup> but it is not until nearly the end of the book that the young master points out to Tom what the Doctor had done:

"And I can assure you he has watched the experiment ever since with great satisfaction. Ah! not one of you boys will ever know the anxiety you have given him, or the care with which he has watched over every step in your school lives."

2

This unobtrusiveness marks off Hughes's Arnold from most of the previous well-meaning teachers in literature. The young master also has to point out to Tom the gently insinuating way in which reforms have been almost surreptitiously carried out, like the disappearance of island-fagging.

"And that's the way that all the Doctor's reforms have been carried out when he has been left to himself - quietly and naturally, putting a good thing in the place of a bad, and letting the bad die out; no wavering, and no hurry - the best thing that could be done for the time being, and patience for the rest."

3

The closing of the book, with Tom mourning the dead master at the altar of Rugby chapel, sees the young man's spiritual progress towards Christ as predicted by Arnold: something that can only happen "through our mysterious human relationships".<sup>4</sup> Only one such relationship is actually mentioned apart from those with members of one's family: the relationship with teachers. The view of Arnold in the novel embodies the view of Hughes that the teacher's essential task is that of character formation.

At the end of this period, Dickens's last novel presents an intriguing, slightly enigmatic, picture of a good teacher in a style that suggests that he may have been influenced by other writers. Although he has recently been "promoted" to the post of a minor canon at Cloisterham Cathedral, Septimus

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1    *ibid.*, p. 196.

2    *ibid.*, p. 325.

3    *ibid.*, p. 317.

4    *ibid.*, p. 335.



Crisparkle is still very much the teacher and classical coach he had been at an earlier stage. He is first introduced in the novel earnestly correcting the grammar of Mr. Tope, the verger, when talking to the Dean. The emphasis on his early rising, breaking the ice to swim, and practising boxing, the manner in which he accepts the tutorial rôle over Neville Landless, and the way in which he so swiftly develops an influence over that young man, all testify more to the teacher than to the clergyman. His concern for establishing the right relationship with his pupil and his moral earnestness seem to stem from an Arnoldian model, but the ingenuousness, the physical vigour and the concern for healthy exercise all speak of the Hughes/Kingsley tradition. Dickens says of him, much in their terms:

Good fellow! Manly fellow! And he was so modest, too. There was no more self-assertion in the Minor Canon than in the schoolboy who had stood in the breezy playing-fields keeping a wicket. He was simply and staunchly true to his duty alike in the large case and in the small. So all true souls ever are.

1

This direct approving comment makes it hard to believe that Dickens is being ironical in his view of Crisparkle's rather ingenuous character. Faced by the emotional reactions of young Neville Landless, he is frequently unsure how to proceed. He looks at him "in consternation", "at a dead loss", "with some incredulity", "in utter amazement".<sup>2</sup> Without any of the implausible assurance of Farrar's masters, he echoes in similar terms their concern to exert the influence which his pupil assures him he has. Crisparkle is aware of the need not to "turn aside a trustfulness beneficial to a mis-shapen young mind and perhaps to his own power of directing and improving it". He assures Neville, "I don't preach more than I can help, and I will not repay your confidence with a sermon," but he also urges him to seek aid from Heaven. He is aware of the young man's "attachment" to himself and seeks

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1 Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, (1870) Oxford, 1972, p. 150.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 47, 48, 50, 82.



to use it for his good, speaking seriously to him in advice, and offering him support and aid in trouble. "Oh, if in my childhood I had known such a guide!" exclaims Neville. For him Crisparkle is all that is patient, considerate, good and true, "Such a good friend and helper!"<sup>1</sup> This emphasis on the teacher as both friend and guide becomes one of the main images of the following period.

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<sup>1</sup> *ibid.*, pp. 48-9, 78, 83-4.

## THE TEACHER AS HUMAN BEING : THE CASE OF BRADLEY HEADSTONE

At this period it becomes possible to consider a few teachers who are presented as major figures in novels, with lives of their own, and who are not just seen in school. There is a problem in introducing such figures into what has been a collection of types. Bradley Headstone and Jane Eyre are so individual, and realised in such detail, that generalisations become unhelpful. However, because the teacher as a fully human figure, particularly seen under pressure, was to become relatively common in novels of the twentieth century, it seems essential to consider Headstone in particular at this point. Three of Charlotte Bronte's novels are seen from the viewpoint of teachers: Jane Eyre, The Professor and Villette. In this sense, she is clearly the first novelist to make teachers central in her work. Nevertheless, this requires some qualification. Although Jane's own schooldays and her brief spell as village schoolmistress are described, virtually nothing is said about her teaching of Adele; indeed, the pupil herself is a shadowy figure. Being a governess is simply the one way of getting Jane in an appropriate rôle into the Rochester household. Therefore, although Jane is both a central, developed character and a teacher, her place in the plot and the nature of her development do not rest significantly on the fact that she is a teacher. The same is not true of Villette, or of Lucy Snowe's previous incarnation in male form, William Crimsworth in The Professor. These figures can both be said to be described in some detail as teachers and also to be realised as human beings in the major action of the books. They are not considered here in detail because their situation, teaching English as a foreign language in Belgium, lies outside the scope of this section. Similarly, the numerous novels of governess life, its trials and humiliations, are mostly written too obviously as social documents.

The task of capturing the personality of a teacher who does not fit conveniently into the stereotypes described earlier in this chapter, who is

significantly conditioned by a teacher's training and work, but who also exists as a human being outside that teaching, and fulfils a major role in the action of the novel, was achieved by Charles Dickens. In his writings on education, he shifted the attention towards the teachers, to indicate that schools were good or bad not so much by type or class as by the individuals that worked in them. It was not the governess system as a whole, but whether you had Ruth Pinch or Mrs. General that was crucial.

Too simple a concern with Dickens's teachers as supposed examples of mid nineteenth century types ignores the very different functions which are served by these characters. It has been suggested that some are broadly drawn dramatic figures only thinly related to the major narrative or thematic structures: Squeers or Creakle. Others, like Blimber, are symbolic extensions of a system from which they are virtually inseparable; indeed, characters like M'Choakumchild hardly exist as individuals at all. By contrast, Bradley Headstone is one of the first male teachers in fiction to exist as an individual with a life and a character outside school, and yet also to be defined socially and psychologically by his profession. He is also one of the first to occupy a central, important role in the narrative. In the different elements and styles of Our Mutual Friend, it is the treatment of the developing rivalry between Bradley Headstone and Eugene Wrayburn that is, in the words of one editor, "the commanding success of the novel".<sup>1</sup>

When first encountering Bradley Headstone, a reader might imagine that this is to be another picture of a grinder in the Blimber, M'Choakumchild tradition. The metaphors present him as a kind of machine, even in the production of music, and as a warehouse crammed with laboriously acquired information. The social aspirations in this opening description, the ironically repeated word "decent", are new, but the real difference between Headstone and Dickens's other teachers lies in the relationship between the

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1 Stephen Gill, introduction to Penguin English Library edition, Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 25.



man and the role. Blimber and M'Choakumchild, like Squeers and Creakle, express their personalities in their teaching styles; there is no suggestion that they might be different human beings out of the classroom. Headstone's "decent" manner is a performance, a desire to claim respectable professional status, and to keep hidden another side of his nature. Underlying the rejection of his origins, the craving for respectability and the mechanical nature of his knowledge and accomplishments, is the repeated suggestion of repression. Dickens writes of a "want of adaptation" between Headstone and his insistently "decent" clothes; a "certain stiffness" as though they are holding in a personality that might break out from their restraint. His knowledge is not only "mechanical", it is presented in terms of the contents of a warehouse that needs continual guarding. His face expresses "a kind of settled trouble" that something might escape from the restraining walls, always "uneasy", "taking stock" that what was won should be held. He wants to bury his pauper origin, "desiring it to be forgotten", but although few others know of it, he cannot deny his own nature: "there was enough of what was animal, and of what was fiery (though smouldering), still visible in him".<sup>1</sup> In this initial description of Headstone, Dickens writes explicitly, "Suppression of so much to make room for so much, had given him a constrained manner."<sup>2</sup> He has made his respectable profession and his acquired knowledge a structure to conceal or control one side of his personality, and it is this that has produced the state of consciousness analysed in the novel.

A number of descriptions of Headstone's behaviour are symbolic of his desperate attempts to control his own nature. In his difficult interview with Lizzie, he "furtively" wrenches at the chair in which he sits, and behaves

... with a curious disposition to set his teeth, and  
with a curious tight-screwing movement of his right hand

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1 Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, (1864-5) Harmondsworth, 1971, pp. 266-7.  
2 ibid., p. 267.

in the clenching palm of his left, like the action of one who was being physically hurt, and was unwilling to cry out.

1

Previously when talking with Eugene, he tried to set his lips, but could not prevent them from quivering;<sup>2</sup> with Riderhood he attempts unsuccessfully to "master his eyes", making "an effort at self-repression".<sup>3</sup> In his final talk with Riderhood, he grasps his own left wrist with his right hand, and never loosens his hold of it all that night.<sup>4</sup> He tells Lizzie that he is a man of strong feelings, but that he represses them: "I don't show what I feel; some of us are obliged habitually to keep it down. To keep it down."<sup>5</sup> He talks of "repressing himself daily".<sup>6</sup>

Dickens uses a number of physical images to suggest the instinctive revolt of the repressed passionate side of the teacher. The first time he appears in the novel, talking with Charley Hexam about the boy's sister, he is biting first at one side of his finger, and then at another. When Lizzie takes his hand "a strange tremble passed over him". When rejected by her, he grinds his knuckles into the stones of the churchyard wall, leaving them "raw and bleeding". Near the climax of the story "a great spirt of blood burst from his nose" and he tells Riderhood that this has happened several times and that he "can't keep it back". When Milvey announces Lizzie's marriage, Headstone has a fit, tearing at his restraining neckcloth, "biting and knocking about him ... furiously". The overall impression is of a body self-destructively breaking out of control.<sup>7</sup> Dickens says of him, when he is pursuing Wrayburn at night, that he is "possessed", driven to torment himself as a sick man may find "perverse pleasure ... in irritating a wound upon his body".

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1 *ibid.*, p. 400.

2 *ibid.*, p. 341.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 698-9.

4 *ibid.*, p. 872.

5 *ibid.*, p. 400.

6 *ibid.*, p. 345.

7 *ibid.*, pp. 265, 402, 456, 704, 821.



Tied up all day with his disciplined show upon him, subdued to the performance of his routine of educational tricks, encircled by a gobbling crowd, he broke loose at night like an ill-tamed wild animal.

1

The circus image is vividly appropriate for the new generation of trained teachers. Headstone, like others, is in the grip of a system which has taken him from his natural environment and trained him to perform a repertoire of painfully acquired acts which bear little relation to his instinctive needs and wishes. The intensity of his feelings for Lizzie are too strong for all the social and educational restraint which he had previously imposed on his nature. Describing his return visit to Church Street, Dickens comments on his feelings in terms of the outbreak of fire or animals breaking free from chains.

It seemed to him as if all that he could suppress in himself he had suppressed, as if all that he could restrain in himself he had restrained, and the time had come - in a rush, in a moment - when the power of self-command had departed from him.

2

At the conscious level he is aware of this as a kind of "defeat", of being "vanquished in a struggle". When he proposes to her, it is in terms of pain and suffering. His feelings are not "voluntary", he is under a "spell", his "wild energy ... now quite let loose", drawn by a "tremendous attraction" which he has "resisted in vain" and which "overmasters" him.<sup>3</sup>

"You could draw me to fire, you could draw me to water, you could draw me to the gallows, you could draw me to any death, you could draw me to anything I have most avoided, you could draw me to any exposure and disgrace."

4

Once out of control, his passion leads him to attempted murder and to the self-destruction in which he takes Riderhood to death with him.

The same difference between surface control and underlying instincts marks Headstone's speech. It is often difficult to know whether he is being

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1    *ibid.*, p. 609.

2    *ibid.*, p. 396.

3    *ibid.*, pp. 453-4.

4    *ibid.*, p. 455.



deliberately less than frank, or whether he is deceiving himself as well as his listeners. In the opening discussion with Charley, does he really believe that he is leaving the boy free as he says to consider the question of his future relationships with his sister?<sup>1</sup> Jenny Wren, Eugene Wrayburn and Rogue Riderhood all discomfort him by piercing through his words to what lies below them.

Headstone's repression of instinct is balanced in a minor way by that other teacher, Miss Peacher, with her unspoken love for him. When Mary Anne tells her that Headstone has entered his house and locked the door,

Miss Peacher repressed a sigh as she gathered her work together for bed, and transfixed that part of her dress where her heart would have been if she had had the dress on, with a sharp, sharp needle. 2

Her emotions are formalised in pedagogic terms. If Bradley had proposed to her, "she would probably have replied in a complete little essay on the theme exactly a slate long".<sup>3</sup> When Mary Anne mentioned the reputed good looks of Lizzie Hexam, Miss Peacher gets herself back into humour by putting the girl through a detailed grammatical analysis of her statements.<sup>4</sup>

Bradley Headstone vividly embodies the uncertainties and worries of members of that new group, the "highly certificated stipendiary schoolmaster", men from humble backgrounds trained beyond the level of their social superiors. Their new and undefined situation is symbolised by the landscape through which Headstone and Charley pass on their first walk from the school to Lizzie's.

The schools were newly built, and there were so many like them all over the country, that one might have thought the whole place were but one restless edifice with the locomotive gift of Aladdin's palace. They were in a neighborhood which looked like a toy neighborhood taken in blocks out of a box by a child of particularly incoherent mind, and set up anyhow; here, one side of a new street; there, a large solitary public-house facing nowhere; here, another finished street already in

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1    ibid., pp. 265-6.  
2    ibid., p. 283.  
3    ibid., p. 268.  
4    ibid., pp. 269-70.

ruins; there, a church; here, an immense new warehouse; there, a dilapidated old country villa; then, a medley of black ditch, sparkling cucumber-frame, rank field, richly cultivated kitchen-garden, brick viaduct, arch-spanned canal, and disorder of frowziness and fog. As if the child had given the table a kick, and gone to sleep. 1

The teachers are like the schools: new and made to a stock pattern, inhabiting a "restless", "incoherent" society which lacks any apparent plan, surrounded by evidences of piecemeal change with no sense of rational development.

Headstone's social insecurity is not only the result of his suppressed pauper origins, but also of his inner awareness that the status which he claims as a schoolmaster - a gentleman, a member of a profession - rests on no agreed basis. Only with other teachers is his situation undisputed; everywhere else he has to tread warily. When first he meets Lizzie, Dickens comments that "the schoolmaster was not at his ease. But he never was, quite."<sup>2</sup> Indeed, the notion is hammered home in that scene: "not improving in respect of ease", "his uneasy figure", "his cumbrous and uneasy action".<sup>3</sup> He achieves decency and respectability by persistent effort, but in choosing these terms Dickens is also indicating what Headstone is unable to accomplish. The "thoroughly decent" appearance of the initial description is too carefully conscious to be more than that. A stranger who sees him taken ill at the end of the novel assumes that he was a man "of a very respectable occupation", and Riderhood can blackmail him in the knowledge that "Yours is a 'spectable calling", and that to preserve respectability Headstone will sacrifice everything.<sup>4</sup> Riderhood is shrewd here, but what Headstone really wants is something a little more than a respectable occupation or calling. Nobody sees him as a member of a profession. Even when he meets and falls passionately in love with Lizzie, his

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1    ibid., pp. 267-8.

2    ibid., p. 275.

3    ibid., pp. 275, 277, 279.

4    ibid., pp. 821, 871.



proposal has to be filtered through consciousness of his station:

"I have in my way won a station which is considered worth winning ... I ask you to believe that if I were to offer my home such as it is, my station such as it is, my affections such as they are, to any one of the best considered, and best qualified, and most distinguished, among the young women engaged in my calling, they would probably be accepted. Even readily accepted ... I have sometimes had it in my thoughts to make that offer and to settle down as many men of my class do: I on the one side of a school, my wife on the other, both of us interested in the same work."

1

Not only are his feelings for Lizzie and his concern for his acquired status inextricably interwoven in this speech, but also it reveals in its careful phrases the uneasiness about what precisely that status is. The terms are all unspecific: a station considered worth winning, my station such as it is, my calling, my class, my work.

The situation is intensified by his discovery that Lizzie seems to prefer the idle Eugene Wrayburn to himself. Eugene is flippant, uncaring for others, only playing at being a lawyer; Bradley is serious, hard working, fulfilling a useful rôle in society. The clash between the two is given an edge by class differences, and is brilliantly caught by Dickens in Book 2, chapter 6. From the start Eugene's manner is deliberately offensive: although he knows Headstone's identity he professes not to know who "this other person" is; he views him with "a cruel look ... as a creature of no worth"; he addresses Headstone repeatedly by the mocking title Schoolmaster, saying that his name is one "which it does not concern me at all to know". That he has the better of the encounter is partly due to the fact that he can remain cool while Headstone becomes passionate, partly to the fact that Charley Hexam takes up an impossible position, but mainly it is because both men know that there is a social gulf between them which enables Wrayburn to despise the teacher. His manners and his charm, the product of a different educational system, are continually insisted on. The contrast between the men is emphasised at the end of the scene, when Headstone

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1 *ibid.*, p. 453.



goes out, "with a consciously bad grace and stiff manner, as Wrayburn looked so easily and calmly on".<sup>1</sup>

In a book that deals throughout with the issue "What makes a gentleman?" (and, indeed, ends with a section explicitly on that topic), it is plain that in many ways Eugene Wrayburn fails to qualify. His attentions at such a time to a lower-class girl are suspect, his gratuitous taunting of Bradley Headstone is contemptible, in his idleness he is a much less valuable member of his profession than the schoolmaster is of his. But it is in the very fact that he has to protest that Headstone indicates that he knows his position is an inferior one.

"Do you throw my obscurity in my teeth, Mr. Wrayburn?"

"You reproach me with my origins ... you cast insinuations at my bringing up."

"In the meanness of your nature you revile me with the meanness of my birth. I hold you in contempt for it."

"You think me of no more value than the dirt under your feet." 2

In fact, Eugene has not directly alluded to Bradley's humble origins; he simply assumes that a teacher is of a lower class by definition. The schoolmaster is cut off both from the humble class from which he springs and from the middle class he would enter. It must be galling to reflect that folk like the Veneerings can buy their way into society, that confidence tricksters like the Lammles can be welcome in it, but that learning and ability do not give the entry.

It is implied that both Headstone and his pupil, Charley Hexam, are the products of an inadequate education that has developed no animating principles for their laboriously acquired information and their craving for respectability. The cold-bloodedness of the master's implied advice to the boy in their first dialogue, asking whether Lizzie is "good company" for someone who is to become "one of us" is returned with a vengeance in their final scene, when Charley has

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1    ibid., p. 347.

2    ibid., pp. 344-7.

become a master in another school. The interview is heavily ironic. Charley's total concern for his own respectability and position in society is somehow even more chilling than Bradley's uncontrollable passion. It is a goal to which all other ties have to give way. His father's death seems a benefit, for "then it might have been supposed that my way to respectability was pretty clear". Unfortunately, his sister "interposed some ridiculous fanciful notions in the way of our being as respectable as I tried for", and then Headstone himself was in danger of bringing down notoriety on Charley: "Every effort I make towards perfect respectability is impeded by somebody else through no fault of mine!"<sup>1</sup> He sums up his resolution:

"However, I have made up my mind that I will become respectable in the scale of society, and that I will not be dragged down by others. I have done with my sister as well as with you ... My prospects are very good, and I mean to follow them alone ... I hope, before many years are out, to succeed the master in my present school, and the mistress being a single woman, though some years older than I am, I might even marry her. If it is any comfort to you to know what plans I may work out by keeping myself strictly respectable in the scale of society, these are the plans at present occurring to me." 2

In this novel, Dickens not only anticipates later developments in the representation of teachers, he brilliantly embodies the prevalent concerns with status and qualifications which are examined in more general terms in the following chapter. In particular he shows that the teacher cannot be understood simply in pedagogic terms, that he is defined by his general system of values, by his relationships out of school, and by society's assumptions and expectations.

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1    ibid., pp. 780-1.

2    ibid., p. 781.

STATUS AND PUBLIC ESTEEM

In the 1841 census teachers did not figure among those listed as "professional persons". Even in Tom Brown's Schooldays, Thomas Hughes saw the professions as the traditional trio of lawyer, parson and doctor, and excluded the schoolmaster.<sup>1</sup> However, in the 1861 census, "schoolmasters, teachers, professors" were included among the professions, well before the date at which such groups as architects and accountants appeared.<sup>2</sup> This is one crude indication of a shift in attitude during the period under review. Informed opinion was apparently beginning to regard teachers as figures of greater importance for a variety of reasons, including the increasing state involvement in education, the developing supply of trained teachers, middle-class concern for education as the key to opportunity, developments in the public schools, and the deliberate promotion by Kay-Shuttleworth of the idea of the teacher's professional status. Even he, however, defined the career for which the Normal School prepared teachers in terms of "modest respectability ... self-denial ... simplicity ... humble sphere ... modesty ... humble and subordinate position ... laborious and frugal life".<sup>3</sup> In his account of teachers in the mid-nineteenth century, Asher Tropp writes that "by far the most important and significant" of their complaints was about their "low social position".<sup>4</sup> How conscious of this even a man of good background and educational qualifications could be is shown in a book written at the end of this period in which there is a frequent note of half-suppressed resentment.

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- 1 Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays, (1857) [1923], p. 38. Teaching is referred to as a profession in William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, pp. 28-9, but this is exceptional at that time.
  - 2 W. J. Reader, Professional Men, 1966, pp. 147-8.
  - 3 James Kay-Shuttleworth, Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, 1862, (1862) 1973, pp. 402-4.
  - 4 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, pp. 35-6.



It is perhaps significant that the author of A Book about Dominies, 1867, published it anonymously. In the Preface, Moncrieff feels that it is necessary to apologise for dealing with a subject apparently "interesting to few", and adds in his first chapter that "a dominie's life is often looked down upon by men who are not of nearly so much use in the world".<sup>1</sup> Teachers tend to be snubbed by society at large as well as by pupils and their parents, he writes. A teacher is not invited out to dinner as a clergyman is, well-connected boys look down on masters, because they are "poor and ill-dressed", and ladies are uncivil in their behaviour: they "look upon the family dominie in scarcely a higher light than the family grocer".<sup>2</sup>

We are offended that the parents of our pupils do not always treat us as their equals, or even superiors, as in most cases we feel ourselves to be ... when I first became a teacher /my aunt/ remonstrated with me upon compromising the family name, and reminding me that God had made me a gentleman, and would expect me to lay out my talents in a more genteel way ... and there are many people who are no wiser than she on this matter, and consider a teacher, however learned and well-bred, as a being far lower in the scale of life than the drawing, conceited puppy into whose thick head he has crammed with great difficulty as much knowledge as has enabled him to squeeze through an army examination.

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Among the grounds for the low status which Moncrieff discusses are the inadequate salaries ("We are apt to value a thing ... by the price we pay for it") and the influence of childish attitudes, expressed in nicknames and disrespect.<sup>4</sup> He describes a traumatic incident from his youth when he met a woman whom he loved and wished to marry, and who said that she would always love him,

... but she lied. For when it was told her that I was only a dominie - that the work of my life was to whip and scold boys - she killed the young love in her heart. Ah! that she could have bid mine die as easily! And then she married a subaltern officer, about whose gentility Mrs. Grundy made no question.

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1 /A. R. H. Moncrieff/, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 2.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 4-5, 52, 66-7.  
3 *ibid.*, pp. 92-5.  
4 *ibid.*, pp. 100-5.  
5 *ibid.*, pp. 127-8.

Despite the 1861 classification, only a minority of teachers would have been regarded either as members of a profession or as gentlemen or ladies.

Teachers formed much the largest professional group in the 1861 census, and nearly three-quarters of them were women. Reader's study concludes that, "Teaching as an occupation had a very low standing indeed and was no profession for a gentleman".<sup>1</sup> Many writers of this period illustrate the difficulty of treating teachers as a homogeneous group when considering their standing in society, since their status depended on such criteria as the nature of their training, their qualifications, whether they were clergy or laymen, the school in which they taught, and even the subject which they taught there. For example, teachers of mathematics at Eton in the fifties were not known as "assistant masters" and were permitted no authority over boys out of school.<sup>2</sup>

Nevertheless, there were still the automatic judgments in this period that to be a teacher of any kind is the last resort of the incapable, that it marks a man or woman as belonging to a caste of social "untouchables", to be treated with pity or contempt. Characters in novels are frequently exclaiming in disgust at the idea that others should court disgrace by even considering becoming teachers. Mr. Helstone angrily reproves Caroline for dreaming of teaching as a career, and says that he will provide for her. "While I live, you shall not turn out a governess, Caroline. I will not have it said that my niece is a governess."<sup>3</sup> Captain Semple rejects the notion that an unqualified foundling boy, just removed from school, should become an usher, insisting that the young man deserves something better: "The task of flogging a parcel of fellows is only fit for a drummer."<sup>4</sup> Tom complains that Maggie has degraded herself by becoming a teacher instead of living

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1 Professional Men, p. 106. Also see pp. 148-9, 153.

2 ibid., p. 166.

3 Charlotte Bronte, Shirley, (1849) 1908, p. 151.

4 Leitch Ritchie, Wearyfoot Common, 1855, p. 70.



"respectably" with relations.<sup>1</sup> When it is suggested in a time of family difficulty that Connie should become a governess, Dr. Julius "treated the proposal with contemptuous surprise", Dr. Eden cried, "Pshaw! make a governess of her! worry her into the grave", and Miss Burnett demanded to know "if she was prepared to uglify herself and wear green spectacles".<sup>2</sup> Sam Smyth's enquiry whether he should teach is treated with incredulity by Dr. Bright, his own former schoolmaster: "You had better break stones on the road at a shilling a day ... than pass a life of misery in such a situation."<sup>3</sup> An elderly friend assures Walter Joyce in similar terms that any career would be preferable to that of teaching: "Usher in a school! hewer in a coal-pit, stone-breaker on a country road, horse in a mill, anything better than that!"<sup>4</sup> When he discovers that the "mysterious and very beautiful lady" who has captured his imagination is actually married to a schoolmaster, the narrator of one novel finds that all her charms have disappeared, "sunk, destroyed ... I would not be consoled; what business had she to be a schoolmistress?"<sup>5</sup> In the same work he calls ushers "the most abject of all classes - gipsies and beggars not excepted". Those with any ability rise out of teaching, and those who remain are socially isolated: "Gentlemen will not own them, and the classes beneath reject them."<sup>6</sup> To keep a dame school is the archetypal mark of vulgarity with which Frank threatens Amy.<sup>7</sup> Even children can be contemptuous of teachers. A callow boy like Foker can treat the elderly master of a grammar school with scorn as somehow beneath him<sup>8</sup> and when young Tom Butler gets the worst of an exchange with Monsieur Bernard, the worst he can say about him afterwards is: "A mean

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1 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 410.

2 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 225.

3 J. T. J. Hewlett, Peter Priggins, Paris, 1841, pp. 133-4.

4 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, p. 158.

5 Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, (1836) 1971, p. 85.

6 ibid., p. 87.

7 Elizabeth M. Sewell, Amy Herbert, (1844) 1846, vol. 2, p. 54.

8 W. M. Thackeray, Pendennis, (1848-50) 1898, pp. 154-5.



glib, beggarly pedagogue. What right has he to speak to me at all?"<sup>1</sup>

The note of pity for those who are forced to teach is almost as insistent as the contempt. Dickens's parish schoolmaster is an unfortunate man, whose disasters led him to that position as a substitute for parish relief, and who is fated to remain the "Pauper Schoolmaster" until either "infirmity renders him incapable, or death releases him".<sup>2</sup> The eccentric Mr. Lawley goes unhinged under the pressures of teaching, is left with "no means of earning his daily bread", enters a lunatic asylum and soon dies. "Poor broken human heart! may he rest in peace."<sup>3</sup> Hugh Miller writes pityingly of an able university student who "failed to get on ... in the world", and was eventually forced to become and remain "the teacher of a parish school".<sup>4</sup> When the narrator of Charley Nugent, 1860, first meets Nelly O'Brien, he cannot believe that the only course open to such an attractive girl, whose father had recently died, is to become a governess.

"I am an orphan, friendless, and very poor. I am going to be a governess; and now you know my story."

Her forlorn tones went to my heart. A governess! That lovely creature!

"You a governess!" I said. "It is not possible. Could none of your former friends assist you? Surely some of them must have had kind hearts. Perhaps they do not know your position?"

5

When Frank Beauclerc describes Mr. Colville as his private tutor, Mr. Goldicott exclaims: "A private tutor! poor man! then he must have wanted a narcotic."<sup>6</sup> The well-to-do rector is "most actively compassionate towards his less fortunate brother", the clerical master of the local school.<sup>7</sup> Even a return to the house where once she had been a governess is "a very pleasant change to a poor unsuccessful school-mistress".<sup>8</sup> When William Crimsworth is serving his brother

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1 P. H. Fitzgerald, Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869, p. 118.

2 Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, (1835-6) 1907, p. 5.

3 F. W. Farrar, Eric or Little by Little, (1858) Edinburgh, 1909, pp. 8-10.

4 Hugh Miller, My Schools and Schoolmasters, (1852) 1860, p. 45.

5 Janet L. Maughan, Charley Nugent, 1860, vol. 1, p. 212.

6 Charles Clarke, The Beauclercs, Father and Son, 1867, vol. 1, p. 113.

7 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, p. 9.

8 Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, (1866) 1966, p. 104.

as clerk, and is invited to his brother's home on a social occasion, the worst he can say about the way in which he is kept in the background is that he looked "weary, solitary, kept down like some desolate tutor or governess ..."<sup>1</sup>

At almost all levels, the frequent assumption is that anyone who has the opportunity to do so will promptly leave teaching, exchanging it for "some less laborious or more profitable calling".<sup>2</sup> Dr. Worthy abandons his headship for a living in the church, "and a comfortable feeling that he had emancipated himself from that most horrible of all slaveries - the situation of schoolmaster".<sup>3</sup> At the beginning of his description of Doctor Birch's Academy, the narrator assures readers that "it was not for choice" that he became an under-master in that establishment, and that he left it with joy and relief.<sup>4</sup> The happy ending for another young man is being able to give up teaching, described as a "drudging occupation" in favour of a situation "procured for him in one of the government offices".<sup>5</sup> Mrs. Kirkpatrick is prepared to abandon her school immediately, with no thought for the children or their parents, when the chance of marriage to Dr. Gibson offers her "a release from the thraldom of keeping school".<sup>6</sup> Septimus Crisparkle, teacher and classical coach, feels that he is fortunately "promoted" when a patron obtains for him the post of minor canon at Cloisterham Cathedral.<sup>7</sup> References like these which depend on the relationship between teachers and others tend to combine the sense of low status accorded the rôle with an implied social judgment on the person occupying it. When two women from the same village meet again after years, both of them accept that the soldier's widow is of a far higher social position than Mrs. Saunderson, who remained

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- 1 Charlotte Bronte, The Professor, (1857) 1975, p. 17.
- 2 /A. R. H. Moncrieff/, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 9.
- 3 /J. T. J. Hewlett/, Peter Priggins, Paris, 1841, p. 203.
- 4 W. M. Thackeray, Dr. Birch and his Young Friends, (1849) 1900, p. 73.
- 5 Elizabeth M. Sewell, The Experience of Life, (1853) 1858, p. 316.
- 6 Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, (1866) 1966, p. 129.
- 7 Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, (1870) Oxford, 1972, p. 6.



as the village schoolmistress. Mrs. Phillips pays a condescending call on the mistress and her husband, accompanied by a servant bringing wine and tea "as a little present to her humble friends". When Mrs. Saunderson discovers that her friend has come to tea, she "expresses her gratitude for the honour of the visit". Mrs. Phillips is graciously pleased with the reception she gets from the schoolmistress,

... and was so much pleased with her manners, as well as with those of her husband, that she became a frequent visitor, and furnished those good people with many comforts they could not have afforded out of their own limited income. 1

In one sensitive passage in Villette, Charlotte Bronte shows Lucy Snowe as uncomfortable in the presence of the Count and his daughter, until she has been able to work into the conversation the words, "I am a teacher". She felt herself in "a false position" until this had been said, in case her new acquaintances "might choose to vary by some shades their hitherto cordial manner towards me, when aware of my grade in society".<sup>2</sup> The Count, a kindly gentleman, reacts with pity; his daughter is disconcerted that someone she likes should have such an occupation.

"Yours," said he, "is an arduous calling. I wish you health and strength to win in it - success."  
His fair little daughter did not take the information quite so composedly; she fixed on me a pair of eyes wide with wonder - almost with dismay.  
"Are you a teacher?" cried she. Then, having paused on the unpalatable idea, "Well, I never knew what you were, nor ever thought of asking: for me, you were always Lucy Snowe." 3

She and her father feel that if Lucy became her companion, this would be an improvement in social position as well as a financial advantage. For Lucy, however, the choice is not so simple; her criteria for assessing position stress independence in a way that theirs do not.

... to be either a private governess or a companion was unnatural to me. Rather than fill the former post in any great house, I would deliberately have taken a housemaid's

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1 Julia Corner, The Village School, n.d. /1848/, pp. 11-2.  
2 Charlotte Bronte, Villette, (1853) 1972, p. 259.  
3 ibid., p. 259.



place, bought a strong pair of gloves, swept bedrooms and staircases, and cleaned stoves and locks, in peace and independence. Rather than be a companion, I would have made shirts and starved.

1

The disparity between personality and rôle, particularly in this repeated emphasis on independence, is what intrigues the other characters.

Miss Fanshawe is sure that Lucy must "be" somebody, because her integrity seems inconceivable in someone lacking either birth or wealth. Lucy tells her candidly, "I am a rising character: once an old lady's companion, then a nursery-governess, now a school-teacher."<sup>2</sup> She reflects on the very different ways in which others view her personality and position,<sup>3</sup> and acknowledges the difference between the "world's" assessment and her own.

As for me, it quite sufficed to my mental tranquility that I was known where it imported that known I should be; the rest sat on me easily: pedigree, social position, and recondite intellectual acquisition, occupied about the same space and place in my interests and thoughts; they were my third-class lodgers ...

4

By implication, she is not numbered among those whom she - or the author - describes as "people whom a lowered position degrades morally".<sup>5</sup>

Underlying the preposterous situation in East Lynne, 1861, when Lady Isabel Vane returns to her own family as governess, without being recognised by children or husband, must surely be the assumption that nobody ever really looks at a governess. It is true that Lady Isabel is supposed to have been scarred in an accident and that she wears blue spectacles, but even in a sensational popular novel readers would surely have expected a more plausible reason for getting her unnoticed into emotional contact with her loved ones. It seems that nobody could conceive that the only child of the Earl of Mount Severn should "go out as a governess".<sup>6</sup>

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1 . ibid., p. 271.

2 . ibid., p. 281.

3 . ibid., p. 274-5.

4 . ibid., p. 281-2.

5 . ibid., p. 282.

6 . Mrs. Henry Wood, East Lynne, (1861) 1890, pp. 300-11.

As far as social placing is concerned, the assumptions that a teacher cannot be a gentleman, that a governess is simply a servant, are less common than at an earlier period. Certainly Thomas Hughes sees the village schoolmaster's place as the servants' hall, where he retires with the wheelwright, "well-satisfied", and he describes the ushers at Tom's first school as "not gentlemen" (though the school is "kept by a gentleman").<sup>1</sup> In general, though, major novelists put these assertions into the mouths of the snobbish or the uninformed. It is as though the writers are aware that such views are commonly expressed in society but they do not share them; indeed, the thrust of the writing encourages the reader to reject them too. For example in Creakle's school the low esteem in which Mr. Mell is held is indicated in the heavy irony accorded his complaint that Steerforth has used his position "to insult a gentleman", "to degrade" him. Steerforth declines to recognise him as more than "an impudent beggar" for protesting and Creakle implies that it would be impossible to degrade such a man further. The fact that his mother lives on charity in an alms-house is seen as justification for the teacher's immediate dismissal.<sup>2</sup> The brutal treatment of the gentle usher, and the comparison with the boorish Creakle, intensify the sense that the judgments are inappropriate, belonging to an outmoded fashion, and that the poor Mell does, in fact, have more of the true qualities of a gentleman than those who scorn him. Clive Newcome tells his father that some men are indefinably gentlemen and others are not, and that this applies to teachers as well as to others.

"There's Jones now, the fifth form master, every man sees he's a gentleman, though he wears ever so old clothes; and there's Mr. Brown, who oils his hair, and wears rings, and white chokers - my eyes! such white chokers! - and yet we call him the handsome snob!"

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- 1 Thomas Hughes, Tom Brown's Schooldays, (1857) /1923/, pp. 50, 55.
  - 2 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) /1947/, pp. 125-8.
  - 3 W. M. Thackeray, The Newcomes, (1853-5) 1906, p. 75.



The social status of the governess seems to exert an obsessive interest during this period, particularly because her position was more ambiguous in a household than that of a teacher in a school. The tension between individual and rôle is pointed out in an authorial digression in one mid-century novel:

What is a governess's place? Strictly speaking, it is that of a person hired with money, and money's worth, to perform certain services not menial; and who must, therefore, neither be treated as a servant, nor be permitted to assume as her right a position of equality. When this position is conceded - which it frequently is - it is not to the governess, but to the woman. 1

In general, although the governess is often referred to in books as a servant, the context usually makes it clear that the civilised reader would reject such a view. Those who express it are usually other servants, who resent the governess's special position, or characters shown as insensitive. The indignation of servants, occurring in novels throughout the period, is frequently undercut by representing it in what the author clearly intends as lower-class pronunciation or syntax. For example, when Clara Mordaunt applies for a post as governess, the porter in the hall mutters that,

the most of them there governesses were as proud and conceited as if they were ladies, though, after all, they were no better than servants, for all they giv'd themselves such airs. 2

When one of the children says that Clara is a lady, not a servant, Betsey the chambermaid exclaims, "I never seed no ladies as went out to service as governesses, and took wages the same as us servants."<sup>3</sup> In Vanity Fair, the housekeeper, Mrs. Blenkinsop, remarks to the maid that she doesn't trust governesses. "They give themselves the hairs and hupstarts of ladies, and their wages is no better than you nor me."<sup>4</sup> Martin Chuzzlewit, Agnes Grey

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1 Leitch Ritchie, Wearyfoot Common, 1855, p. 61.

2 Marguerite Gardiner, The Governess, 1839, vol. 1, p. 10.

3 *ibid.*, p. 58.

4 W. M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, (1847-8) 1963, p. 64.



and Anne Sherwood all chronicle the ways in which a governess might have to struggle against the attempts of servants to make her life uncomfortable and to class her as one of themselves. Similarly, in Warp and Woof, the independent Ursula discovers that the family nurse has told the children that the governess was "only the head of the servants", and has to make it clear that she is "not of the class that sits in housekeepers' rooms".<sup>1</sup> Characteristically, when a servant girl in Christian's Mistake is asked who the lady was that had called at the house,

"Lady!" repeated Phillis scornfully. "She's only the governess."<sup>2</sup>

The way in which conventional, unthinking attitudes might be perpetuated and reinforced is often demonstrated. A mother is reported as telling her children that "governesses were never ladies, but were merely useful to teach young people how to behave as ladies".<sup>3</sup> Everything in the "lofty" family where Ruth Pinch is governess teaches children and servants to look down on her. The critical presentation of the family, the spiteful daughter and the pompous father, as well as sympathy for Ruth and Tom, ensures that the reader applauds the brother's denunciation of those who "degrade" governesses, placing them "at a disadvantage to every servant", people whom "everybody slights".

"Why, how can you, as an honest gentleman, profess displeasure or surprise, at your daughter telling my sister she is something beggarly and humble, when you are for ever telling her the same thing yourself in fifty plain, out-speaking ways, though not in words; and when your very porter and footman make the same delicate announcement to all comers?"<sup>4</sup>

Emily Morton is made aware that "at Wayland Court everyone looked down upon her",<sup>5</sup> and it is a great joke to Margaret that Mrs. Herbert is uncertain which of two similarly dressed figures is the governess and which the lady's maid. Mrs. Herbert has to tell Dora reprovingly that, as the daughter of a clergyman, Emily is "a lady by birth and education".<sup>6</sup>

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1 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 185.

2 D. M. Craik, Christian's Mistake, 1866, p. 150.

3 Marguerite Gardiner, The Governess, 1839, vol. 1, p. 70.

4 Charles Dickens, Martin Chuzzlewit, (1843-4) 1869, p. 359.

5 /Elizabeth M. Sewell/, Amy Herbert, (1844) 1846, vol. 1, p. 118.

6 ibid., vol. 1, p. 77.

This sense of oppression by unthinking snobbishness runs through Agnes Grey, 1847. Although Agnes imagines that it will be "charming to be entrusted with the care and education of children" and that Mr. Murray will prove a gentleman who will consider his governess "a respectable, well-educated lady, the instructor and guide of his children, and not a mere upper servant", her hopes are not borne out by experience.<sup>1</sup> The servants who bring in her luggage are not "very respectful in their demeanour", Mrs. Murray receives her with less consideration than a new servant would have had in the Grey household, and the older daughter rarely forgets that her governess is "a hireling and a poor curate's daughter".<sup>2</sup>

The servants, seeing in what little estimation the governess was held by both parents and children, regulated their behaviour by the same standard ... they entirely neglected my comfort, despised my requests, and slighted my directions ... I sometimes felt myself degraded by the life I led and ashamed of submitting to so many indignities ...

3

One of the first things that marks off Mr. Weston, the new curate, is that he gives her "a slight bow", for she is very conscious that she would have been "invisible" to the Rector "or any other gentleman of those parts".<sup>4</sup> Even at church she had been totally ignored by them.<sup>5</sup> When the family and their visitors went there on Sundays, whether she rode in the carriage with the parents or walked with the younger folk depended on "their own capricious will".

But when I did walk, the first half of the journey was generally a great nuisance to me. As none of the before-mentioned ladies and gentlemen ever noticed me, it was disagreeable to walk beside them, as if listening to what they said, or wishing to be thought one of them, while they talked over me, or across; and if their eyes, in speaking, chanced to fall on me, it seemed as if they looked on vacancy - as if they either did not see me, or were very

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1 Anne Bronte, Agnes Grey, (1847) 1954, pp. 375, 407.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 410-3.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 418.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 440.  
5 *ibid.*, p. 425.



desirous to make it appear so. It was disagreeable, too, to walk behind, and thus appear to acknowledge my own inferiority ...

1

Near the end of the novel, when she is invited to visit her ex-pupil, who has married a title and an estate, she is surprised to be so kindly received:

... though I was a poor clergyman's daughter, a governess, and a school-mistress, she welcomed me with unaffected pleasure to her home; and - what surprised me rather - took some pains to make my visit agreeable.

2

In Shirley, 1849, Mrs. Pryor warns Caroline from her own experience of supercilious gentlefolk that a governess is not regarded as the social equal of her employers, seen by the men as a "tabooed woman" and by the ladies as "a bore", "detested" by servants and prohibited from friendship with her pupils.

Miss Hardman, the eldest daughter of the house once told her:

"Governesses ... must ever be kept in a sort of isolation: it is the only means of maintaining that distance which the reserve of English manners and the decorum of English families exact."

3

In writing to her brother Charles about the vulgarity of the Bridge family, Clara says that their pretentiousness and stupidity is exemplified in their treatment of their governess.

The most painful manifestation of this innate vulgarity of mind is their open and undisguised insolence to those whom they consider their inferiors. Mrs. Bridge's manner to her governess, for instance, is so outrageous that it really sometimes drives me out of the room.

4

Mrs. Peacock has to protest that she does not share "the vulgar contempt for a governess that I have seen exhibited by some people", as the independent Ursula has complained that,

"Amongst your set a governess is at a discount; socially she is your equal, and educationally she is often your superior, but she is treated as a dependant, under obligations which must be reciprocated by a subservience and humility of manner such as are degrading to an educated woman."

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1 ibid., pp. 442-3.

2 ibid., p. 491.

3 Charlotte Bronte, Shirley, (1849) 1908, pp. 297-8.

4 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 2, pp. 202-3.

5 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 3, p. 178.



In the same book, a lady suggests to a young governess on holiday that she should not betray her occupation, because people "looked down on a governess, and never thought her quite a lady".<sup>1</sup> In another novel, the greatest praise offered by Miss Gascoigne about Miss Bennett is that "she knows her place. She is content to be a governess: she never pretends to be a lady."<sup>2</sup> Ironically, the person to whom she is speaking had herself been a governess before her marriage.

The mockery of these received ideas is perhaps plainest in the supposedly "model" letters in Douglas Jerrold's satirical compilation, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, 1853, which are concerned with the appointment and treatment of governesses. Lady Honoria Asphalt haughtily complains of the "impertinence" of governesses who claim to be ladies.

The cook, the housemaid, the lady's-maid, all know their place, and behave themselves accordingly: but there is no teaching a governess that she is nothing more than a servant; a person hired for wages to polish the minds of your children, just in the same manner as Molly polishes your rosewood and mahogany ...

3

In the same letter Jerrold ironically juxtaposes the mistress's treatment of her governess (dismissed for reading a novel, A Christmas Carol) and that afforded her cook, whom she is trying to pacify to prevent him from giving notice: "I am, however, going out, and shall see if a nice diamond ring will restore peace; if so, fifty or seventy pounds will be well bestowed." The Hon. Mrs. Flint replies to Lady Honoria that when her governess joined any social occasions, she never introduced her to anybody; "She was never drawn out of her place - never for a moment confounded with any of the ladies present."<sup>4</sup>

The notion of appropriate marriage choice is one obvious social indicator. In Vanity Fair, for example, Mrs. Sedley "could not bring herself to suppose" that a mere governess, described as humble and grateful, would "dare to look

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1 ibid., vol. 3, p. 178.

2 D. M. Craik, Christian's Mistake, 1866, p. 156.

3 Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 140.

4 ibid., pp. 141, 145.

up to" such a person as Joseph Sedley.<sup>1</sup> George Osborne is contemptuous of Becky's flirtation with Jos, and displeased that there might be a misalliance in the family into which he himself is marrying. For him, Becky is "a little nobody - a little upstart governess". He says to Dobbin:

"Hang it, the family's low enough already, without her. A governess is all very well, but I'd rather have a lady for my sister-in-law. I'm a liberal man; but I've proper pride, and know my own station: let her know hers." 2

There is "great amazement and curiosity" in the village of Norton Bury when Jane Cardigan, said by the villagers to have been "a poor governess all her days" becomes "the good doctor's new wife".<sup>3</sup> Ellen, the governess, is unfairly reproved by her employer for trying to attract the attentions of Mr. Stancliff, the curate. Mrs. Ferrers tells her that she must be aware "that no gentleman could offer a young person in your situation attentions which she ought to receive". The village schoolmaster would be a suitable match, "but one of the clergymen of the parish! really your head must be completely turned by vanity, to have thought of such a thing!"<sup>4</sup> When a handsome young Frenchman captures the heart of Miss Simpson, the comment on his attitude is: "Not that he cared for that cheap victory - a governess, indeed!"<sup>5</sup>

In these novels and in others, however, such unthinking assumptions are frequently undermined by events. Governess or teacher heroines do happily marry "above" them. Agnes Grey is united with Mr. Weston, Jane Eyre with Mr. Rochester. Nelly O'Brien's marriage to the Colonel, later to become the Earl of Duneden, is clearly intended as a reproof to her employers, who

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1 W. M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, (1847-8) 1963, p. 36.

2 ibid., p. 62. Equally it would apparently be unthinkable for a charming and intelligent schoolmaster's daughter to marry the "idiot" grandson of a Marquis - Thackeray, Dr. Birch and his Young Friends, (1849) 1900, p. 96.

3 D. M. Craik, John Halifax, Gentleman, (1857) /1898/ pp. 173-5.

4 Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, p. 260.

5 P. H. Fitzgerald, Autobiography of a Small Boy, 1869, p. 108.



looked on her as a "hired upper servant", and then saw her rise socially above them.<sup>1</sup> Despite the prejudice shown by Miss Ferrers ("no gentleman would or could marry you!")<sup>2</sup> and threats of dismissal, Mr. Stancliff does propose marriage to Ellen, and it is clearly the author's intention to approve of his behaviour and to disapprove of the attitudes displayed by the Ferrers. In Christian's Mistake, Miss Bennett, a governess, is intrigued to learn that the heroine of the story herself had been a governess before marrying Dr. Grey, widower and master of a College, at the beginning of the book. When the two women meet, Miss Bennett gazes curiously at Christian, "the fine lady who had once been a governess, and was not ashamed to own it".<sup>3</sup> While clearly it is marriage which has conferred status on Christian, it is also made clear that she was a lady before that marriage and while still a governess. Perhaps most dramatically of all, in Vanity Fair, Miss Crawley is "almost mad with bewilderment" to find Sir Pitt "on his knees to a penniless governess" and to hear "that a penniless governess should refuse a Baronet with four thousand a year".<sup>4</sup> Despite her partiality for Becky, and her protestations that she sees her as an equal, Miss Crawley assumes that Becky's secret attachment must be to "some apothecary, or house steward, or painter, or young curate, or something of that sort",<sup>5</sup> and is furious when she hears that it was actually to Rawdon, whom she cuts out of her will.

Not all governesses are shown as submitting meekly to social discrimination. Although she refers to herself with arch irony as a "poor little governess", Miss Wirt has possibly a better right to figure in The Book of Snobs, 1847, than her employers. She is continually dropping the names of the titled families where she has taught, and Major and Mrs. Ponto defer to her with the greatest respect: "glorious creature", "a prodigy of accomplish-

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1 J. L. Maughan, Charley Nugent, 1860, vol. 2, pp. 18, 281.

2 Anne Sherwood, vol. 1, p. 283.

3 D. M. Craik, Christian's Mistake, 1866, p. 188.

4 W. M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, (1847-8) 1963, p. 144.

5 *ibid.*, p. 146.



ments" and "a most invaluable person". Thackeray comments:

... I, who have been accustomed to see governesses bullied in the world, was delighted to find this one ruling the roast, and to think that even the majestic Mrs. Ponto bent before her ... I hadn't a word to say against a woman who was intimate with every Duchess in the Red Book. 1

In Vanity Fair, Becky Sharp contrives to put George Osborne firmly in his place, when she is installed as governess at Queens Crawley, where she dines even with the most "illustrious" company. She remembers that his sisters never condescended to speak to her when she was staying with Amelia, "but we poor governesses, you know, are used to slights of this sort". She goes on to compare their behaviour unfavourably with the considerate treatment she receives in the Hampshire family. Indeed, there is a pleasant reversal in the scene when Becky repays George Osborne's snobbishness, pointing out the "difference" of being in "a gentleman's family". "Osborne was quite savage. The little Governess patronised him."<sup>2</sup> It is hardly evidence to say that Madame Vine, the French governess in East Lynne, 1861, is recognised as "a thorough gentlewoman", "of gentle birth and breeding",<sup>3</sup> since "Madame" is actually Lady Isabel Vane, only child of the Earl of Mount Severn, and originally mistress of the house to which she returns disguised as a teacher. There is heavy irony in the conversation she has with Barbara, who has taken her place as Mr. Carlyle's wife.

"I was born and reared a gentlewoman," answered Lady Isabel. "Yes, I am sure of it: there is no mistaking the tone of a gentlewoman," said Barbara. "How sad it is when pecuniary reverses fall upon us! I dare say you never thought to go out as a governess." 4

The ease with which Barbara slips into the assumption about the governess's background suggests how stock the situation must have been.

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- 1 W. M. Thackeray, The Book of Snobs, (1846-7) 1898, pp. 107-8.
  - 2 W. M. Thackeray, Vanity Fair, (1847-8) 1963, p. 138.
  - 3 Mrs. Henry Wood, East Lynne, (1861) 1890, pp. 299-307.
  - 4 *ibid.*, p. 307.

Particularly in rural communities, the respect paid to the teacher as the local representative of learning is presented in terms not very different from Goldsmith's or Clare's. The master of the local school at Helmingham is seen by the local farmers as "a marvel of book-learning".<sup>1</sup> Dickens suggests that among ordinary people at least the village schoolmaster has a degree of prestige, for Nell and her grandfather, in The Old Curiosity Shop, are "timid of approaching" Mr. Marton, "for he was the schoolmaster ...". Nell is afraid to disturb him, and hopes that he will make the first move. The words "They were very tired, and the child would have been bold enough to address even a schoolmaster ..." suggest either fear or respect, and when eventually she does enter the garden gate it is only after she "took courage".<sup>2</sup> Grace Harvey, the twenty-eight-year-old village schoolmistress of Kingsley's Two Years Ago, is presented as a dominant figure, despite her humble position, in the little town. She exercised "an almost mesmeric influence on everyone"; she "governed, she knew not how or why, all hearts in that wild simple fishing town"; "there was hardly a mother in Aberalva who did not confess her debt to Grace".<sup>3</sup> When the curate considers removing the school from her because she attends chapel, he meets with almost universal opposition. In the rural community where Bartle Massey has settled for twenty years as the only schoolmaster he is respected not just as a man but as the representative of learning, however elementary the level at which he teaches: "The amount of knowledge Bartle Massey must possess was something so dim and vast that Bill's imagination recoiled before it."<sup>4</sup>

In a time of social mobility, it is suggested in some of Mrs. Gaskell's stories that becoming a teacher is a way of rising in the scale for able members of the lower classes. The Leighs own Upchase Farm, but "its possession hardly raised them above the rank of labourers". At the end of the story, Tom, the

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1 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, p. 9.

2 Charles Dickens, The Old Curiosity Shop, (1840-1) 1951, p. 182.

3 Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago, (1857) 1900, pp. 42-3.

4 George Eliot, Adam Bede, (1859) 1901, p. 351.



"better scholar" of the boys, becomes "a schoolmaster in Rochdale" and helps to support his mother.<sup>1</sup> Becoming a village schoolmaster is similarly the ambition of the lame but intelligent country boy, Harry Gregson, in "My Lady Ludlow", 1858.<sup>2</sup> Susan Bennett is described as one of the lower middle class girls, "daughters of clerks or petty shopkeepers" who see becoming a teacher or governess as a step up in the world. Such young women "take to teaching as 'genteel', and as being rather an elevation than not from the class in which they were born".<sup>3</sup> Although Miss Twinkleton's views of the schoolmistress's function - "the formation of the future wives and mothers of England"<sup>4</sup> - may be presented with some irony, increasingly serious claims were being made for the importance of teaching. These, in turn, were used to support claims for a higher social position. D'Arcy Thompson, himself a teacher of classics at Edinburgh Academy at the time when he was writing Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, 1864, asserted an elevated view of the profession. Only the clergy took precedence in "the dignity of usefulness"; and he placed the schoolmaster above the lawyer and the physician in "the exceeding dignity of our calling".<sup>5</sup>

In this period generalised judgments on teaching give way increasingly to attempts to differentiate between categories of teacher. Tradesmen's daughters think it "improper" that they should be asked to teach poor children, and one says to another, "I undertook to instruct a national, not a ragged school."<sup>6</sup> Although Doctor May is indignant at such snobbery, his own daughters come in for criticism from their brother Norman, when they propose to teach the poor children.

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- 1 "Lizzie Leigh" (1850) in Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, Cranford and Other Tales, (Knutsford edition, vol. 2), 1906, pp. 209, 240.
  - 2 Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, My Lady Ludlow and Other Tales, (Knutsford edition, vol. 5), 1906.
  - 3 D. M. Craik, Christian's Mistake, 1866, p. 148.
  - 4 Charles Dickens, The Mystery of Edwin Drood, (1870) Oxford, 1972, p. 52.
  - 5 D. W. Thompson, Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, (1864) /1912/, pp. 194, 235.
  - 6 C. M. Yonge, The Daisy Chain, (1856) 1901, p. 113.



"Let those who are fit for nothing else go and drone over A, B, C, with ragged children, if they like ... minds of a superior kind are intended for higher purposes, not to be wasted in this manner."

1

The story does not support Norman's position, but there is no doubting the significance of the distinctions which did exist. These may be the simple, traditional distinctions between the clergyman and the layman, the graduate and the non-graduate. So Mr. Riley assures Mr. Tulliver that,

"... all the best schoolmasters are of the clergy. The schoolmasters who are not clergymen are a very low sort of men generally ... men who have failed in other trades, most likely."

2

The Rev. Walter Stelling sees teaching as a useful means of advancement for an ambitious young clergyman, "for there were capital masterships of grammar-schools to be had, and Mr. Stelling meant to have one of them."<sup>3</sup> The tailor Crossthwaite says to Alton in Kingsley's Alton Locke that the parsons have

"the monopoly of education in England and they get their bread by it at their public schools and universities; and of course it's their interest to keep up the price of their commodity."

4

Mr. Primer assumes that teaching is a profession, but approves of schoolmasters being licensed by the Bishop as a sign that their "competency is guaranteed by authority" as opposed to the unlicensed incompetence of "any ignorant person who may think fit to open a school".<sup>5</sup>

Comparisons are made in a similar way between graduates and non-graduates, and between teachers in schools and in private families. Walter Joyce, usher in a school, who hopes to marry Ashurst's daughter, is gloomy about his chances after the master's death:

"All I can try to get is a tutor's, or an usher's, or a secretary's place, and in any of these the want of the University stamp is heavily against me ... The University degree is like the Hall-mark in silver ... "

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1 *ibid.*, p. 187.

2 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 28.

3 *ibid.*, p. 146.

4 Charles Kingsley, Alton Locke, (1850) 1896, p. 36.

5 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, pp. 78-9.

6 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, p. 81.

The clerk at a scholastic agency tells him that he has no chance of finding a post; they have sixty men on their books, all of them "not merely members of colleges, but members who have taken rank, prizemen, first-class men, wranglers, senior optimes ..."<sup>1</sup> In Mrs. Gaskell's story "My French Master", she describes how an emigré during the Revolution taught a few private pupils in England, where he had had to return, disappointed, after the events of 1815. The situation changed him from a gentleman to a "workman", a teacher, distributing advertisements and withdrawing from society.

Now this was a great coming-down. In former days, non-teaching at schools had been the line which marked that M. de Chalabre had taken up teaching rather as an amateur profession, than with any intention of devoting his life to it.

2

Even lower down the scale, there seems an increasing willingness to define the status of a particular teaching post in comparison with other occupations. Dickens, for example, sees the master of a national school in the 1830s as implicitly level with "an inferior sort of attorney's clerk" but rather below that "small tyrant" the master of a workhouse.<sup>3</sup> William Gresley puts into a character's mouth the view, which seems his own, that the position of a church schoolmaster is "every bit as good as that of a dissenting preacher".<sup>4</sup> It is not, perhaps, surprising that teachers even in a good school consider it a promotion to take up "a quiet country living" or a university tutorship.<sup>5</sup> Douglas Jerrold, tongue partly in cheek, has a young man who served as usher for five years refusing to return to teaching from the "blissful liberty" and "abounding comforts" of his new position as a private in the police force.<sup>6</sup> When Paul Westmore's father is transported for forgery, the boy has to leave Oxford to maintain his mother and sister. With some difficulty he gains "an

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1 *ibid.*, p. 128.

2 Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, "My French Master" (1853), in Cranford and Other Tales (Knutsford edition, vol. 2), 1906, pp. 522-3.

3 Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, (1835-6) 1907, p. 4.

4 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, p. 9.

5 F. W. Farrar, St. Winifred's, (1862) /1910/, p. 238 and see Charles Savile, Leonard Normandale, 1850, vol. 1, p. 12.

6 Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 170.



inferior clerkship", but when his origins are discovered he is discharged. "After that he took the post of usher in a school, gave lessons in the classics; acted as a reporter on the press ... " It seems not only that teaching seemed less attractive to him than an "inferior clerkship" but also that such a position was easier to obtain.<sup>1</sup> The consecutive promotions of the so-called "Professor" Sancey indicate the social level that might be attached to being an usher:

He was a vulgar fellow, originally a grocer's assistant, then an usher in a small school, then a dissenting preacher, finally what is called a school agent ...

2

Some of the best work of the period helps to define the uncertainty of those who were teaching about their social status, the mixture of aspiration and fear, the confusion of criteria by which a position was to be defined. It is most subtly done in Our Mutual Friend, which is discussed elsewhere. The Claverings and Jane Eyre show, in different ways, the effect of emotive labels and the different elements which are involved in social placing: qualifications, working conditions, salary, marital opportunities. At the beginning of the first of these novels, Harry Clavering has gone early to Cambridge, become a fellow at twenty-two, and rather than follow the line his father expects into orders and a living, he "had become a schoolmaster, and was already a rich man. He had done more than well ... " But his own determination is to change profession, to become a civil engineer. The chief motive is that in rejecting him for Lord Ongar, Julia Brabazon has spoken the hurtful words, "You are an usher at a school," and they have rankled.

Harry Clavering might not be an usher, but, nevertheless, he was home for the holidays. And who can say where the usher ends and the schoolmaster begins? He, perhaps, may properly be called an usher, who is hired by a private schoolmaster to assist himself in his private occupation, whereas Harry Clavering had been selected by a public body out of a hundred candidates, with much real or pretended

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1 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 1, p. 233.

2 Mortimer Collins, The Vivian Romance, 1870, vol. 2, p. 73.



reference to certificates of qualification. He was certainly not an usher, as he was paid three hundred a year for his work, - which is quite beyond the mark of ushers. So much was certain; but yet the word stuck in his throat and made him uncomfortable. He did not like to reflect that he was home for the holidays.

But he had determined that he would never come home for the holidays again. At Christmas he would leave the school at which he had won his appointment with so much trouble, and go into an open profession. 1

Jane Eyre's social position, as teacher and as governess, is also shown as to some degree ambiguous. When she first meets Rochester on the road, it is clear from her conversation that she is not a servant, and yet her simple clothes were not "half fine enough for a lady's maid. He seemed puzzled to decide what I was," and she has to explain that she is the governess.<sup>2</sup> When Jane hears of Miss Ingram, she castigates her own folly in dreaming that she could please Rochester, and condemns herself to drawing her own picture, entitled "Portrait of a Governess, disconnected, poor, and plain".<sup>3</sup> She tells herself that her only tie with him is the salary she receives for teaching his protégée.

"He is not of your order: keep to your caste; and be too self-respecting to lavish the love of the whole heart, soul, and strength, where such a gift is not wanted and would be despised." 4

When St. John Rivers offers Jane Eyre the new post of schoolmistress for the girls of the village of Morton, it is rather awkwardly, as if "he seemed half to expect an indignant, or at least a disdainful rejection of the offer".<sup>5</sup>

At the time, and later, Jane analyses the social implications with some care.

In truth, it was humble - but then it was sheltered, and I wanted a safe asylum: it was plodding - but then, compared with that of a governess in a rich house, it was independent; and the fear of servitude with strangers entered my soul like iron: it was not ignoble - not unworthy - not mentally degrading. 6

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1 Anthony Trollope, The Claverings, (1867) 1929, pp. 14, 2.

2 Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, 1847, Oxford, 1969, p. 139.

3 *ibid.*, p. 201.

4 *ibid.*, p. 203.

5 *ibid.*, p. 453.

6 *ibid.*, p. 453.

When St. John points out how limited the work with poor girls will be, and asks, "What will you do with your accomplishments?" she retorts, "Save them till they are wanted." At the end of the first day, however, she records very different reactions from the earlier bold ones.

I felt desolate to a degree. I felt - yes, idiot that I am - I felt degraded. I doubted I had taken a step which sank instead of raising me in the scale of social existence. I was weakly dismayed at the ignorance, the poverty, the coarseness of all I heard and saw round me.

1

It seems appropriate to close this section with the views of a schoolmaster towards the end of this period, considering the situation comparatively. One of the essays which form the volume Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, 1864, is entitled "The Social Position of Schoolmasters". D'Arcy Thompson writes that during his many visits to Belgium, the strangest thing that occurred to him in studying their school system was that,

the Masters were never spoken of as occupying any peculiar or comical position in society. It never seemed to strike a boy to speak in terms of ridicule of his Schoolmaster any more than of his Clergyman or Medical Attendant.

2

One ill-paid teacher "associated on terms of perfect intimacy with families of very ancient lineage in the neighbourhood of Bruges", and teachers in Florence held a position "quite equal to that of an ordinary barrister amongst ourselves".<sup>3</sup> Thompson contrasts this situation with that obtaining in Britain. Schoolmasters in England depend on being clergymen for their status, whereas in logical Scotland, "we call a schoolmaster a schoolmaster" without "fictitious orders".

And yet a schoolmaster in Scotland has certainly need of any aid that could be rendered for the improvement of his social status. The latter is far below that of any other professional body.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 458-9.

2 D'Arcy W. Thompson, Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, (1864) [1912], p. 205.

3 *ibid.*, p. 206.

4 *ibid.*, p. 208.

He asks how it is that learned men, masters of their subjects, "take by general consent a lower place at feasts than a medical man of little practice, and an advocate of few briefs?".<sup>1</sup> He sardonically advocates learning from "artisans" and proclaiming "a general STRIKE OF SCHOOLMASTERS!" until the following terms are agreed:

A Schoolmaster, who should have graduated at a University, shall hereafter be addressed, personally or epistolarily, with the courtesy usually shown to a second rate Solicitor or a briefless Advocate.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 209.

2 *ibid.*, p. 213.



## QUALIFICATIONS

Authors fleshed-out the continuing criticisms of educationalists and public reports of the period that many teachers were wholly unqualified, that they had failed in other pursuits or had been left destitute, that age and ignorance were no impediments. Lord Macaulay spoke in the House of Commons in 1847 about the "squalid hovels" in which unqualified teachers like "disabled miners or broken hucksters" operated: "men who ought themselves to have been learners pretended to teach".<sup>1</sup>

The same strictures on the system, and particularly on the lack of formal requirements, are made throughout the period. Dickens remarked in his Preface to Nicholas Nickleby on the extraordinary fact that "any man who had proved his unfitness for any other occupation in life, was free, without examination or qualification, to open a school anywhere ... " He and Henry Morley returned with heavy-handed irony to the same theme in "Mr. Bendigo Buster on our National Defences against Education", which contrasts a "trained and educated" Prussian teacher with an incompetent English one, in mock approval of the latter. In Germany, exclaims Mr. Buster, "Without a diploma, no person is allowed to teach. There's despotism for you!"<sup>2</sup> Thackeray wrote that the English seem to hold education in so little regard "that almost any man, armed with a birch and a regulation cassock and degree, might undertake the charge".<sup>3</sup> One character in The Colonel, 1853, in a glow of authorial approval, speaks of the urgent need for "national institutions" to train female teachers on a large scale, and to permit only those with "some sort of

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- 1 Lord Macaulay, Works, 1898, vol. 11, p. 238. Also see, for example, E. G. West, Education and the Industrial Revolution, 1975, p. 53; J. Lawson & H. Silver, A Social History of Education in England, 1973, pp. 280 ff; G. M. Meers, "Victorian Schoolteachers in Fiction", PhD. thesis, Evanston, Illinois, 1953, pp. 46-9.
- 2 Charles Dickens's Uncollected Writings from "Household Words" 1850-1859, 1968, vol. 1, p. 201.
- 3 W. M. Thackeray, The Book of Snobs, (1846-7) 1898, p. 54.

licence", proving that "so much time of discipline and instruction had been undergone", to practise in schools or as governesses.<sup>1</sup> In Warp and Woof, Jenny Layel, who has been a governess, complains that teaching is under-rated as an occupation because of the lack of entry qualifications, which means that "amongst all the thousands who take to teaching as a means of livelihood, only about one in ten is fitted for the task".<sup>2</sup> In 1870, Mortimer Collins similarly exclaimed:

The English system, which requires a lawyer or a doctor to prove some amount of character and knowledge, while it allows anybody who likes to set up as schoolmaster or schoolmistress, is simply abominable ... I would rather have a child of mine altogether untaught, than taught by ninety-nine out of a hundred of those who profess to teach in England. 3

Although after 1846 the possession of the government certificate was some indication of professional ability, the majority of teachers in elementary schools were uncertificated until a much later date.<sup>4</sup> Even those students who were preparing to become teachers, according to James Kay-Shuttleworth in 1843, were:

... commonly selected from a humble sphere ... Few have received any education except that given in a common parochial school. They read and write very imperfectly; are unable to indite a letter correctly; and are seldom skilful, even in the first four rules of arithmetic. 5

Prose works of the period include such teachers as an aged pauper with impaired memory, a disbanded soldier with a wooden leg, a bankrupt dealer in hops, an ignorant man who had been in the leather trade, a baker's wife "whose chief fitness for her office appeared to consist in a pair of large silver-mounted spectacles", an unsuccessful bootmaker who went bankrupt, a rough and bullying

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1 Anna Atkins, The Colonel, 1853, vol. 3, pp. 260-2.

2 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 87.

3 Mortimer Collins, The Vivian Romance, 1870, vol. 2, pp. 74-5.

4 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, p. 19. Something of the controversy within the profession is conveyed in "Fifteen Years Among National Schools" by A. Teacher, serialised in the monthly periodical The School and the Teacher between August and December 1856.

5 James Kay-Shuttleworth, Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, 1862, (1862) 1973, pp. 400-1.



master's mate, an old soldier from foreign service who has "dissipated time and money on whist and sangaree", and a grocer's assistant.<sup>1</sup>

The impression of unfitness for the rôle underlies almost all Dickens's most vivid teacher characters, not only Squeers and Creakle ("more ignorant", according to Steerforth, "than the lowest boy in the school")<sup>2</sup> but such minor figures as the master at the Charitable Grinders' School into whose hands Robin Toodle falls. He "didn't know anything, and wasn't fit for anything", "a brute jobbed into his place of schoolmaster with as much fitness for it as a hound".<sup>3</sup> Mr. Wopsle's great aunt, who kept the school to which Pip first went, was

... a ridiculous old woman of limited means and unlimited infirmity, who used to go to sleep from six to seven every evening, in the society of youth who paid twopence per week each for the improving opportunity of seeing her do it. 4

A number of these teachers were presented as men and women who had failed in other walks of life, people that Kay-Shuttleworth said "resort to this calling after they have been proved to be unfit for any other", and whose sole qualification, according to Lord Macaulay, was "their utter unfitness for every other employment".<sup>5</sup> A. R. H. Moncrieff complained from within the profession that "novelists and popular rumour" combine to suggest that it is largely made up of "bankrupt tradesmen".<sup>6</sup> For example, the head of a private school in Peter Priggins, 1841, had twice been bankrupt as a linen draper, and

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1 Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, (1835-6) 1907, p. 5; Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, (1836) 1971, p. 22; Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) /1947/ p. 112; Charles Dickens, Household Words, No. 81, 11 Oct. 1851, p. 81; Elizabeth M. Sewell, The Experience of Life, (1853) 1858, p.79; Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 165; Henry Spicer, Old Styles's, 1859, p. 175; Charles C. Clarke, Charlie Thornhill, (1863) 1876, pp. 163-4; Mortimer Collins, The Vivian Romance, 1870, vol. 2, p. 73.

2 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) /1947/, p. 112.

3 Charles Dickens, Dombey & Son, (1846-8) Oxford, 1974, p. 70.

4 Charles Dickens, Great Expectations, (1860-1) 1946, p. 44.

5 James Kay-Shuttleworth, Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, 1862, (1862) 1973, p. 251; Lord Macaulay, Works, 1898, vol. 11, p. 238.

6 /A. R. H. Moncrieff/, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, pp. 96-7.



then a popular preacher, before setting up school and assuming the title of Doctor, without paying any fees for it or knowing a word of Latin or Greek.<sup>1</sup> Dr. Rawson, the headmaster of Burchell Hall, ironically praised as "a most exemplary Christian gentleman", came to school-keeping after failing in several other occupations. Dutton Cook writes airily, as though this was to be expected.

He had made two or three false starts in life, of course, and had met with reverses; had even on some occasions been bankrupt, I believe; certainly he had been engaged in commerce, brewing, horse-dealing, the coal-trade - some such things. Then he had devoted himself to what was formerly one of the last resources of the enterprising, the instruction of youth.

2

One of such men writes to thank the friend who previously urged him to go into "the academy business": "Little did I then dream that the trade of school-master seemed made by Providence for unfortunate tradesmen who had failed in everything else."<sup>3</sup>

A desire or need to teach is still frequently presented as virtually the sole criterion to be considered. When two girls in their teens contemplate opening a school for poor children in the locality, as a kind of well-meaning pastime to occupy their leisure, their father and others raise no objections nor suggest that they are unqualified. Mr. Wilmot says that it is a sound idea solely on the grounds that it may do good to the fifteen-year-old Ethel.<sup>4</sup> Parents who would scorn to let their children go to a charity school under a trained mistress assume that they will be properly educated in a small private school kept by "a person only half taught, and with no guide as to what was the safest kind of learning".<sup>5</sup> When she is left unprovided for, Lucy Snowe is engaged, without references or any formal qualifications, as a governess, and later as an English teacher, by Madame Beck, in Villette, 1853. When the

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1 J. T. J. Hewlett, Peter Priggins, Paris, 1841, pp. 119-20.

2 Dutton Cook, The Trials of the Tredgolds, 2nd ed., 1864, p. 6.

3 Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 165.

4 C. M. Yonge, The Daisy Chain, (1856) 1901, p. 120.

5 C. M. Yonge, Langley School, 1850, p. 50.

narrator of Cranford wonders what Miss Matty can do after she has been ruined by the failure of the bank, "Teaching was, of course, the first thing that suggested itself."<sup>1</sup> After Sally's family is left in dire financial straits after the death of her father, her immediate notion is -

... to begin a day-school. It was the only thing which could be done at once without risk, and I had known it answer in Carsdale before. It would not support us comfortably, but it would help us on for the time ...

2

On the death of a vicar, his two daughters immediately conclude that they must be governesses: no other course seems open to them:

"We must work for our living."

"At what?"

"We must be governesses."

"Oh, yes ... "

3

Similar indications that need, rather than a sense of vocation or appropriate qualifications, was the most urgent consideration in the choice of a teaching career are to be found in Agnes Grey and The Professor. When the family are surprised because the eighteen-year-old Agnes Grey says she would like to be a governess, she retorts:

"Well! I don't see anything so very extraordinary in it. I do not pretend to be able to instruct great girls; but surely, I could teach little ones; and I should like it so much: I am so fond of children."

4

The family's reservations are all about her ability to look after herself in a strange environment; nobody questions whether she can actually teach.

However, when she leaves the Bloomfields, her mother tells her to aim high:

At length, she advised me to put an advertisement myself in the paper, stating my qualifications, etc.

"Music, singing, drawing, French, Latin, and German," said she, "are no mean assemblage: many will be glad to have so much in one instructor; and this time you should try your fortune in a somewhat higher family ... "

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1 Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, Cranford, (1851-3) 1906, p. 157.

2 Elizabeth M. Sewell, The Experience of Life, (1853) 1858, p. 210.

3 Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, p. 8.

4 Anne Bronte, Agnes Grey, (1847) 1954, p. 374.

5 ibid., p. 406.



After Agnes' father dies, her mother immediately suggests that the two of them should set up a school, without questioning their qualifications, but only their ability to attract enough pupils:

"I will exert myself and look out for a small house, commodiously situated in some populous but healthy district, where we will take a few young ladies to board and educate - if we can get them - and as many day pupils as will come, or as we can manage to instruct. Your father's relations and old friends will be able to send us some pupils, or to assist us with their recommendations, no doubt ... "

1

William Crimsworth, the central figure in The Professor, finds the choice of occupation difficult. The experience of being a clerk convinces him that trade is not for him; he declines to be a clergyman on the grounds that he has no vocation "and rather than adopt a profession for which I have no vocation, I would endure extremities of hardship from poverty"; and as Hundsen points out brutally, "you can't be a lawyer, or a doctor, or a gentleman, because you've no money". Apparently, though, he has no worries about his vocation for teaching, since when Mr. Brown suggests this, Crimsworth seizes the idea "eagerly", saying, "The very thing, Sir!".<sup>2</sup> Recalling how he was left at twenty-one, after the death of his father, to support his family, another author records how his "expensive education" had not equipped him for "the honours and emoluments of a learned profession".

There was but one resource open to me. I looked out for a situation as under-master or usher at a private school, and obtained one with little difficulty.

3

The generalisations, both direct comments by the author and words put into the mouths of characters, reinforce the impression given by the characters themselves. E. Ward remarks that "it frequently happens that the schoolmaster is qualified for anything but teaching youth".<sup>4</sup> D'Arcy Thompson attacks "the popular, but mistaken idea" that young men lacking the means or spirit to

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1 ibid., p. 480.

2 Charlotte Bronte, The Professor, (1857) 1975, pp. 43, 49.

3 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 11.

4 E. Ward, Boys and their Rulers, 1853, p. 11.



succeed in law or medicine "may subside into a teacher," taking clerical orders in the hope of eventually escaping from the "despised profession".<sup>1</sup> The mistresses of middle-class boarding schools, "with vulgar minds and neglected education," are said to "know little ... give superficial instruction".<sup>2</sup> Colyton blames all the failings of women on the effects of "the system of education pursued", because "two-thirds of the governesses in circulation had been forced by the direst misfortunes to the calling".<sup>3</sup> Many simply take up the post as a genteel way of awaiting matrimony,

Half educated, lazy, unconscientious, with neither the working faculty of a common servant, nor the tastes and feelings of a lady, they do harm wherever they go; they neither win respect nor deserve it.

4

Possibly just as damning is the occasional suggestion of dull mediocrity. The Rev. F. Pringle can get the mastership of a small grammar school although he is "a second-rate man, who had taken a second-class degree", and who has no interest at all in teaching.<sup>5</sup>

Such gloomy views of teacher standards are intensified by the expectations of employers and of those concerned directly with education. Possibly encouraged by the paragons of earlier fiction, some advertisers clearly had unreal images of the teachers, tutors and governesses they might recruit. The Governess opens with a scene in which Mrs. Waller and her niece are reading the advertisement columns of the Morning Post, and find one for a governess to three girls between the ages of five and nine.

She must be of a prepossessing appearance, of refined manners, and a perfect musician. She is required to instruct her pupils in French, Italian, and English; geography and the use of the globes, with music, drawing, and dancing; in all of which branches of education she is expected to be a proficient. Equanimity of temper

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- 1 D. W. Thompson, Day-Dreams of a Schoolmaster, (1864) /19127, p. 193.
  - 2 Frederic Chichester, Masters and Workmen, 1851, vol. 2, pp. 88-9.
  - 3 Anna Atkins, The Colonel, 1853, vol. 3, pp. 260-4.
  - 4 D. M. Craik, Christian's Mistake, 1866, p. 148.
  - 5 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 1, p. 3.

and cheerfulness of disposition, joined to uninterrupted health, are indispensable requisites. She must understand cutting out and making children's dresses. 1

Mrs. Waller not unreasonably comments that those accomplishments "never yet fell to the lot of one human being ... and yet for all these, the wages of a lady's maid are offered". The assumption that standards were rising is expressed in well-meaning books like Church-Clavering. Joseph Primer is said to be, from his first appointment, "considerably superior in learning and acquirement to the generality in his station; though not above what, it is hoped, another generation may see our national as well as commercial schoolmasters".<sup>2</sup>

What impression would a reader of the period have gained of what it meant to be suitably qualified for such a position? What are the qualities which seem to be attached to those who are specifically presented by their authors as "good" teachers? The first thing that is clear is that educational issues were not always paramount; people did not necessarily want a trained teacher or a good mind; they might not be "particular about education", as a number of examples show. The first dialogue in Framley Parsonage, between the young vicar, Mark Roberts, and his wife, is about who will be the teacher in the village school. Despite his own conviction that "one of the regular trained schoolmistresses would be better" and his wife's feeling that he should not accept "an incompetent teacher for the parish children, when he was able to procure one that was competent", Roberts agrees to the appointment of Sarah Thompson because Lady Lytton wishes it. He finds it easier to let her ladyship have her way on what he presents as a trivial issue:

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1 Marguerite Gardiner, The Governess, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 1-2. Compare the similar expectations of Mrs. Flint in Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, pp. 144-5, and of the Countess of D----, expecting three foreign languages, all educational subjects, with music and drawing for £30 p.a. in Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, pp. 46-7.

2 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, p. 1.



"... if it is wrong, wrong in some infinitesimal degree, one must put up with it. Sarah Thompson is very respectable; the only question is whether she can teach." 1

Lady Harriet's description of Clare Kirkpatrick, 1866, in its combination of qualities, gives an entertaining picture of what that lady thought appropriate for a teacher or governess.

"She's not very wise, certainly; but she's so useful and agreeable, and has such pleasant manners, I should have thought any one who wasn't particular about education would have been charmed to keep her as a governess." 2

By contrast, Nelly O'Brien can speak three foreign languages "like a native", and she is a charming girl, but the Colonel says it is necessary to find her another vocation rather than teaching; she is too young and pretty, and for a governess or teacher "a more than ordinary amount of presence is necessary".<sup>3</sup>

An examination of the most commonly cited reasons for expressing approval of a teacher during this period suggests that ability to teach is much more frequently mentioned than in the previous period, although it is rarely defined in detail. The earlier emphases on qualities of character and on the teacher's own standards of education and scholarship are predictably continued. The outstanding teachers are shown scoring on all three counts. Mr. Prince is an Oxford man "learned", "crammed with Greek", is successful with the boys, to whom he is "uncommonly kind", and is "respected of all for his honesty ... his bravery ... a latent power about him which all saw and confessed somehow."<sup>4</sup> Mr. Percival is noted for his "brilliant scholarship", his "successful method of teaching a form" and above all for the influence of his "kind, wise, conciliatory manner".<sup>5</sup> Old Styles is a striking personality, loved by his boys, but also "equally distinguished as a scholar and a disciplinarian".<sup>6</sup>

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1 Anthony Trollope, Framley Parsonage, (1861) 1948, pp. 6-7.

2 Mrs. E. C. Gaskell, Wives and Daughters, (1866) 1966, p. 99.

3 J. L. Maughan, Charley Nugent, 1860, vol. 1, p. 274.

4 W. M. Thackeray, Doctor Birch and His Young Friends, (1849) 1900, pp. 73-4.

5 F. W. Farrar, St. Winifred's, (1862) /1910/, pp. 238-9.

6 Henry Spicer, Old Styles's, 1859, p. 71.



Some of the headmasters, indeed, are so flawless and possess so many qualities that it is hard to believe in them. Dr. Gresham is described as a great man - "and he was a great man, if great and varied learning, and a capability of imparting it, could make him so" - whose study is littered with texts, manuscripts and proofs "in Greek, Latin, and Sanscrit", and who is "the high priest of the whole". Later, comparing Gresham's establishment not unfavourably with Eton, the author comments:

Dr. Gresham himself was a man of most brilliant talent, sound learning, and, rarer still, of varied accomplishments, which great scholarship, for some reason or other, was generally supposed to exclude. But he was more than this. He was a most admirable schoolmaster, combining a happy playfulness of disposition with a power of influencing young minds to an almost incredible extent. 1

In another novel, the same author describes the headmaster of Grammerton, Doctor Armstrong, as one of those rare "admirable schoolmasters", and later as a "fine old scholar-like gentleman".<sup>2</sup>

He was in himself a grand and noble gentleman, fitted to fill with respect, affection, or awe, the rising generation of the upper and middle classes of a country like this. A liberal, but no pedantic, admirer of classical literature, of accurate but very extensive reading among the ancients, and making this knowledge subservient to the other purposes of a practical life: interesting his pupils by the varied stories of apt illustration which he brought to bear upon their immediate pursuits. Withal a Christian gentleman of generous sentiments, conscious of his own powers, and not intolerant of the mistakes of other men. 3

Such testimonials hark back to the notions of an earlier period that a good teacher must be perfect in every respect. At the same time, however, there are indications of new ways of interpreting desirable qualifications. Among the personal qualities, a sense of vocation is more likely to be mentioned, the need for people "who have devoted their whole life to the work of teaching, and have their heart and soul in it".<sup>4</sup> The concept of teaching

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1 Charles Clarke, Charlie Thornhill, (1863) 1876, pp. 20, 63.

2 Charles Clarke, The Beauclercs, Father and Son, 1867, vol. 1, p. 100.

3 ibid., vol. 1, p. 24.

4 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 175.

ability is widened to include not just the power of conveying information, but the ability to relate to individuals: skill to "read human nature", and to be able to adapt methods to different personalities.<sup>1</sup> Without the ability to teach, academic qualifications are often shown as inadequate. As Moncrieff wrote, "You can by examination make sure of learned, or at least of crammed teachers", but not of skilful or conscientious ones. It is possible for a man to be "too much of a genius"; too clever to teach effectively.<sup>2</sup> This is brought alive by characters in a number of novels. Mr. Innovate gained a double first at Oxford, but his lack of teaching experience and his love of theorising make him a disaster as a headmaster.<sup>3</sup> Jack Birch is a clergyman and an Oxford graduate, but a "supercilious little prig" and "an empty, pompous little coxcomb", who is an ineffectual teacher.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Dickson is "a first-rate classic", but an exceedingly vain teacher who "grossly neglected his pupils";<sup>5</sup> Mr. Smith is a "somewhat clever pedagogue" and a good-tempered man, but too lazy to teach, so that his pupils make "little or no progress";<sup>6</sup> the "well-educated university man" whose life is passed "among dry tomes" is unsuccessful with pupils because in his "stiff, formal" way he sees them as "his natural enemies", while the "respectable country clergyman", relying on his former scholarship, "would teach if his pupils would learn; but he has neither persuasion nor vigour to induce them to do so".<sup>7</sup> Despite Mr. Riley's assurances that Stelling is an Oxford M.A., a clergyman, and "fond of teaching", his inability to adapt his methods to Tom Tulliver means that he is essentially unsuccessful.<sup>8</sup> Mr. Westmore is described as "a fine scholar" with "brilliant powers", and as a man of "the finest intellect", but he is also vague and impractical, and ends up giving Latin lessons in girls' schools.<sup>9</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 121.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 98, 187-8.

3 J. T. J. Hewlett, Peter Priggins, Paris, 1841, pp. 203 ff.

4 W. M. Thackeray, Doctor Birch and his Young Friends, (1842) 1900, pp. 73-4.

5 Charles Savile, Leonard Normandale, 1850, vol. 1, pp. 13-4.

6 E. Ward, Boys and their Rulers, 1853, p. 12.

7 Charles C. Clarke, Charlie Thornhill, (1863) 1876, pp. 163-4.

8 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 28.

9 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 1, pp. 48-57.



Similarly, academic qualifications are inadequate if the essential personal qualities are lacking. The whole argument of The Colonel, 1853, stresses this. Miss Morant was appointed as a governess because of her ability, and particularly because of the high standard of her spoken French, "but little else was considered". She turns out to be the villain of the story, weaving a "noisome web around all things".<sup>1</sup> Ursula, in Warp and Woof, 1861, is qualified in terms of intellectual and other accomplishments, she reads three languages, and has "elected" herself the clever one of the family, but her manner is hard and self-centred. She admits that she does not like children: what she can do is to keep them in order.<sup>2</sup> The concern for character and personality was undoubtedly given some impetus by increasing awareness of the practice of Thomas Arnold, who wrote, in one letter enquiring for a master:

What I want is a man who is a Christian and a gentleman - an active man, and one who has common sense and understands boys. I do not so much care about scholarship ... 3

The developing concern for actual teaching ability is shown in a number of novels as over-riding both academic distinction and social polish. The Rev. Mark Warner is an "excellent man":

Mr. Warner was not, it is true, a great scholar, but he was admirably adapted for instructing young persons. He was firm without severity, and kind without over-indulgence. 4

Gottlieb Schrecklich, a refugee German master, is an awkward, uncouth, shabby figure, socially maladroit, but he "combined a masterly grasp of his knowledge with a clearness and ease in communicating it".<sup>5</sup> Mr. Black may be a strange, dwarfish figure, and little may be known about his own education, but he was "an excellent master, the best instructor in mathematics, Styles said, he had

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1 Anna Atkins, The Colonel, 1853, vol. 1, p. 175 and vol. 3, pp. 258-9.

2 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 1, pp. 120, 139.

3 Quoted in Sir Joshua Fitch, Thomas and Matthew Arnold and their influence on English Education, 1897, p. 69.

4 Charles Savile, Leonard Normandale, 1850, vol. 1, p. 11.

5 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 1, p. 96.



ever known".<sup>1</sup> Sometimes it is difficult to know just how far the depreciation of academic attainment is ironical, and how far to be taken at face value. For example, the new young German master at Orville College, is presented as an Englishman who has been educated chiefly in Germany, and who spoke French and German "as a native". For some years he had been a professor at the University of Heidelberg, and came "strongly recommended to Dr. Brabazon". It later transpires that he has a doctorate, though he chooses to drop the title. He may be wise in this, since the Headmaster says of him: "He took honours abroad, I believe. We don't think much of that, you know." He is more impressed by the fact that Mr. Henry has no trace of foreign accent.

Not only that: the tone was particularly refined. The fact gave satisfaction to Dr. Brabazon, who liked his pupils to be surrounded by good associations in all ways.

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1 Henry Spicer, Old Styles's, 1859, p. 236.

2 Mrs. Henry Wood, Orville College, (1867) 1899, pp. 7-8, 67-9.

## SALARY AND CONDITIONS

The general impression which emerges from references in novels of the time is that during this period salaries were rising, that there was increasing variation according to qualifications and level of work, but that nevertheless teaching was almost universally presented as an ill-paid occupation. Such an impression could, if necessary, be confirmed as essentially true to the facts of the time. In the years to 1870, the average annual salary of certificated male teachers apparently never reached one hundred pounds, and certificated women never reached eighty pounds.<sup>1</sup> At the same period, graduates in grammar schools earned from fifty pounds upwards, "but in general assistant masters were lucky to get £100-200 p.a."<sup>2</sup> A few very much more lucrative posts were available in public schools.

The dangerous effects of poor salaries and lack of promotion prospects are often referred to. Not only did pay and status go together, the low salaries proved "insufficient either to attract recruits to the profession or to keep them in the schools once they had been trained".<sup>3</sup> Kay-Shuttleworth wrote in 1846 that to be master of an elementary school yielded "neither honour nor emolument", and that there was nothing to attract men even from a "subordinate condition" in trade to teaching, when the salary was "very little greater than that of an agricultural labourer, and very rarely equal to that of a moderately skilful mechanic". Such a master is forced to "eke out his subsistence" by taking on other work.

These additions to his income, if he be successful, barely keep him out of debt, and in old age he has no prospect but hopeless indigence and dependence.

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1 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, p. 273.

2 T. E. Cook, Education and the Professions, 1973, p. 36.

3 The School Teachers, p. 9.

4 James Kay-Shuttleworth, Four Periods of Public Education as Reviewed in 1832, 1839, 1846, 1862, (1862) 1973, p. 474.

In the following year, in the parliamentary debates on education, speakers like Lord John Russell and Sir Robert Peel claimed that able men left teaching for more profitable occupations, and Macaulay urged the government's responsibility to "reward the schoolmaster" adequately.<sup>1</sup>

A. R. H. Moncrieff argues that, "If people were prepared to pay their dominies better I am certain they would think more highly of them."<sup>2</sup> His sympathies go out to the teacher:

... who has been brought up a gentleman, and has a family to bring up in the same way upon the salary which he receives for doing much harder and nobler and more useful work than half of the rich people whose sons he is educating ... most of us are wofully ill paid. A tutor in a gentleman's family too often receives the wages of a butler without his perquisites. And after many years of hard study and labour, when he has fought his way to a mastership in some good school, he still finds that he is not half so well off as a fashionable tailor. 3

Something of the range of remuneration can be suggested by ranking briefly what was offered to some characters in books of the time. The advertisement from Squeers, which Nicholas Nickleby answered, specified five pounds per annum ("A Master of Arts would be preferred"), though he did get his keep after a fashion.<sup>4</sup> Miss Roberts led "a wretched life", always busy caring for the pupils, for six pounds a year.<sup>5</sup> A governess could be offered as little as twelve pounds per annum.<sup>6</sup> Jane Eyre's salary at Lowood School is fifteen pounds per annum.<sup>7</sup> A young man, offered the position of usher at twenty pounds a year, is assured that it is "the dignity of the calling that makes it really valuable".<sup>8</sup> A governess, offered the same amount, would have

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1 Macaulay, Works, 1898, vol. 11, p. 245. Compare the discussions of salary in "Fifteen Years among National Schools" by A Teacher, serialised in The School and the Teacher, August - December 1856. For further details, see G. W. Hughes, "The Social and Economic Status of the Elementary School Teacher in England 1833-1870", M.Ed. thesis, University of Manchester, 1936.

2 A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 100.

3 ibid., p. 99.

4 Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, (1839) 1950, p. 26.

5 E. Ward, Boys and their Rulers, 1853, p. 11.

6 Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, p. 42.

7 Charlotte Bronte, Jane Eyre, (1847) Oxford, 1969, p. 105.

8 Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 169.



to be a spendthrift, according to her employer, not to be able to save for retirement.<sup>1</sup> Clara Mordaunt and Agnes Grey become governesses at twenty-five guineas a year, which the former says is no more unreasonable than usual.<sup>2</sup> The "liberal" salary offered as usher to an Oxford graduate is thirty guineas.<sup>3</sup> Miss Blogg gets thirty pounds a year as a teacher, and is delighted at the hint of an increase.<sup>4</sup> Jane Eyre sees becoming a governess at thirty pounds per annum as promotion. She gets the same amount as village schoolmistress, with a house and a young servant.<sup>5</sup> The Hon. Mrs. Flint exclaims at the greed of an accomplished daily governess who demanded, "Positively, thirty pounds a year, and by way of climax - her dinner!".<sup>6</sup> Old Mr. Marton rejoices at having made his fortune when he is appointed schoolmaster at another village for thirty-five pounds a year.<sup>7</sup> Another country teacher gets forty pounds per annum, with house and garden.<sup>8</sup> Agnes Grey gets fifty pounds per annum in her second post,<sup>9</sup> but when Clara Mordaunt asks fifty guineas per annum as governess, her future employer tries to beat her down, saying, "You cannot be serious, you surely cannot expect so unreasonable a salary?".<sup>10</sup> Horrified by the demands of English graduates, Mr. Bampton is relieved to discover that a refugee German scholar "would consider a salary of £50 munificent" for becoming a tutor.<sup>11</sup> In a time of sudden family need, one young man promptly arranges to be an usher in a local school "with sixty pounds a year",<sup>12</sup> the same sum that A. R. H. Moncrieff earned when young.<sup>13</sup>

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- 1 *ibid.*, p. 143.
  - 2 Marguerite Gardiner, *The Governess*, 1839, vol. 1, p. 2, and Anne Bronte, *Agnes Grey*, (1847) 1954, p. 376.
  - 3 *J. T. J. Hewlett*, *Peter Priggins*, Paris, 1841, p. 121.
  - 4 Mortimer Collins, *The Vivian Romance*, 1870, vol. 2, p. 202.
  - 5 Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, (1847) Oxford, 1969, pp. 105-6, 453-8.
  - 6 Douglas Jerrold, *Punch's Complete Letter Writer*, (1845) 1853, p. 144.
  - 7 Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, (1840-1) 1951, p. 343.
  - 8 *The School and the Teacher*, August 1856, p. 152.
  - 9 *Agnes Grey*, p. 406.
  - 10 *The Governess*, vol. 2, p. 94.
  - 11 W. J. Conybeare, *Perversion*, 1856, vol. 1, p. 94.
  - 12 Elizabeth M. Sewell, *The Experience of Life*, (1853) 1858, p. 221.
  - 13 *A. R. H. Moncrieff*, *A Book about Dominies*, Edinburgh, 1867, p. 11.

Joseph Primer, who has been the assistant to his schoolmaster father, also gets sixty pounds a year as an assistant at a national school, where his predecessor died, still teaching, in his eightieth year.<sup>1</sup> Lady Vane, the supposed governess of East Lynne, gets seventy guineas,<sup>2</sup> and Ursula Fletcher insists on eighty guineas a year as governess.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Stelling charges a hundred pounds for each pupil he accepts into his home.<sup>4</sup> Joseph Primer's father, master of a country grammar school, earned "little more than £200 a year",<sup>5</sup> the same salary as James Ashurst in a similar post.<sup>6</sup> Three hundred seems to be the grammar schoolmaster's salary implied in The Mill on the Floss,<sup>7</sup> and Harry Clavering, a Cambridge graduate, gets the same at St. Cuthbert's School.<sup>8</sup> "Recently qualified" men from Oxford and Cambridge were reported to demand four hundred pounds a year to live as tutor in a private gentleman's house<sup>9</sup> and this is what Nathan Shanks got to leave Corpus.<sup>10</sup> Mrs. General, who declines to discuss terms and cuts off the word "remuneration" before it has left Mr. Dorrit's lips, indicates that she expects four hundred pounds per annum as a superior kind of governess.<sup>11</sup>

The range is enormous, and indicates the difficulty of discussing the conditions offered to teachers as a single group. In general, there are clear links between status and salary. Only university-educated clergymen seem to earn over a hundred pounds a year for teaching. The contrast between the ordained and the lay schoolmaster is summed up in a comment in Household Words. Dickens and Henry Morley, writing of the endowment of free grammar schools, imply that in mid-century England a trained teacher could expect considerably

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- 1 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, p. 9.
  - 2 Mrs. Henry Wood, East Lynne, (1861) 1890, p. 299.
  - 3 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 1, p. 123.
  - 4 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 27.
  - 5 Church-Clavering, p. 1.
  - 6 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, p. 24.
  - 7 The Mill on the Floss, p. 182.
  - 8 Anthony Trollope, The Claverings, (1867) 1929, p. 2.
  - 9 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 1, p. 94.
  - 10 /J. T. J. Hewlett/, Peter Priggins, Paris, 1841, p. 55.
  - 11 Charles Dickens, Little Dorrit, (1857) 1967, pp. 501-2.



less than a clergyman for doing the same work. The salary of one position, they write, would be "a scanty stipend for a clergyman, but a fair stipend for a trained village schoolmaster".<sup>1</sup> They go on to write of the importance for such men of augmenting their income by taking private pupils:

Educated men and clergymen are named as masters, with salaries below their expectation. They are distinctly told to help themselves, by taking private pupils; and what they are distinctly told to do they do. 2

The Rev. Walter Stelling, in The Mill on the Floss, is shown as an ambitious young clergyman, who not only sees teaching a few private pupils as a useful way of augmenting his income, but also hopes for further advancement, "for there were capital masterships of grammar-schools to be had ...".<sup>3</sup> Similar opportunities for the layman are described in William Gresley's highly polemical novel, used to embody his views on religion and education. A carefully judged tone of social discrimination runs through this description of the career of a young man, son of a clergyman and grammar school master, who went as a teacher at a national school. In addition to his salary, he got "a very nice and respectable house". Under his care, the school prospered, and "the peculiar station which he occupied" enabled him to be familiar with people of different classes. Farmers and "small tradesmen" began to send their pupils to his establishment, "so that it soon assumed the character of a middle or commercial school, as well as a mere national school" and, as a result, "Mr. Primer's emoluments were much increased". The clergyman who had advised him to take the post had assured him of such a likelihood of gaining pupils from the "middle classes": "Your character and attainments will insure you a considerable addition to your income from this source."<sup>4</sup> Although this example is introduced to support Gresley's line of argument, there is no reason to doubt the general truth. It is striking, though, that

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1 Harry Stone (ed.), Charles Dickens' Uncollected Writings from "Household Words" 1850-1859, 1968, vol. 1, p. 352.

2 ibid., p. 359.

3 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, p. 146.

4 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, pp. 9, 17.



in such a highly moralising book, there are such specific details of salaries and conditions. When this is repeated in other books, it suggests that authors are reacting to a widespread concern about appropriate levels of pay in a time when uncertainties about social standing were accompanied by such wide variations in salary as have been indicated. The precision with which the financial conditions of the teacher-hero in The Professor are worked out<sup>1</sup> may suggest something of Charlotte Bronte's own experiences as well as of her express intention in the Preface that her character "should work his way through life as I had seen real living men work theirs - that he should never get a shilling he had not earned ...".

The pages of Anne Sherwood are full of such details. The scholastic agent who interviews a vicar's two daughters as potential governesses thinks the intellectually able Annie worth less than her taller and more attractive sister Ellen. He says to Annie: "You have no accomplishments; I shall put down twenty guineas; I suppose you will not refuse eighteen."<sup>2</sup> When Mrs. Harrington eventually offers Ellen a post, she blushes at having to name the salary of twenty pounds per annum because:

... she was ashamed of the sum offered to an educated gentlewoman. The smallness of the salary did not shock either Annie or Ellen; they remembered an offer of twelve! 3

When Bertha Somerton is offered a change of place at sixty guineas a year she is overwhelmed at what seems a blissful dream of good future, and bursts into tears.<sup>4</sup> When more experienced, Annie also asks for and obtains sixty guineas.<sup>5</sup>

Despite the variations, it is the prevailing tone of the comments and the comparisons which is the real indicator. "The master's salary was, as usual, small"; "the salary is so small"; "not very much to be sure"; "there are positively many footmen who do not get so much"; "Poor thing, what a wretched

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- 1 Charlotte Bronte, The Professor, (1857) 1975, e.g. pp. 51, 68, 169, 189, 199, 219-20.
  - 2 Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, p. 42.
  - 3 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 158.
  - 4 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 179.
  - 5 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 124.

life she led, and all, perhaps, for ten pounds a year"; junior masters are "wretchedly paid"; ushers at Burchell Hall are paid "at a pitifully low rate".<sup>1</sup> One of Howard's ushers has to borrow money from the housemaid.<sup>2</sup> The village schoolmaster is glad enough to lend his sword for a week to Tom Tulliver in return for five shillings.<sup>3</sup> When a stranger enquires whether a beautiful young woman has any money, the only answer he needs to be given is the laconic: "The village schoolmistress."<sup>4</sup> When Riderhood tries to blackmail him, Bradley Headstone says:

"You can't get blood out of a stone, Riderhood."

"I can get money out of a schoolmaster, though."

"You can't get out of me what is not in me. You can't wrest from me what I have not got. Mine is but a poor calling."

5

When the head of Helmingham, a county grammar school, the Rev. James Ashurst, is dying in impoverished surroundings, the family cannot afford the one hundred and thirty guineas specialist's fee that might save his life. The doctor says that "he did not believe there was a single penny". The headmaster has already had to borrow money from the rector and the chairman of the governors. The salary of two hundred pounds per annum with a free house might have been adequate, but when Mrs. Ashurst's health required two long spells abroad her husband had no reserves for such a sudden expense,

... he had recourse to money-lenders to raise the first loans required, and then to friends to pay the interest on and obtain renewals of these loans, then to other money-lenders to replace the original sums, and to other friends to repay a portion of the first friendly loans ...

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- 1 Mary Russell Mitford, Belford Regis, (1835) 1846, p. 132; Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, (1839) 1950, p. 26; William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, p. 9; Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 169; E. Ward, Boys and their Rulers, 1853, p. 11; Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) /1947/, p. 113; Dutton Cook, The Trials of the Tredgolds, 2nd ed., 1864, pp. 8-9.
  - 2 Edward Howard, Rattlin the Reefer, (1836) 1971, p. 67.
  - 3 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, pp. 188-9.
  - 4 Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago, (1857) 1900, p. 66.
  - 5 Charles Dickens, Our Mutual Friend, (1884-5) Harmondsworth, 1971, p. 871. When proposing to Lizzie, however, Bradley had said that "My circumstances are quite easy, and you would want for nothing." *ibid.*, p. 455.



He never freed himself from his troubles in his life-time. "He struggled on in the same hopeless, helpless, hand-to-mouth fashion for about eight years more, always impecunious in the highest degree ..."<sup>1</sup>

Occasionally, later in the period, a pious note is struck. Mr. Henry, a young German teacher, spends hours of each day during the holiday coaching boys and tells Sir Simon that he makes no charge for this.

"I am not helping the boys for money. It would scarcely be honourable. I am well paid by Dr. Brabazon; and any little assistance I can give them out of school is only their due."

2

Such a contented teacher, particularly in the lower ranks of the profession, is a rare figure in books of this period. When David Copperfield returns to the idealised Agnes, he finds her "useful and happy", running a small school for girls. The readiness with which she has accepted this work is clearly meant to be an indication of her uncomplaining nature rather than a comment on the acceptability of the teacher's rôle.

"You have much to do, dear Agnes?"

"With my school?" said she, looking up again, in all her bright composure.

"Yes. It is laborious, is it not?"

"The labour is so pleasant," she returned, "that it is scarcely grateful in me to call it by that name."

3

This is hardly powerful enough to counterbalance the impressions of bad conditions and overwork in so many of Dickens's novels. Even Ralph Nickleby has to admit that teaching in a boarding school may be "too hard" a life for Kate.<sup>4</sup> The master of a county grammar school dies at about sixty, "worn out by the excessive labour of his profession".<sup>5</sup> As a governess, Emily Morton finds that "her daily life was one of wearying mortification and self-denial", subject to "the heaviest trials" from a family who claim that they "make her useful" when they want her.<sup>6</sup> Lucy Snowe sees teaching as a harness to which

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1 Edmund Yates, Wrecked in Port, 1869, vol. 1, pp. 7, 14, 24, 36-7.

2 Mrs. Henry Wood, Orville College, (1867) 1899, p. 164.

3 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) /1947/, p. 949.

4 Charles Dickens, Nicholas Nickleby, (1839) 1950, p. 25.

5 William Gresley, Church-Clavering, 1840, p. 2.

6 /Elizabeth M. Sewell/, Amy Herbert, (1844) 1846, vol. 2, p. 66 and vol. 1, p. 85.



one must become "inured", and asked why she continues with a labour she does not always enjoy, replies, "Chiefly, I fear, for the sake of the money I get".<sup>1</sup> The teachers in the serial "Fifteen Years Among National Schools" almost all suffer from strain and overwork, particularly at the time of inspections and examinations. Mrs. Morton is ill, Miss Darlington has "a nervous attack", and Miss Damper frequently "became exhausted and ill".<sup>2</sup> Kitty Layel says of her governess sister that the work "knocked her up", and that "ten years of it are enough to sprinkle most women's heads with grey".<sup>3</sup> Two novels compare the life and labour of a governess unfavourably with that of a slave in the West Indies.<sup>4</sup>

When the daughters of a vicar discuss the need to find work immediately after their father's death, it seems clear that they will have to teach, despite forebodings.

"Is it, then, so dreadful to be a governess?" exclaimed Ellen; "are they all unhappy?"

"From what I have heard, I believe them to be the most unhappy, ill-treated class in the world!" said Annie ... 5

The novel goes on to document more thoroughly than most the actual sufferings of governesses, seen through the eyes of the two girls. There is a lengthy description of their search, frequently disappointed, for posts, and the different agencies with which they have contact. Sometimes over thirty governesses are waiting at an agency in the hope of being placed; entrance fees and percentages of salary are demanded; some employers examine many candidates in insulting detail. Annie's friend, Bertha Somerton, is not allowed to meet her in the house where she is governess, and she seems "greatly altered from the vivacious-looking girl" that Annie remembered from three years earlier.<sup>6</sup>

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1 Charlotte Bronte, Villette, (1853) 1972, pp. 215, 260.

2 The School and the Teacher, No. 33, September 1956.

3 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 96.

4 Berkeley Aikin, Anne Sherwood, 1857, vol. 1, p. 58; and J. L. Maughan, Charley Nugent, 1860, vol. 2, pp. 21-3.

5 Anne Sherwood, vol. 1, p. 10.

6 ibid., vol. 1, pp. 29 and 33.

Bertha Somerton, "the poor pale-faced governess!" who leads "a sad, sad life" but "was very meek and uncomplaining" is portrayed as working with unruly children all day until seven, and then having to make all the children's clothes in the evenings, alone in her uncomfortable room at the top of the house.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Stokes-Delville, who had once been a governess herself, expects Ellen to work "from seven in the morning till nine in the evening".<sup>2</sup> Though the dingy living conditions are bad,<sup>3</sup> the actual labour of teaching spoilt and unwilling children is worse. When Ellen is taken ill, and the doctor is called, he finds her a bad case:

"Governess again! fourth this week! ... you must be careful, and she must do no more governessing; better send her into a coal-pit at once to work." 4

The recuperation in a comfortable home, for which her sister pays twenty-five pounds, actually costs one hundred and fifty pounds, and the only way that it is made possible for a governess is that the kindly Dr. Sinclair secretly pays the difference.<sup>5</sup> Charley Nugent tells Nelly O'Brien on their first meeting that he wishes she were not becoming a governess: "You are not at all suited for it. It is a trying life."<sup>6</sup> Even the governess in his own family, that he claims to have been very happy, had to endure ten years of engagement to a tutor, until Charley's father "procured a small living for him".<sup>7</sup> He finds it difficult to make any contact with Nelly at the Jennings family, as he anticipated, "as I well knew the extra stringency of the rules and regulations that surround a governess".<sup>8</sup> The family are totally cold and indifferent to her, she complains, and never speak to her or treat her

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1 *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 69-70.

2 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 95.

3 *ibid.*, vol. 1, pp. 163-4. "This seems to be the rule in very splendid mansions; everything unfit to be seen is condemned to the school-room, even the cracked, ill-matched pieces of china." (*ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 132.)

4 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 38.

5 *ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 52-3.

6 J. L. Maughan, Charley Nugent, 1860, vol. 1, p. 263.

7 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 265.

8 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 1.



kindly. Her routine begins at seven and continues with the children until eight at night, after which she often has other chores to do: writing or copying music. Her letters to Charley are suppressed, and Mrs. Jennings claims falsely that Nelly was "dismissed for impropriety of conduct", refusing to reveal her whereabouts.<sup>1</sup>

The picture of the living conditions offered to resident teachers and governesses might have been designed to discourage candidates. Clara Mordaunt is given a dirty, comfortless room, "scantily and meanly furnished"; she is warned that the usual food is stale bread, skim milk and bad tea; she is not permitted to receive visits from relations or friends.<sup>2</sup> Nicholas Nickleby has to share a bed and a towel with the boys, and he eats their inadequate food in the same filthy surroundings.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Marton's schoolroom is also his parlour and kitchen, with no appropriate furniture or comforts.<sup>4</sup> After two years of teaching, Jane Eyre still has to ask permission to go to a neighbouring village after tea, and rules oblige her to be back by eight to take up "various duties" which fill the evening.<sup>5</sup> Conditions at Dr. Birch's Academy, the bad food, rising at five in the morning, the labours of the day and the vindictiveness of Miss Birch, "who has turned away seventeen ushers and second-masters in eleven years", are coolly described by Thackeray as "not matters in themselves pleasurable".<sup>6</sup> Mr. Mell, who "always did the drudgery", who is expected to choose cold meat, not hot, and whose pupils mock his poverty, works during the holidays until seven or eight at night making out the boys's bills.<sup>7</sup> George Borrow says that the tinker has a better life than the teacher, whose duties he describes as "drudging ... from morning to night, without any rational enjoyment but to beat the children".<sup>8</sup> The Hon. Mrs. Flint assures

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1 *ibid.*, vol. 2, p. 177.

2 Marguerite Gardiner, *The Governess*, 1839, vol. 1, pp. 20-1, 71, 8-9.

3 Charles Dickens, *Nicholas Nickleby*, (1839) 1950, pp. 82 ff.

4 Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, (1840-1) 1951, p. 183.

5 Charlotte Bronte, *Jane Eyre*, (1847) Oxford, 1969, p. 104.

6 W. M. Thackeray, *Doctor Birch and his Young Friends*, (1849) 1900, pp. 73, 85.

7 Charles Dickens, *David Copperfield*, (1849-50) /1947/, pp. 105, 113, 122.

8 George Borrow, *Lavengro*, (1851) 1921, p. 362.



a less experienced friend that in drawing up conditions for a governess she should always deduct salary for any illness, never permit her a bell to summon servants, and always lay down the scale of food to be permitted her.<sup>1</sup> Although he is housed at school in "a very small room, with an excessively small bed", William Crimsworth congratulates himself that, unlike many other teachers, he does not have to share the room, and that he does not have to spend every moment of the day with the boys, as the ushers do.<sup>2</sup> Bartle Massey, the village schoolmaster, permits himself "one extravagance": "to eat bread once a day instead of oat-cake". His house has no curtains, and his few pieces of old furniture were bought "for an old song".<sup>3</sup> Maggie Tulliver spends "joyless days of distasteful occupation" working in "a third-rate schoolroom with all its jarring sounds and petty round of tasks", and she describes the school diet to Lucy as "watery rice-pudding spiced with Pinnock".<sup>4</sup> In Warp and Woof, one governess has to rise at six and spend twelve hours a day with her pupils. Another, Ursula, works in a schoolroom with "a general air of coldness, desolation and disorder", and although her own room is even colder and darker she never has a fire.<sup>5</sup>

The impression is given that there was no security of tenure; a teacher could be dismissed without notice. An usher is interviewed by the headmaster one morning and leaves on the coach before dinner.<sup>6</sup> Emily Morton is dismissed on the spot on the false and unexamined assumption that she was responsible for leaving a girl alone to fall into the water. When the true guilt is established she is reinstated, but on the subsequent death of her pupil she is immediately expected to find another situation. Colonel Herbert reflects that "it will be a miserable life for her".<sup>7</sup> Mr. Mell loses his position at Creakle's

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- 1 Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, pp. 144-5.
  - 2 Charlotte Bronte, The Professor, (1857) 1975, pp. 54. 77.
  - 3 George Eliot, Adam Bede, (1859) 1901, pp. 358-60.
  - 4 George Eliot, The Mill on the Floss, (1860) New York, 1965, pp. 390, 401.
  - 5 Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, pp. 96-7, 181-6.
  - 6 Harriet Martineau, The Crofton Boys, 1841 /1865/, p. 152.
  - 7 Elizabeth M. Sewell /, Amy Herbert, (1844) 1846, vol. 2, p. 171.

school, picks up his few belongings, and leaves on the spot.<sup>1</sup> A tutor who makes the unfortunate mistake of proposing to one of the daughters of the house is dismissed by a written note which informs him that the gig will take him away the following morning.<sup>2</sup> When Lucy Snowe appears on the scene, Mrs. Sweeny, the previous governess, is instantly replaced; a policeman ejects her and her belongings.<sup>3</sup> When Mr. Wilson has the misfortune to be ill, Lucy replaces him as English teacher, but at half the cost.<sup>4</sup> Frank Headley, the curate, talks of taking away the village school from the much loved schoolmistress, Grace Harvey, on the grounds that "she will persist in going to the chapel".<sup>5</sup> When a seedy assistant master, tormented by scornful boys from well-to-do families, is driven to the point where he cuffs one of them, he is forced to leave after the boys complain to the Principal.<sup>6</sup> The prospect of an impoverished old age was so threatening that unforced retirement seemed out of the question. The Pauper Schoolmaster will remain in the office "until infirmity renders him incapable, or death releases him".<sup>7</sup> In one of the supposed letters of the Hon. Mrs. Flint there is a description of a discharged governess who had saved "next to nothing", went on to teach "the daughters of small tradesmen, at eighteen-pence a lesson", and when too old for this, "though sand-blind, keeps a sixpenny school for little boys and girls of the lower orders. With this, and the profit on her cakes, she contrives to eke out a miserable existence ..."<sup>8</sup> Leigh Hunt suggests that one reason that Christ's Hospital was exceptional in retaining its staff was that the school offered some measure of security: the teachers "might expect pensions or livings in their old age".<sup>9</sup>

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1 Charles Dickens, David Copperfield, (1849-50) /1947/, p. 128.

2 W. J. Conybeare, Perversion, 1856, vol. 1, pp. 119-23.

3 Charlotte Bronte, Villette, (1853) 1972, pp. 60-1.

4 ibid., p. 70.

5 Charles Kingsley, Two Years Ago, (1857) 1900, p. 44.

6 /A. R. H. Moncrieff/, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, pp. 42-3.

7 Charles Dickens, Sketches by Boz, (1835-6) 1907, p. 105.

8 Douglas Jerrold, Punch's Complete Letter Writer, (1845) 1853, p. 143.

9 Leigh Hunt, Autobiography, (1850) 1948, p. 60.



## THE FIGURE OF THE TEACHER, 1871 - 1918

The chief problem in approaching the works of this period is the sheer bulk of available material, and this itself is perhaps the clearest indication of a shift in attitude. Teachers apparently became the subject of much more serious and sustained attention for writers. More books for adults have a school background, ranging in style from Trollope's Dr. Wortle's School, 1881, to Hugh Walpole's Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911. Teachers are more frequently seen as suitable protagonists for a novel, not simply in somewhat conventional school stories like C. M. Yonge's Our New Mistress, 1888, or Reed's The Master of the Shell, 1894, but in more reflective adult works like Roger Wray's The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, or A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, by S. P. B. Mais. Writers seem more ready to question the accepted literary models of school life. Novels as different as Stalky & Co., 1899, and The Loom of Youth, 1917, could provoke a storm of controversy. The clash between traditional and more progressive views of education becomes a popular theme for authors, and awareness of the need for change was accelerated at the end of the period by the painful lessons of the Great War.

In such a period, when teachers are being depicted in an increasingly varied way as well as in greater detail, it becomes more difficult to establish clearly defined teacher figures. However, it is possible to offer broad generalisations by comparison with earlier periods. Whereas teachers were previously seen nearly always in relation with their pupils, they are now more often shown in relationship with one another and with other adults. Whereas they were mostly seen through the eyes of pupils, now stories are not infrequently narrated from a teacher's point of view. There is far more concern with what might be called the professional side of the teacher's rôle: concepts of training and the choice of instructional methods, the interaction of "traditional" and "progressive" styles, the clash of personalities on a



staff, the relationship between a teacher's professional and private lives. Increasingly individuals are differentiated according to the subjects they teach and the methods that seem to accompany the subject. Although authors had previously set brief scenes in classrooms, usually concerned with struggles over discipline, it is in this period that attempts to give the flavour of teaching itself become common, particularly attempts to catch the language styles of different instructors. The earlier assumption that a good teacher was a paragon who combined fine character, sound religious principles, an excellent brain and outstanding teaching ability disappears. There is no longer a stock model of the "good" teacher; masters and mistresses are shown as excellent in very different ways. They may be inspiring teachers, or friends to whom pupils can turn in trouble, or quirky individualists who change the lives of selected scholars, or wise, mature figures marked by depth of understanding, or people viewed with awe and respect because of their achievements. Instead of polarising qualities so that teachers are presented as wholly good, or ridiculous, or evil, they are now shown like other human beings as a mixture of qualities, most of which may be potentially good or bad according to the total personality and the situation. An eccentricity may be a disabling flaw in one man, for which he is ridiculed, but an endearing mark of another's personality.

Something like forty of the books in this sample, including works for adults as well as for children, are set largely or wholly in school. In nearly half of these the protagonist or a major character is a teacher. Teachers play larger rôles and a greater variety of rôles, in which their concerns and relationships are seriously discussed, than in previous periods. Frederick Anstey's The Giant Robe, 1884, is an early example of a book with a schoolmaster as the villain, and teachers cut a reasonably heroic figure in such novels as Trollope's Dr. Wortle's School, 1881, or Lord Ormont and his Aminta, 1894, by Meredith. Fancy Day, the new village schoolmistress

at Mellstock, is one of Hardy's most charming heroines, though there is something a little patronising about the way in which members of the choir describe her.<sup>1</sup> In her first appearance at the window, and later at the party, it is the bright, dark eyes and the luxuriant dark-brown hair that are stressed, but the indications of character are perhaps more important: the combination of courage and shyness, the pleasant manner, thoughtfulness, honesty combined with coquettishness.<sup>2</sup> The schoolmistress is the centre of attention in the village, and attracts the love of three very different men: Dick Dewy, Mr. Shiner and Mr. Maybold, the parson. Certainly nobody could be further from the stock image of village schoolmarm than this one: "If ever a woman looked a divinity Fancy Day appeared one ..."<sup>3</sup> Perhaps because of her station as a governess, Trollope says that he would not "... dare to put forward Lucy Morris as the heroine" of The Eustace Diamonds, but he adds shortly afterwards that she "certainly was a treasure, - a treasure though no heroine".<sup>4</sup> Lucy is the most delightful character in the novel, and the narrative demands that the reader should rejoice when Frank Greystock finally marries her. Although she is no beauty, lacks elegance and has a quiet manner, this "poor little" teacher - as she is repeatedly called - is universally beloved. Her chief characteristic is a sweetness of temperament which enables her to get on with almost everyone.

She was a sweetly social, genial little human being whose presence in the house was ever felt to be like sunshine. She was never forward, but never bashful. She was always open to familiar intercourse without ever putting herself forward. There was no man or woman with whom she would not so talk as to make the man or woman feel that the conversation was remarkably pleasant, - and she could do the same with any child. She was an active, mindful, bright, energetic little thing to whom no work ever came amiss.

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- 1 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, (1872) 1964, pp. 25-8.
  - 2 *ibid.*, pp. 35-6, 53-5.
  - 3 *ibid.*, p. 170.
  - 4 Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds, (1873) 1973, vol. 1, pp. 19, 23.
  - 5 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 23.



This period, compared with the previous two, is the first in which far more books have been written by teachers or authors who have taught than by men and women with any other background. Of those whose careers have been traced, seventeen had taught for different lengths of time, compared with four who had been ordained (two of whom were also teachers), five lawyers, two doctors, two in the forces, eight in different kinds of business, and so on. Again, it is the kind of experience that is important. Unlike the authors of 1740 to 1833, many of the writers had lengthy and successful careers in school. G. F. Bradby was an assistant and a housemaster at Rugby for nearly forty years; Desmond Coke was an assistant and vice-master of Clayesmore School; Dr. Gilkes was head of Dulwich; Ian Hay taught for eleven years at Fettes and Durham School; H. G. Wells and D. H. Lawrence were both trained teachers; S. P. B. Mais and Hugh Walpole repeatedly drew on their own experience when describing schools and teachers.

The specific interest in the resemblances and differences between fictional and actual teachers, which began to appear in books towards the end of the last period, is much further developed.<sup>1</sup> This is the chief theme on which Ian Hay organised his different sketches of The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, and it recurs frequently in the different books of S. P. B. Mais, and in many other novels.<sup>2</sup> Mais was well aware of the dual relationship between fiction and reality. Writing about Bradby's novel The Lanchester Tradition, 1913, three years after its publication, he argued on the one side that in schools Bradby's characters were seen to be convincing representations of actual teachers.

... the types represented by Chowdler, Bent, Flaggon and Tiphm have not only been recognised, but a universal vote would seem to show that here at any rate is no caricature. These four men really "live and move and have their being".

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- 1 For example, Holme Lee, Warp and Woof, 1861, vol. 2, p. 86 and A. R. H. Moncrieff, A Book about Dominies, Edinburgh, 1867, pp. 178, 183.
- 2 For a more detailed account, see Robert Protherough, "'True' and 'False' in School Fiction", B.J.E.S., Vol. XXVII No. 2, June 1979.
- 3 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 143.



Mais went on, however, to express the hope that his fictional examples would "impress" on the reader "the necessity for a change from a regime that permits of such teachers and such schools". Clearly he saw fiction as influencing education as well as representing it.

By using the word types of Bradby's characters, Mais implied awareness of a number of stock rôles seen as the embodiment of actual teachers. During this period there is continuing change in the repertoire of these "types". Although the particular rôle of the headmaster as such is not a concern of this study, the way in which a stereotype of the head teacher crystallises at this time provides a clear example of the process by which a new teacher figure becomes dominant. The literary portraits of the mid-Victorian period showed head teachers in a variety of rôles: comic, pathetic, violent, scholarly, understanding. After 1870 much of this variety disappears. In part this may have been due to changes in the rôle itself: instead of being the leader of a group of "assistants" essentially engaged in the same work as himself, the head was increasingly seen as the organiser of a team of specialists; his authority rested less on scholarship and more on his management skills; in particular he tended to be judged by his public appearances.<sup>1</sup> To examine a clutch of fictional heads, male and female, after 1870 is to realise that many of them are virtually indistinguishable from one another; indeed, in retrospect they seem to merge into a composite figure of which Dr. Grimstone in Vice-Versa is an embodiment in pastiche. Virtually all are presented as majestic figures, creating a godlike effect of awe and terror, outside in terms of physique and personality and separated from ordinary mortals by powers of speech and by a special rhetorical style. "Dignified", "grave" and "solemn" are the epithets most frequently used to describe these figures.

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1 George Baron, "The Secondary Schoolmaster, 1895-1914", London University Ph.D. thesis, 1952, pp. 530-2.

To take a dozen of them from different times in the period as examples, their appearances are typically described as "awful", "terrible" and "awe-inspiring",<sup>1</sup> "awful" and "commanding", with "impressive dignity",<sup>2</sup> "an object of terror",<sup>3</sup> awaking "terror ... in the youthful breast",<sup>4</sup> "singularly impressive" creating "breathless silence",<sup>5</sup> "regarded with more awe than affection",<sup>6</sup> "radiating power" and "sombre authority",<sup>7</sup> leaving boys "awed from skin to core",<sup>8</sup> "the personification of majesty, dominion, ferocity and awe",<sup>9</sup> striking "terror" into the heart,<sup>10</sup> inspiring "universal terror"<sup>11</sup> or greeted by "awed respect".<sup>12</sup> Almost all of these head teachers are above average size: four are described as "tall", one "big", one "large and stout", one "huge of build" and two "gigantic". In the absence of research correlating promotion with height, it is interesting to speculate whether large men stood a better chance of becoming headmasters because they were thought to be more naturally imposing, or whether the descriptions depend on childish recollections which exaggerate a head's size because of the majesty which surrounded him, or whether this is another example of derivative presentation, books feeding on books. Two novels which refer to small head teachers both go on immediately to assure the reader that lack of inches was compensated for by other qualities.

She was in reality small of stature, but she held herself with an air which gave her the appearance of being six feet high at least ...

13

Dr. Spedding ... was not physically a big man, but he was the fortunate possessor of a singularly powerful face ... Nose, mouth, and chin were all indicative of strength and resolution.

14

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- 1 Louisa M. Gray, Ada and Gerty, (1875) /1906/, pp. 40 and 285.
  - 2 Mrs. G. L. Banks, The Manchester Man, (1876) Altrincham, 1954, pp. 65-6.
  - 3 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, /1881-2/ 1971, p. 125.
  - 4 E. H. L. Watson, Christopher Deane, 1902, p. 30.
  - 5 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, pp. 157, 236.
  - 6 Lilian F. Wevill, Betty's First Term, 1908, pp. 31-2.
  - 7 St. John Lucas, The First Round, 1909, p. 58.
  - 8 E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, p. 326.
  - 9 Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, 1913, vol. 1, p. 151.
  - 10 W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage, (1915) 1966, p. 49.
  - 11 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, /1916/ /1929/, p. 3.
  - 12 *ibid.*, p. 176.
  - 13 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, p. 47.
  - 14 E. H. L. Watson, Christopher Deane, 1902, pp. 29-30.



All of these teachers seem to speak in similar ways. Humour or a light touch are rare. The repeated adverbial terms are gravely, solemnly, sharply and sternly. Headmasters in a passion are usually said to have thundered, roared, boomed or bellowed. Their appearances are normally described in Chapel or Hall, where their words are greeted by "profound stillness" and a strong emotional effect on their hearers.<sup>1</sup> There is frequently the suggestion of deliberately cultivated tricks of public speaking. When the Warden at Bridwell speaks or reads, his hearers are conscious of "his musical full voice giving an expression to his words of sonorous grace and stately magnificence".<sup>2</sup> The Head Master of Harrow "subtly" changes his tone, and his voice had "what may be described as an edge to it - the cutting quality so invaluable to any speaker who desires to make a deep impression upon his audience".<sup>3</sup> E. W. Hornung's image pushes the Head's claims to divinity about as far as they can decently go: "That earnest voice and noble mien ... were as the voice from Sinai and the face of God to him to-day."<sup>4</sup>

In novels like these, the head's majesty is emphasised by his isolation and by the functions he performs. A one-to-one scene is rare; in some books it does not occur at all, the head is only presented on public occasions. The essential rôles are the ritual ones of priest, judge, and monarch. Virtually all the headmasters are described as preaching affecting sermons in chapel, addressing the school at prize-givings or other occasions, and publicly denouncing wrongdoing. Their position and power are emphasised by the accompanying ceremonial, the throne-like chair, the surrounding acolytes. In one story, when the boys are summoned to the Great Hall,

The masters were all assembled upon the great platform of the hall, the Doctor wearing his robes, while each master, in addition to wearing his cap and gown, wore his university hood as well.

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- 1 For example, J. E. C. Welldon, Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895, pp. 240-3.
  - 2 A. W. Clarke, Jaspar Tristram, 1899, p. 101.
  - 3 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 157.
  - 4 E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, p. 359.



It was an impressive scene ...

The head-master sat in a carved chair, one of the famous relics of that great historic school, while the rest of the masters sat on each side of him.

When all the boys had entered and taken their places, the bell ceased tolling. There was breathless silence as Doctor Chapple rose ...

1

So withdrawn is the Warden at Bridwell that he never seems to be named, and he is shown exclusively in ceremonious religious or semi-religious functions, when he holds forth "from his lofty canopied stall".<sup>2</sup> One author, who had experienced the situation himself, wrote:

At the present day there is some reason to think an English headmaster the most manifest potentate extant in our civilised world. He is certainly treated by his subjects with an outward observance and etiquette quite royal; and no European monarch retains such an apparently absolute power of veto, untrammelled by fear of majorities or of dynamite.

3

Twenty years later, considering the necessary qualifications of the "Headmaster of Fact", as opposed to fiction, Ian Hay wrote at one point in terms that suggested that in this respect fact and fiction must have been close together:

... he must be a majestic figurehead ... The dignity which doth hedge a Headmaster is so tremendous that the dullest and fussiest of the race can hardly fail to be impressive and awe-inspiring to the plastic mind of youth ... He must also, of course, be a ruler ... Boys idolise him. In his presence they are paralysed with fear, but away from it they glory in his ferocity of mien and strength of arm ... Such a man is Olympian, having none of the foibles or soft moments of a human being. He dwells apart, in an atmosphere too rarefied for those who intrude into it.

4

Although headmasters, then, may be shown as conforming to one majestic, awe-inspiring type, in general it is much harder to categorise many of the teacher figures in books of this period than those of earlier periods. Considerably more basic "types" occur, there is more individual variety within each of these, and some teachers seem to be presented at different points as belonging to different categories, and prompting different reactions. Whereas previously this had been true of occasional figures, like Bradley Headstone,

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1 Charles J. Mansford, Bully, Fag and Hero, 1897, p. 257.

2 A. W. Clarke, Jaspar Tristram, 1899, p. 101.

3 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 2.

4 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 6, 9-10.

it becomes more common in the period under review. Teachers are shown as appearing differently to different individuals, or even to the same individual at different times. For example, in A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 1916, Joyce shows that Stephen's reservations about his teachers vary appropriately with his age. When he is young he views them with innocent wonder, naively conscious of their rages, and wondering how they can reconcile these with their vocation.<sup>1</sup> At Belvedere, he is more conscious of the gulf between reality and what his teachers advocate; their obsession with what seems trivial to him. While he is wrestling with his own problems, their "constant voices" urged conventional responses, and "these voices had now come to be hollowsounding in his ears".<sup>2</sup> At the end of his schooldays, he looks back on his teachers with respect and yet with a sense that they belong to an outmoded stage in his development.

Their presence had made him diffident of himself ... even when he doubted some statement of a master, he had never presumed to doubt openly. Lately some of their judgments had sounded a little childish in his ears and had made him feel a regret and pity as though he were slowly passing out of an accustomed world and were hearing its language for the last time.

3

The movement of this, the "distant echoes" of school memories, the sense that life in the college is "grave and ordered and passionless"<sup>4</sup> prepares for his rejection of the religious vocation, and the teaching that might have gone with it.

The range of attitudes towards a particular type of teacher figure can be demonstrated by examining the way in which the keen sporting master is presented during this period. The attitude to games, and the priority they are given, is seen as a key discriminator, but one which is differently interpreted by particular characters and by different authors. There is an

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1 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, (1916) 1942, pp. 52-4.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 94.  
3 *ibid.*, pp. 177-8.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 183.



overwhelming insistence on the importance of sporting ability as a desirable qualification for a teacher,<sup>1</sup> but this is modified in the later part of the period by a repeated suggestion that over-enthusiasm for games is a sign of an inadequate personality. Most of the earlier novels assume that young masters actually join in games with the boys, spend much of their time coaching, watch all the matches and get carried away by enthusiasm, becoming "like any boy" again.<sup>2</sup> Such behaviour is the mark of the teacher-heroes of some of the popular books.

For example, when Mark Railsford begins teaching at Grandcourt, his happiest and most successful moments all seem to be connected with games. His teaching, about which little is said, is clearly poor, but by contrast "he had been as nearly happy as he could be in the congenial work of training and encouraging the youthful athletes of his house".<sup>3</sup> His opinion of the school rises when he umpires his first match and when asked to umpire again he agrees, "only wishing he could play in the fifteen himself". The school's Athletic Union give him "a small ovation" as a welcome Blue among the masters.<sup>4</sup> His energy is much more apparent on the field than in the classroom.

Less attractive and less plausible, despite the author's approval of him, is Dudley Relton, in Fathers of Men, said to be not only a "pioneer of cricket masters" but "man enough to take the Middle Fifth on his accession to the staff", with a forearm "like a steel girder".<sup>5</sup> The terms of approval in which Relton is described are all boyish: he is "decent", behaves "coolly", shows a "sneaking fondness" for some of his pupils.<sup>6</sup> After what appears to be only two years of teaching, and still in his mid-twenties, Relton gets a headship, and his departure is said to be a "great loss" to the school.<sup>7</sup>

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1 See the section on Qualifications in the following chapter.

2 For example, A. W. Clarke, Jaspar Tristram, 1899, p. 53; Desmond Coke, The Bending of a Twig, 1906, pp. 162-4; A. D. Fox, Follow Up!, 1908, p. 258.

3 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, 1894/1913, p. 152.

4 ibid., pp. 70-1.

5 E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, pp. 197, 212.

6 ibid., pp. 213-5.

7 ibid., p. 250.



There are, however, balancing signs of a more critical attitude towards the supremacy of sporting activities in the lives of those who "treated work, meals, and sleep as literally interludes - mere necessary pauses between a game and a game".<sup>1</sup> Flack, "the chief cricketer on the staff" in The New Machiavelli, is shown as having an obsessive interest in the county championships, which he forces his boys to share, working up "unnatural enthusiasms" and turning the narrator into "a cricket humbug of the first class".<sup>2</sup> S. P. B. Mais gently mocks the "frenzied" behaviour of a blazered housemaster, urging on his team.<sup>3</sup> A good deal of Boys and Masters is concerned with boys' games of different kinds, and with the disappointments which one of the masters, Scott, undergoes when he sees his sporting influence wane as he gets older.

He had helped in the school games for many years, and had regarded the success of the elevens as a personal matter ... He gave advice, and of course it was listened to, but it was not taken; and this for the first time for fifteen years. The new kings did not know Scott; his maxims at cricket and football were received with an indifference by the more skilled performers, which at first he did not understand ... 4

Of Garnett, the chief sporting master, and "a good football player", the author writes:

Life was not much to him if he did not play at cricket, and the applause he had received at Lord's as a boy was one of his sweetest memories. 5

Such an attitude would seem praiseworthy to Hornung; for Gilkes it is a condemnation.

Perhaps the most developed ironic picture of this kind of arrested development is that of Buller, "the Bull", in The Loom of Youth, 1917. In a way he is a "great man", "splendid", "fine", with a dominating personality, but he also lacks any sense of proportion. For him, games are the only things that matter, winning is of supreme importance, and his authority must be

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1 Henry Newbolt, The Twymans, 1911, p. 107.  
2 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, p. 75.  
3 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 109.  
4 A. H. Gilkes, Boys and Masters, 1887, pp. 172-3.  
5 *ibid.*, pp. 175 and 190.

unquestioned. He is much given to shouting and swearing; he repeats the same phrases over and over again; he loses his temper easily. He is not even particularly effective as a coach; his furious behaviour frightens his teams so much that they often play worse when he is present. His position is only tenable as long as the pupils share his own attitudes and priorities. At one moment a boy suddenly glimpses how ridiculous Buller really is.

At half-time Buller poured forth a superb torrent of rhetoric. And suddenly there came over Gordon an uncontrollable desire to laugh. "The Bull" looked so funny, with his hair ruffled, and his eyes flaming with wrath. Gordon had to look the other way, or he would have burst into paroxysms of laughter.

1

The growing disillusionment of one schoolmaster with games worship is shown in A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918. One of the first things Patrick Traherne discovers at Radchester is that he has gained his post largely because of his Oxford Blue, and he is "evidently expected to play games daily".<sup>2</sup> On a social evening, the sporting members of staff "talked mainly about historic incidents in bygone Inter-University matches".<sup>3</sup> Helping with games is both a duty and a jealously guarded privilege. Before long, Traherne is tired of the emphasis on games, and the everlasting discussion of them: "I love strenuous exercise but I object to making football my God."<sup>4</sup> At his next school, Marlton, Traherne discovers that Ingleby, the master who runs games and "rules by fear and the rod", is a representative of the traditional school, who resents Traherne's views. Ingleby -

... is a passionate devotee of 'Rugger', and puts the fear of God into every boy who comes near him ... He dislikes and distrusts me because I said somewhere that I thought games were overdone at the Public Schools. His belief is that games have been, and are, the saving of England, the one outstanding glory of our national life.

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1 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, 1917 /1930/, p. 163.  
2 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 22.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 23.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 31.  
5 *ibid.*, pp. 214-5.

Although a recurrent figure, then, the teacher as keen sportsman is difficult to categorise because so much depends on the emotional loading. An author may present him anywhere between two extremes, as admirable or ludicrous, as a model to imitate or as a dreadful warning.

Even in the period from 1834 to 1870, nearly all the teachers examined could be simply placed at the extremes of two scales: they were authoritarian or ineffectual, they were presented for the reader's approval or disapproval. In the years from 1871 to 1918 a much greater range of emotional attitudes is involved. Teachers are shown as awaking feelings of awe, respect, sympathy, interest or fear; admiration, approval, understanding or dislike; affection, amusement, tolerance, pity, contempt or scorn. In addition, teachers are characterised less in terms of pupil attitudes and more through staff and other adult relationships. Consequently, not only do new variants and sub-types of the traditional teacher figures appear, wholly new stock characters develop. Masters are defined in terms of the subjects they teach, their role in the school and their behaviour towards their colleagues. New polarities appear: traditionalists versus progressives, crammers against inspirers. Those figures that seem most to engage the attention of authors at this time are considered in the remainder of this chapter.



## TRADITIONAL TYRANTS

Although the teacher as bully or dragon remains a stock figure, still conventionally shown cane in hand in some of the books of this period, there are few extended descriptions of teachers who are essentially floggers. Other punishments, especially the ultimate threat of expulsion, are more common. The major emphasis in the last part of the nineteenth century is to see the thrasher as located in the past. This is not simply the retrospective effect of authors remembering the sufferings of their schooldays.<sup>1</sup> Those who are opposed to beating see it as belonging to earlier, less enlightened times. Shaw repeatedly attacked the outmoded notion that teaching was a matter of "torturing the children if they do not learn", and invoked Creakle, Squeers and Murdstone as examples of "naturally cruel men" who see vigorous use of the cane as "the normal and proper business of a schoolmaster".<sup>2</sup> Others represent the flogger as less of a frightening ogre and more of an absurd hangover, out of place in the modern educational world. Equally, those who support beating tend to invoke "tradition"; they hark back to great floggers of the past to support their belief that the birch is an essential character-builder.

Such praise of flogging is put into the mouth of Dr. Middleton in The Egoist, 1879, where it is undermined not only by Sir Willoughby's disagreement but also by the fact that Clara Middleton brings Crossjay to obedience by gentleness far more effectively than disciplinary methods have done. The hankering for corporal punishment is shown as somehow regressive:

"No, sir, no: the birch! the birch! Boys of spirit commonly turn into solid men, and the solidier the men the more surely do they vote for Busby. For me, I pray he may be immortal in Great Britain. Sea-air nor mountain-air is half so bracing. I venture to say that

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1 For example, Anthony Trollope's conviction that as a junior at Harrow he was "flogged oftener than any human being alive", in An Autobiography, (1883) 1923, p. 17.

2 G. B. Shaw in letters to the papers, in Great Thoughts, 7 October 1905, and in the 1918 Education Year Book - Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, pp. 303-11.

the power to take a licking is better worth having than the power to administer one. Horse him and birch him if Crossjay runs from his books ... We English beat the world because we take a licking well." 1

Jack, the narrator of We and the World, 1880, has a father who similarly uses arguments that he admits are "old-fashioned", and deriving from the days of great-grandfather, in favour of severe discipline. The violence of Jack's schoolmaster, Mr. Crayshaw, is not described in any detail - "The old wounds are scars now, it is long past and over", says Jack<sup>2</sup> - but the commentary, in the author's voice rather than Jack's, condemns the abuse of power. People are unwilling to acknowledge that such inhumanity persists, she writes, to believe that there still exist people who take "a hideous pleasure in seeing and inflicting pain". Indeed, "if it belonged to the past alone, to barbarous despotisms or to savage life, one might wisely forget it".<sup>3</sup>

In passages like this, Mrs. Ewing seems as anxious as Dickens to affect public opinion, but her method is very different. She asserts that cruelty was Crayshaw's "ruling passion",<sup>4</sup> but she tries to make her effect less by describing that cruelty than by direct sermonising, or by analysing its effects (including the death of one pupil).

Crayshaw's cruelty crushed others, it made liars and sneaks of boys naturally honest, and it produced in Lorraine an unchildlike despair that was almost grand, so far was the spirit above the flesh in him. But I think its commonest and strongest result was to make the boys bully each other. 5

The enthusiasm shown for childhood beatings in a dramatic monologue "The Schoolmasters" is moderated in the reader's mind both by the simple, half-educated style of the narrator, and by the distance of the backward look. He has affection both for the "grand old man" Clucas, with his birch, strap

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1 George Meredith, The Egoist, (1879) 1972, pp. 65-6.  
2 J. H. Ewing, We and the World, (1881) 1910, p. 100.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 101.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 108.  
5 *ibid.*, p. 103.



and a rap on the head, and for the totally incompetent Danny Skillicorn, who "plied me / With the cane one day till he nearly destroyed me", and who was subsequently involved in a fight with the boy's mother.<sup>1</sup>

In his novel The Twymans, 1911, Henry Newbolt described an autocratic cane wielder that seems to be drawn from his own experience, since the details are very close to those given in his autobiography. "Nix" is enthroned at a large desk, and pupils come up in turns "for judgment and execution"; "the blows rained like hail"; "a cut or flogging might resound ... at any moment". The emphasis is again on the way in which styles of teaching and punishment, like the building itself, belong to a past age: "amazingly old-fashioned", "a Dominie of the oldest type of all", pleasures "even more old-fashioned than the pains". Indeed, most explicitly, "the scene inside was one which could hardly be imagined - or believed - by any modern boy".<sup>2</sup>

Pupils themselves are frequently represented as seeing beating as a matter of pure age-old convention, pointless or absurd. In one novel, when a group of Eton boys, returning from the cricket match at Lords, do a great deal of damage to the train, a long list of their names is taken to the Head. Their anticipations are in terms of celebrated floggers of the past.

Impey and Rendell took the whole thing as a big joke.  
"I wonder if the Head will swish the lot of us?" laughed the latter.

"It will be as exciting as the time when Keate flogged seventy-two without a pause."

3

Joe Vance explains to Lossie that it was a matter of course that he was birched at school:

"All boys get birched - it doesn't matter really whether they are good or bad - it's part of the discipline. Dr. Lasher says he was birched when he was young, and what would he have been without it?"

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1 T. E. Brown, Fo'c's'le Yarns /1881/, in Collected Poems of T. E. Brown, 1900, pp. 493-509.

2 Henry Newbolt, The Twymans, 1911, pp. 46-7, and My World in My Time, 1932, pp. 36-7.

3 Alice and Claude Askew, The Etonian, /1906/, p. 304.

4 William de Morgan, Joseph Vance, 1907, p. 116.



The Doctor's comfortable conviction enables him to continue with the "enjoyment of a luxury which he and his forbears had indulged in for nearly three centuries".<sup>1</sup> The increasingly symbolic importance of the outmoded tradition of corporal punishment in public school life is wryly described in the person of the narrator of The New Machiavelli, 1911. In his memories of life at the City Merchants School, he writes of the liberal headmaster, Gates:

And though he never birched a boy in his life, and was, I am convinced, morally incapable of such a scuffle, he retained the block and birch in the school through all his term of office, and spoke at the Headmasters' Conference in temperate approval of corporal chastisement, comparing it, dear soul! to the power of the sword. 2

Another Headmaster, a believer in the birch but also aware of the "inherent absurdity" of the performance, devised an elaborate ritual involving the porter, lictors, acolytes and assistants at the punishment, and he was always "very particular about the ceremonies connected with it".<sup>3</sup> In Sonia, 1917, there is another extraordinary ritual in Chapel where leaving Monitors hand on the ceremonial birch to their successors, and the Captain-elect kneels at the Birch Table to offer the traditional Latin prayers authorized by Queen Elizabeth.<sup>4</sup>

In a number of less well-written novels beating is presented as one of the stock elements inseparable from school life. So conventional is it, though, that the master never seems an ogre; the boys never really suffer; everyone is simply going through the motions. To the modern reader, the whole disciplinary process seems ludicrous and arbitrary. In stories like Bully, Fag and Hero, 1897, The Human Boy, 1899, and Fathers of Men, 1912, teachers are seen almost exclusively as judges and executioners. Boys are sentenced to beatings of gradated severity and ceremonial, and expulsion is frequently threatened as the ultimate deterrent. In the first of these novels,

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1 ibid., pp. 95-6.

2 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, p. 78.

3 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 229.

4 Stephen McKenna, Sonia, 1917, p. 56.

the Headmaster, Doctor Chapple, is said to be famous for his "swishing powers", and is reputed to have birched forty-three boys in one day. He tells one pupil,

"My determination is to assist you to be an ornament to Littlebury, and I shall flog you till you are!"  
Doctor Chapple spoke as if he were really promising Comber a prize as an encouragement for good behaviour. 1

His approach to discipline is erratic. When a weak boy who followed those who broke out of bounds is taken seriously ill, the Doctor announces that he had thought it his duty "to expel every one who was at the head of this matter".<sup>2</sup> When eventually he comes to the "penalty of this serious and dangerous escapade", he announces quite arbitrarily that he will flog the top twelve men in the form and do nothing to the rest. As for the twelve chosen,

"I shall require each in the library for ten minutes. Afterwards those whom I have punished may go to the dormitory, where the matron will be found with some vinegar and brown paper for such as think they require it." 3

At the climax of the book, the guilty thief, who has tried to place the blame on others, is exposed by the use of hypnotism, and his expulsion is carried out before a formal gathering of the whole school. The headmaster denounces Comber at length, and the boy is led out, pale and trembling to the front.

Before anything else was said to Comber, the Prefect of Hall was sent to get the bully's books. He brought also his cap, and indeed everything belonging to Comber which bore the name of Littlebury upon it. There, in sight of the whole school, the crest was torn from his cap, his cricketing and football colours were formally rent, and then his name erased from every book allotted to him by school rules.

The great register was brought, and the Doctor, before every one, crossed out Comber's name.

"Men of Littlebury," said the Doctor. "I have followed out the duties of my office. Comber is no longer one of you - he is herewith expelled. Tomorrow he will leave Littlebury, never to return. May it be many years before I am again called upon to perform such an onerous and distressing task." 4

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1 Charles J. Mansford, Bully, Fag and Hero, 1897, pp. 51-2.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 55.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 58.  
4 *ibid.*, pp. 260-1.



In The Human Boy, 1899, a series of sketches from the viewpoints of different boys of different ages, "The Protest of the Wing Dormitory" begins with the narrator reflecting that he was lucky, "being merely one of those chaps who were flogged and not expelled afterwards".<sup>1</sup> Both of these severe punishments seem to have been common in the school. Boys are flogged for shooting the Doctor's wife's parrot with a catapult, for fighting, for dishonesty and for running away.<sup>2</sup> There is one long description of the Doctor in action - actually beating the wrong boy, by mistake - "doing all he knew with the birch", administering "the hottest flogging he'd given to any boy in his life".<sup>3</sup> Expulsion is seen as appropriate for leading a rebellion, for stealing the headmaster's fruit or for taking other boys' money for an act of mercy.<sup>4</sup> In this last case, the Headmaster takes what he rightly calls a "curious" decision. He says in assembly:

"I have determined to leave the fate of the boy Ferrars in your hands. This time to-morrow I shall expect Slade, as representing the school, to inform me of your decision, and to-day, contrary to custom, will be a half-holiday, that the school may debate the question and conclude upon it."

5

Despite a heavy hint that the Doctor feels that Ferrars should be forgiven, the voting goes narrowly against him, he is expelled, and "we never saw him again".<sup>6</sup> This relates oddly to an earlier incident when another boy expects Tomlin to be expelled, and the Doctor lectures him, explaining that, "chaps were not expelled for trifles" and implying "that being expelled from Merivale would ruin a chap's future in the next world as well as this one".<sup>7</sup>

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- 1 Eden Phillpotts, The Human Boy, (1899) 1910, p. 26.
  - 2 *ibid.*, pp. 43, 43-4, 171, 183.
  - 3 *ibid.*, 148-50.
  - 4 *ibid.*, pp. 42, 148, 170-1.
  - 5 *ibid.*, p. 170.
  - 6 *ibid.*, p. 171.
  - 7 *ibid.*, p. 144.



In Fathers of Men, flogging is part of the daily routine:

It was after second school that the day's delinquents were flogged by the Head Master before the eyes of all and sundry who liked to peer through the diamond panes of his class-room windows.

1

Breaking bounds "richly deserved" flogging; an error in Greek "deserves a good flogging"; shirking work receives a "castigation" of eight strokes.<sup>2</sup>

Hornung describes the process in some detail, with interest in how far each culprit is padded. Mr. Thrale, the headmaster, "short and sharp of speech" is described in action:

With that he opened his desk and took out his cane, and the boy who deserved it knelt down with stolid alacrity. The venerable executioner then gathered half his gown into his left hand, and held it away at arm's length to give free play to his right. And there followed eight such slashing cuts as fetched the dust from a taut pair of trousers, and sent their wearer waddling stiffly from the room.

3

Some offences are too serious for beating. "The flogging judge" tells the rebellious Jan that "thrashing is too good for you" and talks of "drumming him out" of school.<sup>4</sup> When he catches Jan breaking bounds at night, Mr. Relton says that this is "a final offence at any school ... It's as bad as bad can be."<sup>5</sup> Mr. Heriot confirms that "the one and only punishment is - the sack!". (But, in fact, Mr. Relton suppresses the evidence because he does not want to lose his champion left-arm bowler before the cricket season.) Towards the end of the book, falsely condemned, Jan is told by the headmaster that he has "forfeited" his "existence" in the school:

"You will remain till Monday; meanwhile you are to consider yourself a prisoner on parole, and mix no more in the society for which you have shown yourself unfit. So far as this school goes you are condemned to death for lying, betrayal and mock-manly meanness."

6

The images used for expulsion in these three books are very similar in their suggestions of finality and death.

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1 E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, pp. 135-6.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 161, 101, 102.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 101-2.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 103-4.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 213-4.

6 *ibid.*, p. 328.

The overwhelming impression created by books like these is that punishment is primarily a symbolic act. Hardly any attention is paid to the suffering of the victim. Equally, the master is rarely seen as enjoying the infliction of pain; he, too, is caught up in a ritual that he does not really control. He may be imperceptive or unjust, but he is not a brute in the mould of Squeers or Creakle. The system itself has become dominant, and the individuals that operate it have little personality of their own; they lack the vivid existence of Dickens's bullies. There are, of course, mentions during this period of teachers who are physically violent, but these are generally brief: the erratic furies and "scarcely sane injustice" of the Principal of Cavendish Academy, Mr. Neech's ungovernable rages in which he would "flog a boy savagely and, the flogging done, fling his cane out of the window in a fit of remorse", Dr. Bassett's use of a hockey-stick which left purple weals for a week afterwards.<sup>1</sup>

Better writers, like Maugham, Wells and Joyce, show that brutality is a characteristic revealed in total attitude and not just by the act of wielding a cane. For example, when he discovers Philip and Singer playing a childish game he had forbidden, Mr. Watson, head of a prep. school, calls both boys into his study. Singer is told to bend over, and is given the usual six with the cane, but when Philip prepares to take his turn Watson says:

"I'm not going to cane you. You're a new boy. And I can't hit a cripple. Go away, both of you, and don't be naughty again."

2

It is difficult to tell whether the reader is meant to find the head imperceptive or deliberately cruel; the result of his action is to cause Philip considerably more suffering at the hands of the other boys.

In King's School, Tercanbury, the masters had lost the power of corporal punishment since the notorious case when the choleric Rev. B. B. Gordon had

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1 H. G. Wells, Kipps, (1905) 1941, pp. 14-5; Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, vol. 1, 1913, pp. 155-6; Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 33.

2 W. S. Maugham, Of Human Bondage, (1915) 1966, p. 62.



struck a boy with a book so hard that his hearing was affected. That master's brutality was not diminished, however, by being deprived of his cane. Instead, it found outlet in violent abuse, physical tortures and bullying boys out of their ability to learn. The effect on a sensitive boy like Philip is just as destructive as the cane would have been. Maugham writes of this master:

With no one to call him to account, with only small boys to face him, he had long lost all power of self-control. He began his work in a rage and ended it in a passion ... No master could have been more unfitted to teach things to so shy a boy as Philip. 1

H. G. Wells's Mr. Mainwearing is a latter-day Creakle, for whom beating is a necessary drug rather than simply a means of discipline. He would awake from his sleep after lunch, "viciously ... in an evil temper ... filled with suspicions ... with a heavy scowl ... threateningly", and seek some individual wrongdoer to act as "focus" for his "diffused wrath". Having identified one, Mainwearing would "grip him hungrily" and after he had thrashed him would leave the room to look for more trouble, "feeling a little better".<sup>2</sup> Wells describes the beating of young Pyecroft in this manner, but things are different when the master sets about Peter, who is unused to such treatment. When Mainwearing takes the cane and calls out Peter for punishment, the boy retorts, "I ain't going to be caned", and attempts to run for it. After a chase and an undignified struggle he is overpowered and given ten cuts. Suspecting that the boy is still not conquered, Mainwearing orders him to stay in the next day and write five hundred lines.

"Bring them to me on Wednesday evening at latest. That will keep you busy - and no time to spare. You hear me, sir? 'I must not sulk' and 'I must obey'. And if they are not ready, sir, twelve strokes good and full. And every morning until they are ready, twelve strokes. That's how we do things here. No shirking. Play the fool with me and you pay for it - up to the hilt." 3

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 87-9.

2 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., p. 141.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 150-1.



Probably the most celebrated single description of physical punishment during this period is the one given in Joyce's A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, 1916. Here again, though, the predominant impression is not of a particular teacher's brutality. Father Dolan has little existence in the novel outside this episode; he is almost the embodiment of a certain disciplinary system; immediate responses to "injustice" are qualified by later events. Joyce's concern is with Stephen's inexperienced reactions to the idea of punishment, of which the pandybat incident is only part, though certainly the most vivid moment. He hears without really understanding the talk of other boys, their mixture of bravado and fear, about serious offences and punishments. As they talk of being sent up for "six and eight" or "twice nine", of "ferulae" or the choice between "flogging or being expelled", his imagination creates the impressions - the differing sounds of cane and pandybat, the circumstances of flogging, the hands of masters - with a complex mixture of emotions: fear, fascination and "a feeling of queer quiet pleasure".<sup>1</sup> In the distance he hears the sounds of cricket, bat on ball.

That was a sound to hear but if you were hit then you would feel a pain. The pandybat made a sound too but not like that. The fellows said it was made of whalebone and leather with lead inside; and he wondered what was the pain like. There were different kinds of sounds. A long thin cane would have a high whistling sound and he wondered what was that pain like. It made him shivery to think of it and cold ...

2

These anticipations prepare for the direct experience of unjust punishment at the hands of Father Dolan. The often quoted scene is, though vivid, less impressive in capturing the physical sensations than in conveying the boy's muddled reactions: fear, shame, resentment and anger, as well as pain. These burst out in a boy's inadequate language, confused and repetitive, dwelling on the words "unfair" and "cruel". Major and minor causes of

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1 James Joyce, A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man, (1916) 1942, pp. 49-51.

2 *ibid.*, p. 50.

bitterness mingle: that no notice had been paid to his academic record, that no distinction had been made between Fleming and himself, that Father Dolan had straightened his hand to strike it better, even that one of his potatoes at lunch time had a spade-mark in it. In his sense of ill-usage, he takes at face value the other boys' suggestions that he should complain and the sardonic comments of older boys. His boyish reaction to what seems a victory in his interview with the Rector is reassessed later when Mr. Dedalus imitates the way the Rector told the story, calling Stephen a "manly little chap".

"Father Dolan and I, when I told them all at dinner about it, Father Dolan and I had a great laugh over it. You better mind yourself, Father Dolan, said I, or young Dedalus will send you up for twice nine. We had a famous laugh together over it. Ha! Ha! Ha! 1

Despite Shaw's assertion that schoolmistresses "are quite as handy with the cane as the men",<sup>2</sup> the female equivalents of the male bullies are rarely shown as resorting to physical violence, but their cruelty can be equally great. Of the dragons of this period, Miss Minchin in A Little Princess, 1905, is probably the best known. It is less the punishments and the ill-treatment that this schoolmistress heaps on Sara Crewe than the hatred of which they are an expression that condemns her in the eyes of the reader. She boxes ears, deprives Sara of meals and sets her endless menial chores,<sup>3</sup> but it is made clear that these things of themselves have little effect on the girl. Miss Minchin's real cruelty is shown in her callous treatment of Sara when the news of her beloved father's supposed death arrives, in the way that she encourages other girls and even the servants to look down upon her, and in striking at her through unkindness to her friends, especially the little maid, Becky.

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1 ibid., p. 82.

2 The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, pp. 305-11.

3 Frances Hodgson Burnett, A Little Princess, (1905) Harmondsworth, 1976, pp. 129, 143, 175, 189.



Although Miss Minchin is drawn in bold colours as a tyrant, the effect is muted partly because she is also so obviously ridiculous in her snobbishness, meanness and insincerity, and partly because of the focus in which she is held. Usually she is seen through Sara's disdainful eyes or presented in a similarly cool way by the author. Her house itself is cold and unattractive, and when Miss Minchin first appears, she was "very like her house, Sara felt: tall and dull, and respectable and ugly. She had large, cold, fishy eyes, and a large, cold fishy smile."<sup>1</sup> From the beginning, Sara pierces through Miss Minchin's insincerity, and the author describes the character's reactions in identical terms to those of the supposedly impersonal description: "Miss Minchin's large, fishy smile became very flattering indeed."<sup>2</sup> Even after the collapse in her fortunes, Sara still sees the mistress in the same way: "I only spare you because I am a princess, and you are a poor, stupid, unkind, vulgar old thing, and don't know any better".<sup>3</sup> Meanwhile, the author emphasizes that Miss Minchin had "a sordid mind", that she was "not a clever woman" and that she was guilty of "worldly folly".<sup>4</sup> Indeed, it is her self-seeking and insincerity rather than her brutality that are emphasised in this two-way Cinderella story. When Miss Minchin thinks Sara Crewe is rich, she refers to her as "a beautiful and promising child", "an original child!", "a darling little creature!".<sup>5</sup> Because of the girl's clear gaze and unusual but candid manner, it is not long before the mistress begins to feel "rather a grudge against her show pupil".<sup>6</sup> As soon as Sara seems to be a penniless orphan, her terms for the girl change abruptly. She is "a little pauper", a "spoiled, pampered, fanciful child", "a beggar", "a bold, impudent child".<sup>7</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 11.

2 *ibid.*, p. 13.

3 *ibid.*, p. 128.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 191, 213, 211.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 11-13.

6 *ibid.*, p. 25.

7 *ibid.*, pp. 73, 76, 82, 129.



The commercial basis of Miss Minchin's thinking is insisted on throughout A Little Princess in terms which foreshadow Orwell's A Clergyman's Daughter. At the very first interview Sara is aware of the falsity in attitude that concern for profit has developed in the mistress. She may dislike Sara's fine clothes, but they will "look very well" as an advertisement for the school.<sup>1</sup> Shortly afterwards, Frances Hodgson Burnett writes,

Privately Miss Minchin disliked her, but she was far too worldly a woman to do or say anything which might make such a desirable pupil wish to leave her school. 2

As well as wishing to punish Sara socially, Miss Minchin is determined to recover cash value from her without damaging the reputation of the school.

If she had been older, Miss Minchin would have given her the bigger girls to teach and saved money by dismissing an instructress; but while she remained and looked like a child, she could be made more useful as a sort of little superior errand girl and maid-of-all-work. 3

When eventually the truth is established, Miss Minchin's chief fear is that she may be exposed, to the detriment of her school.<sup>4</sup> However, whereas in earlier novels the ending might have shown her ostracised and destitute, here her punishment is only some degree of self-knowledge and having to hear painful truths from her sister.

Angela Brazil's early novel, The Fortunes of Philippa, already showed that author's strong tendency to rely on stock figures, like the threatening Miss Percy, "a lady of uncertain age, and even more uncertain temper", "a woman of narrow sympathies and strict discipline".<sup>5</sup>

She seemed to regard school-girls with perpetual suspicion, and to have a perfect genius for pouncing down upon us on the most inopportune occasions ... She had a very lynx eye for missing buttons or untied shoe-laces, her long thin nose

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1 *ibid.*, p. 18.

2 *ibid.*, p. 34.

3 *ibid.*, p. 89 and cf. p. 127.

4 *ibid.*, p. 213.

5 Angela Brazil, The Fortunes of Philippa, (1907) [1937], pp. 58, 143.

smelled out directly the chestnuts we endeavoured to roast by the school-room fire, and she could catch the lowest whisper in the preparation hour.

1

Harried by Miss Percy, who punishes her untidiness by pinning articles left about to her clothes, "till I looked like a gipsy pedlar or an old clothes-woman"<sup>2</sup> Philippa goes down with what the doctor calls "a decided case of nervous breakdown, due to overwork".<sup>3</sup>

Some years before A Little Princess and The Fortunes of Philippa, Mrs. Molesworth had given a relatively effective description of the bad effect of strict methods of discipline on some pupils when the teachers lacked understanding of children. In The Carved Lions, 1895, the narrator looks back in old age on the sufferings of a young girl who unwittingly manages to antagonise the mistress when she first goes away to school. The teachers are not presented as deliberately cruel, but they seem so to the newly-arrived Geraldine. Seeking affection and understanding, all she receives from Miss Aspinall is cold commands and instructions, "not a word of sympathy or encouragement".<sup>4</sup> The girl herself has never had the opportunity to learn the necessary conventions of school, and her instinctive behaviour is the source of trouble:

I had yet to learn the habit of not saying out whatever came into my head.

I think my trick of staring must have been rather provoking, and perhaps must have seemed rude ...

The governess thought I meant to be impertinent ...

I stared at her and forgot to curtsey as we always were expected to do ...

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Although Miss Fenmore, an idealised character, treats Geraldine kindly, most of the staff interpret her conduct in an unfavourable way, until their attitude does, in fact, make her behave badly. What she intends innocently

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1 *ibid.*, p. 58.

2 *ibid.*, p. 157.

3 *ibid.*, p. 162.

4 Mrs. M. L. Molesworth, The Carved Lions, (1895) 1896, p. 75.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 74, 79, 80, 134.

draws upon her a series of rebukes:

"What manners! Fie."

"Little girls must not contradict, and must not be rude."

"You are a most impertinent child ..."

"You are a very naughty girl;" she said, "a very naughty girl indeed. I saw at once how spoiled and self-willed you were ..."

"Geraldine, your tears are only those of anger and temper." 1

At a simple level, Mrs. Molesworth presents the damaging effects of these judgments on Geraldine's personality.

I tried to think, thereby bringing on myself a reprimand for inattention, which did not have the effect of brightening my wits, I fear.

I sat there in a sort of stupified indifference. That day had been the worst I had had.

I began to get on less well at lessons, very often making mistakes and replying at random, for which I was scolded as if I did it out of carelessness.

I grew stony. Now I did not care ... I stood there, dull and stupid and obstinate, though a perfect fire was raging inside me. 2

Such an exploration of the differences between a child's and a teacher's perception of an incident, and between intentions and results on both sides, marks one way in which simplistic notions of teachers as tyrants were giving way to more understanding views of interaction.

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1    ibid., pp. 79, 82, 101, 106, 138.

2    ibid., pp. 82, 106, 119, 137.



## JUSTIFIED BEATERS

As in the previous period, there are a number of novels in which the situation suggests that corporal punishment is necessary, indeed desirable, and in which the teacher who wields the cane is shown in an approving light. In The Unclassed, for example, Waymark's beating of Master Felix is greeted with approval by all except the boy's mother, who is presented as unsympathetically as the boy himself. Although the incident is the direct reason for Waymark's resignation from Dr. Tootle's school, he does not regret the action, and the reader is clearly intended to agree with his retort to the Headmaster's question: "Who gave you authority to use corporal chastisement?"

"The boy has long deserved a good thrashing," he said, "and I'm glad I lost my temper sufficiently to give him a portion of his deserts. If you wish to know the immediate cause, it simply was that he threw a book at his governess's head and hit her."

1

The justification for Waymark is essentially emotional: increasing irritation with the boy, chivalry on behalf of the governess, general frustration with the school. He admits to losing his temper, and the beating gives him some relief: "He felt vastly better for the exercise, and there was even a smile on his heated face."<sup>2</sup> At the other extreme, the justification may be apparently rational, and the beating dispassionate. When David Blaize is thrashed by the Headmaster, the cool words are harder to bear than the "stinging blows", which the boy acknowledges are justified. He has to agree that he has disregarded his Housemaster's serious warnings, that he has been guilty of many "silly, disobedient" crimes, and that minor punishments have made no impression. The Headmaster insists that rules must be obeyed, and that David richly deserves his punishment.

"I am not going to whip you for my amusement," he continued, walking towards a cupboard, "far less for yours. I am whipping you because I wish to give you something by

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1 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 76.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 75.

which to remember that you must keep rules instead of breaking them. Reasonable methods have been tried with you, and they don't succeed, and I am going to treat you as if you weren't reasonable, and hurt you. I don't like doing it, you will like it much less, and I want you to understand that it's a lower method of treating a boy like you, who is quite big enough and clever enough to know better. You have been behaving like an unreasonable animal instead of a sensible boy. You are going to be sharply reminded to have more sense in the future. Now get ready. 1

The emphasis on "reason" and "sense" is insistent.

Even mass floggings can be presented as necessary in extreme circumstances. When Mr. Bevan attempts to change school traditions and meets with opposition, he is hissed by some of the assembled school. Thirty boys are found guilty.

Canes were sent for. Amidst a silence that could be felt, each one of them was questioned, found defenceless, and convicted. Over a desk they were laid in turn, before the eyes of the whole school; and there, while every one looked on with tingling nerves, wondering where matters were going to stop, each received a terrific ten ... 2

The incident, according to the author, had a "gigantic effect"; the scene was one "never likely to be forgotten by the boys"; it was "the turning-point in Mr. Bevan's reign". "From that moment he had the school firmly in his grip. His authority was never again seriously disputed."<sup>3</sup>

An author's valuation of scenes like this, however, does not always carry conviction. P. G. Wodehouse apparently expects readers to see the Headmaster of Wrykyn as a man of sound judgment and an effective disciplinarian, respected by masters and boys. In fact his behaviour emerges as almost ludicrously incompetent in its use of indiscriminate penalties. When he is informed that some of his boys have thrown a policeman into a pond, his reaction is to punish the entire school by cancelling a whole-holiday, rather than trying to discover who were guilty. Having handled this badly, he then has to cope with the situation when the entire school, except for the sixth form and day boys, takes the day off for a picnic. One of the other teachers, Mr. Spence,

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1 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, (1916) /1929/, pp. 228-9.  
2 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 204.  
3 ibid., pp. 204-5.



says of the head in this situation that "One can rely on him to do the statesman-like thing ..." What he does is to put four hundred senior boys down for two afternoons of extra school, and to cane everybody below the Upper Fourth. When the news gets out, Wyatt exclaims, "... he is an old sportsman. I never saw such a man."<sup>1</sup>

Stalky & Co., 1899, is perhaps the work that comes closest to advancing some sort of rationale for the cane. Ability in beating is presented throughout in terms of admiration. The housemaster King is only despised because "he was no expert in the gentle art".<sup>2</sup> By contrast, when the boys examine the results of the Head's handiwork:

The wales were very red and very level. There was not a penny to choose between any of them for thoroughness, efficiency, and a certain clarity of outline that stamps the work of the artist. 3

The climax of the episode in which the Head saves Stettson major from death by diphtheria at risk of his own life, is when he announces that for their unruly behaviour to Mr. Mason he will beat the whole of the Upper School before they leave for the holidays.

When this news was made public, the school, lost in wonder and admiration, gaped at the Head as he went to his house. Here was a man to be revered. On the rare occasions when he canded he did it very scientifically, and the execution of a hundred boys would be epic - immense. 4

Praise for beating in terms usually reserved for art and divinity suggests a heavy authorial loading. The appropriateness or otherwise of punishment in this book is always bound up with the personality of the administrator. The Headmaster, unlike some of his staff, is unconcerned with legalistic guilt or innocence, but his punishments are accepted by the boys as being ultimately fair. When the three boys appeal to him for being unjustly accused of trespassing and drunkenness, he is aware that they are completely innocent of

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1 P. G. Wodehouse, Mike, 1909, pp. 60-8.

2 Rudyard Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 162.

3 *ibid.*, p. 128.

4 *ibid.*, p. 185.



these charges, but he also guesses that they are guilty of deliberately misleading two of his staff. He says to them:

"There is not a flaw in any of your characters. And that is why I am going to perpetrate a howling injustice. Your reputations have been injured, haven't they? You have been disgraced before the house, haven't you? You have a peculiarly keen regard for the honour of your house, haven't you? Well, now I am going to lick you." 1

Having given them six strokes each, he adds a word of salutary advice ("When you find a variation from the normal - this will be useful to you in later life - always meet him in an abnormal way"), offers them the run of his paperbacks (which already smell of tobacco), and parts on cordial terms.

Similarly, when they are sent to the Headmaster by a young master, accused of a list of wholly imaginary crimes drawn from the pages of St. Winifred's, Beetle reports:

"Stalky asked to have the 'depositions' read out, and the Head knocked him spinning into a waste-paper basket. Then he gave us eight cuts apiece - welters - for - for - takin' unheard-of liberties with a new master. I saw his shoulders shaking when we went out." 2

When Mr. Prout complains of the boys, the Head ignores the suspected misdemeanours, and simply charges them with "bothering" their housemaster and himself. When he suggests gating and lines, they protest that they are not "too big to lick", and he canes them, saying that,

"Among the - lower classes this would lay me open to a charge of - assault ... There's a certain flagrant injustice about this that ought to appeal to - your temperament." 3

Beetle cannot quite work out why they are not "wrathy" with the Head, since it was a "flagrant injustice". Ultimately, it is the sense that he is doing it for their good and that of the school; the sentiment recorded in the verses which act as preface to the volumes of stories:

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1    ibid., p. 35.  
2    ibid., p. 49.  
3    ibid., pp. 127-8.

There we met with famous men  
Set in office o'er us;  
And they beat us on with rods -  
Faithfully with many rods -  
Daily beat us on with rods,  
For the love they bore us.

1

Less rational, and more instinctive is the praise lavished on "Bulldog", the celebrated disciplinarian and mathematical master of Muirtown Seminary, in a novel published just two years after Stalky & Co. Caning on the hand seems to be the chief, almost the only punishment, offered in the school, and the inculcation of stoicism seems to be its chief purpose: "It was a point of honour that no boy should show distress ... they made no moan before the boys, and no complaint against the master."<sup>2</sup> Bulldog takes a real pride in his punitive skill, and the way he always "attended to each culprit separately and carefully".<sup>3</sup> The same punishment is used for being on the stairs down which the masters descend, truancy, misbehaviour, poor work, telling lies. In each case the boy was "soundly thrashed", and the verb "thrash" occurs often. Indeed, when Bulldog is at death's door, he is revived only by having a notorious pupil brought before him and a cane put into his hand, which creates "the first expression of interest he had shown during his illness".<sup>4</sup> The tone in which the beatings are described is significant.

Thrashings ... worth the having.

The thrashing which Speug got from Bulldog was monumental, and in preparation for it that ingenious youth put on three folds of underclothing.

He administered discipline on Jock with conscientious severity.

He searched out and felt a superior cane kept for the treatment of truants and other grievous offenders.

Muirtown was proud to think that its favourite master was an expert in every branch of his calling and dealt with the grandchildren as thoroughly as he had done with the grandfathers.

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1    ibid., p. vii.  
2    Ian Maclaren, Young Barbarians, 1901, p. 209.  
3    ibid., p. 3.  
4    ibid., p. 202.  
5    ibid., pp. 22, 142, 312-3, 32, 304-5.

The cumulative impression is not just one of a strange admiration, it suggests a kind of medical function for the cane: it is "treatment" which has to be "administered" by an "expert" and "conscientious" practitioner, skilled in his "calling".



## RESPECTED DISCIPLINARIANS

A number of authors divide assistant masters almost instinctively into those who can and those who cannot keep order as though control is the one essential qualification (a view which is itself put into the mouths of a number of fictional teachers). One man is "a strict disciplinarian" and rules "by fear", another is an experienced "martinet or disciplinarian", and both of these are thought to be successful though unpopular, while a third man, industrious and well-intentioned, meets with "derision" because he has "but little authority".<sup>1</sup> A. H. Gilkes likens teachers' control over pupils to that of good or inexperienced drivers with a coach-and-four. With one master at the reins, "all is unquiet, useless, and dangerous", but with another, the boys "knew that their master was there, and that the time for frisking was over".<sup>2</sup> It is hardly necessary to illustrate the distinction further. The unfortunate men and women placed among the goats because they "can't manage a form!"<sup>3</sup> are discussed elsewhere. Here it is necessary to consider what seem to be suggested as the characteristics of those teachers presented as effective but respected disciplinarians. Although the concepts appear in a number of books, the exemplary teachers themselves do not form a very clearly defined "type". Shown as possessing one over-riding ability, they may be different from each other in many ways, even in the disciplinary measures they employ. In general, they seem to show some or all of the following qualities: a sense of proportion, firmness without too much punishment; understanding of their pupils and a sense of "knowingness"; fluent and effective use of the tongue; and an ability to surprise by the choice of action or punishment.

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1 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, pp. 22-3, 56-7, 26-7.

2 A. H. Gilkes, Boys and Masters, 1887, pp. 66-7.

3 ibid., p. 89.

The desirable balance between foolish lenity and harsh rigidity is often referred to as difficult to achieve. One author mistrusted the "kindly theorists" who insisted on appealing to the "right feelings" of boys, suspecting that they would find it impossible to manage a school without sanctions, but when he became master of a small grammar school, he wrote: "I didn't like the idea of beating boys, and I hoped to be able to do without it." Beating might serve a useful purpose for the victims, but it was bad for the teacher.<sup>1</sup> Patrick Traherne recoils from the idea of thrashing children and yet reluctantly admits that it may be necessary for some pupils or some offences.

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 ... On the other hand, I firmly believe that there is a type of boy who can understand no other form of punishment.

2

In general, however, the characters who are presented as respected disciplinarians are usually reluctant to cane and do not see an automatic connection between discipline and punishment. In some novels masters seem to be "above" corporal punishment, which is in the hands of senior boys.<sup>3</sup> A headmaster tells a new assistant that he must decide on his own methods, remembering that in school routine "discipline ... is essential", but that caning is to be seen as an exceptional punishment, and must always be reported.<sup>4</sup> When she arrives to take over an unruly village school, Miss Martin is also firm that corporal punishment "should only be inflicted by the head teacher".<sup>5</sup> One chapter of the book is called "New Discipline", and there are a number of examples of how Miss Martin deals with particular problems. Eventually she is able to record in her log-book that "my rules are observed, though they

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, pp. 229, 278-9.

2 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 27-8.

3 For example, A. W. Clarke, Jaspar Tristram, 1899, and Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913.

4 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, 1894 / 1913, p. 29.

5 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, 1888, p. 16.



seemed to astonish the children very much",<sup>1</sup> and the way in which the children are saved from the fire at the theatre is credited to the discipline she has instilled, which an inspector describes as "admirable". Indeed, as compared with the almost obsessive interest in the subject at earlier periods, there is refreshingly little stress on punishment in a number of books of this period. In most cases, a reproof seems all that is needed to maintain order in The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's. One evil-doer, weak rather than wicked, leaves the school at the end of the novel, but there is no dramatic expulsion scene, and he departs "truly penitent".<sup>2</sup> In Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895, there is virtually no description of punishment of any kind. On one occasion, when guilty boys are sent to the headmaster, his rebuke and sentence are said to "belong to the secret history of St. Anselm's".<sup>3</sup> One of the few clashes with discipline in The First Round, 1909, is when Dennis makes an unsuccessful attempt to run away, wearing his school cap, which betrays him to a master. The headmaster treats the boy with understanding, convinces him of "the foolishness of being a young idiot" and punishes him leniently.

"I ain't going to punish you as severely as you seem to deserve," said that dignitary, "because I believe that your own conscience will do that when you realise that you've behaved like a buffoon. You will do the usual imposition for absence from call-over, and the same for being late for locking-up. Don't let me hear of you again until you've grown wiser, and don't begin to think that other people are really less excellent than you because they don't suffer from irresistible impulses to do silly things." 4

Preventing misbehaviour before it starts is the technique of Mr. Bull, who "understood the mind of extreme youth".<sup>5</sup> This presentation of a teacher

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1 *ibid.*, p. 69.

2 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, (1881-2) 1971, p. 300. Similarly in Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 202, "there were no expulsions"; serious culprits were withdrawn at the end of term when other boys were leaving and nobody knew who the offenders were. "The secret was well kept, and the work was well done."

3 J. E. C. Welldon, Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 3rd ed., 1895, p. 125.

4 St. John Lucas, The First Round, 2nd ed., 1909, p. 130.

5 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 78-80.



as essentially sympathetic, understanding pupils, and maintaining discipline without unnecessary severity, is typical of a number of works at this time Mr. Hobill does not give a boy the caning he expects, but

... after gazing at me fixedly for full three minutes - or longer - without a syllable, he began to talk to me. And upon my word, he talked so that I very soon had a queer, lumpy feeling in my throat ... At the end of ten minutes I came out of that study - without seeing the vestige of a cane - in a very subdued frame of mind.

1

In The Bending of a Twig, 1906, beating seems virtually unknown, and half-hour detentions seem the only form of punishment. When a master gets no reply to his query about who was throwing a ball in the corridor, he simply returns to his study. "Mr. Alton did not care to do detective work: it was not necessary. The boy would own up presently."<sup>2</sup>

Other pictures of masters are characterised by the essential quality of "knowingness": being instinctively aware of what has been going on, spotting the real culprit, fitting the treatment to the individual. Mr. Rastle, a young teacher with "a sly smile constantly playing at the corners of his mouth", is well able to detect and deal with Bramble's tormenting of Stephen.<sup>3</sup> Warde, the housemaster, is quick to build up a picture of a gambling affair from hints and suggestions - "Already he had formed in his mind a working hypothesis to account for this forged letter" - and to decide on the appropriate course of action.<sup>4</sup> The Head in David Blaize is a faint shadow of the Head in Stalky & Co., but it is clearly the author's intention that he should be seen as similarly wise and understanding. The affair of the "Court" is close to Kipling in language, as well as in the handling of the incident and in the presentation of the Head's closing judgment.<sup>5</sup>

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- 1 Andrew Home, From Fag to Monitor, 1896, p. 123.
  - 2 Desmond Coke, The Bending of a Twig, 1906, p. 118.
  - 3 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, (1881-2) 1971, pp. 35-6.
  - 4 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 150.
  - 5 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, [1916] [1929], pp. 284-6.

Particularly in the later part of this period, reference is often made to masters who rule by the power of the tongue. King, exposing his victims to ridicule in Stalky & Co., 1899, is a fully developed example of the feared rather than loved teacher whose acid voice dominates classes. Similarly, Mr. Cardew causes "genuine awe" by his "cynical humour", "incisive sarcasm" and "mordant" comments. "He rarely punished a boy if he felt satisfied with the neat turn of phrase with which he demolished the offender."<sup>1</sup>

When Michael Fane goes to St. James<sup>o</sup>, he finds that most of the masters maintain discipline by force of personality and an effective speech style. Mr. Gray is given to sarcasm, and when Michael attempts to retort with irony he is overwhelmed by the master's "excellent cure for pretentious and flamboyant youths".<sup>2</sup> Mr. Wellings "ruled entirely by the lash of his tongue". On the surface his manner was "mild and apologetic", but his unsettling questions and heavy humour reduced truculent offenders to impotence.<sup>3</sup> Mr. Turner cloaks his essential good humour with a vivacious flood of abuse.

He had the choler of the obese, easily roused and as easily calmed, and his boys soon discovered that there was much kindness beneath the invective with which he constantly assailed them.

4

Girls seem to be controlled less by anger and abuse than by the repeated suggestion that a mistress is disappointed in a girl, saddened by her immature or untrustworthy behaviour. The chief weapon of discipline in the rather boyish girls' school which is the scene of Dorothea Moore's A Plucky School-Girl, 1908, seems to be the public scolding, delivered in tones that are frequently described as icy or crushing. Miss Quantock makes a speech "which made the first form, and especially the two delinquents, tingle", and leaves them "in a very quiet and subdued condition".<sup>5</sup> Worst of all are "words of rebuke" from Miss Warwick, the headmistress, "more to be feared than the

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1 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, pp. 201-4.  
2 Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, vol. 1, 1913, p. 291.  
3 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 81-4.  
4 W. S. Maugham, Of Human Bondage, (1915) 1966, p. 95.  
5 Dorothea Moore, A Plucky School-Girl, 1908, p. 228.



longest 'pijaw' from other people".<sup>1</sup> Tip says that "Miss Warwick always makes me weep oceans",<sup>2</sup> and Terry is appalled by "that terrible cold tone"<sup>3</sup> in which Miss Warwick says:

"I am more grieved than I can tell you that a Manor School girl could think of such a dreadful and disgraceful thing as running away. I have always trusted my girls, you know, Terry, and I did not think it needful, as so many people do, to have them watched and guarded in the grounds and playing-fields. It has always been quite easy for the Manor girls to run away, only - I trusted to their honour." 4

Such inculcation of guilt is quite enough to maintain control.

Effective disciplinarians are often presented not only as reacting unpredictably to pupils' offences, but also as devising original punishments, frequently comical but effective. One schoolmaster author set boys to copying two pages of Bradshaw's timetable, which he thought "more profitable and formidable to the victim than the customary Latin or Greek lines".<sup>5</sup> Another "satirical pedagogue" sentences a boy who had been reading Fenimore Cooper in class to turn the first ten lines, containing such words as wampum and skunk, into Greek.<sup>6</sup> A boy who is unwell as a result of smoking is ordered to finish a large cigar, though the penalty is remitted when he promises not to smoke again.<sup>7</sup> One "pioneer of reformed punishments" sent boys a five mile walk to count the houses in a certain street, made a pupil who ate sweets in class come daily to the master's distant house to ask for a single sweet until they were all consumed, and ordered coughers and sneezers to write essays on colds.<sup>8</sup> When a boy habitually arrives in class without the necessary books, Mr. Robinson keeps a duplicate set for him in the classroom, and hires the necessary volumes to him at the rate of threepence per book per hour.<sup>9</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 25.

2 *ibid.*, p. 91.

3 *ibid.*, p. 211.

4 *ibid.*, p. 212.

5 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, pp. 120-1.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 154-5, 162.

7 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, 1894 / 1913, p. 141.

8 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 208.

9 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 136.



To sum up, methods of control and the penalties used, are presented during this period as much more varied, and more considered than at earlier times. There is more consideration of the relative importance of the three major functions of punishment: as retribution for an offence, as remedial treatment for an individual, and as a warning to others. Dealing with individuals can sometimes lead to what seems a strangely arbitrary scale of punishments. A group of boys gamble at bridge, and one of them is driven to forgery and deceit. The Headmaster announces that two of the older boys will be expelled: "I would mitigate the punishment, if I could, but I must think of the majority. This sort of malignant disease must be cut out." A third, younger, boy is sentenced to be flogged, though he receives only one light, symbolic, cut: "The Head Master wished to lay stripes upon the boy's heart, not his body." When two other boys own up to having played in the same game, the Head does not punish them, because they have owned up; they have "proved worthy of their breeding", and shown themselves to be "gentlemen".<sup>1</sup> Readers may resist Vachell's suggestion that this Headmaster is an admirable disciplinarian.

Something of the more complex attitude to discipline and punishment is indicated in a later Stalky story, "Regulus", written in 1908, but not published until 1917. A previously sober, conscientious boy, Winston, releases a live mouse in the mechanical drawing lesson, and causes a near riot. The crime is seen as "rank ruffianism" because perpetrated by a fifth form boy, but it would have been "venial" in the Upper Third. The staff feel that the choice of a mouse rather than a rat has distinctly lowered the occasion. Because Winston has previously been so stiffly virtuous, the Head feels that the crime comes "very happily". He condemns Winston to five hundred Latin lines, to be done at such a time that it will also result in the boy being beaten by the Captain of Games for missing football practice. Winston acknowledges

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1 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, pp. 156-60.

that his action was a "cad's trick" on the grounds that, unlike the academic staff, the drawing master is not permitted to give more than fifty lines as a penalty. The whole experience is summed up as a highly-desirable educational experience for the boy, and as yet another example of the Headmaster's understanding exercise of discipline.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Rudyard Kipling, A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, pp. 239-70.

## FIGURES OF FUN

The early bold stereotypes of comic teachers normally worked on the assumption that they were figures of fun in all respects and to all people. Men like Mr. Keystick were ridiculous in appearance, in character and in lack of teaching ability; they were ludicrous to pupils, adults and - presumably - to the reader. In this period, however, the totally absurd teacher is a rare figure. Miss Prism brings on to the stage many of the stock comic details associated with governesses: a wordy, sententious style, a girlish passion for the local clergyman, a taste for unworldly moralising and a dangerous absentmindedness. Nevertheless, the impression she creates is endearing; we laugh with her as well as at her.<sup>1</sup> Miss Amelia, in A Little Princess, 1905, may seem to be set up as a caricature of the plump, feeble and ignorant mistress, but under pressure she can act rightly and speak the unpalatable truth. Conversely, Herbert Pembroke, in The Longest Journey, 1907, may appear a successful schoolmaster, but Forster relentlessly exposes the absurdities of his pretensions. Comic caricatures at this time seem to be associated with particular categories of teacher; in particular, with those who teach certain subjects or those who cannot discipline their classes. Indeed, frequently there seems to be an implied connection between the two. These groups are discussed in separate sections. Here the concern is with those who on balance seem to be presented as figures of fun.

There are, as of old, the swift dismissive judgments on particular teachers for some unlovely or ridiculous characteristic. A Harrow house-master, referred to by members of his own house as slacker, beast, brute, snob, fool and blighter, is universally called Dirty Dick because he once made the mistake of telling his form that one bath a week was plenty, two luxury and three superfluity.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Allardyce, a "fossil", is consistently

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1 Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest, (performed 1895) 1899.

2 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, pp. 14-6 and 7.



unpunctual; "Somnolent, dreary, and absent-minded, he droned through his work day by day and term by term without life, zeal, or vigilance ..."<sup>1</sup> Mr. Grimston loves to "lurk unseen" and catch boys misbehaving; he was "a serious and comprehensive nuisance to the whole school".<sup>2</sup> The principal of a private school:

had been intended by nature for an old maid. He was an elderly faddist of a rather tiresome type, with theories upon every possible subject, from cellular underclothing to the higher education of women.

3

Mr. Wain "looked like some weird bird" and Mr. Downing resembled "an excitable bullfinch"; Mr. Appleby is a fanatical gardener and Mr. Outwood an impassioned archaeologist.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Caryll was reputed to be ninety years old and combined three pairs of spectacles to bring all his classroom within range.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Rowe "left no impression whatever" and was "so utterly bereft of personality that he had not even a nickname".<sup>6</sup> The conceited master known as Bogus is admirably suited by being both a clergyman and Officer Commanding the Corps, since in both rôles, "he could indulge continuously in his favourite pastime of hearing his own voice".<sup>7</sup>

In the more sustained analysis of teachers who are presented as somehow comical, perhaps the commonest feature is a clash or a mis-match between their private and public rôles, between an individual's character and the persona adopted as teacher. The traditional notion of the pedant lived on in the idea that a teacher must by definition be incapable of coping with polite society, with serious human relationships or with passionate feelings. In The Egoist, Meredith puts such a view into the mouth of Sir Willoughby. He affects to be amused by the notion that the tutor, Vernon Whitford, might

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1 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, [1905], p. 47.

2 *ibid.*, p. 209.

3 Ian Hay, "Pip", 1907, pp. 28-9.

4 P. G. Wodehouse, Mike, 1909, pp. 32, 206, 132-3, 187.

5 Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, vol. 1, 1913, p. 189.

6 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 41, 29.

7 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) [1930], p. 29.

be in love. Although Vernon is only thirty-two, Sir Willoughby always refers to him as "old Vernon", and creates a quite false impression of a pathetic, dry, bookish figure, incapable of wooing a woman.<sup>1</sup> In fact, despite the sneers at him as a lover, a conversationalist and a rider, the tutor acquits himself well. Similar assumptions are made by Clara Middleton about her governess, whom she describes to Laetitia Dale as "a learned lady, who taught me in person the picturesqueness of grumpiness".<sup>2</sup> The relationship between teacher and taught is ironically reversed in private and social life, where Clara says, "We were a kind of foreground and background: she threw me into relief, and I was an apology for her existence".<sup>3</sup> The same is true of Miss Prism's relationship with Cecily Cardew. It is precisely because of the conventionality of her rôle that the notions of Miss Prism having written a sentimental three volume novel, or nourishing a romantic regard for Canon Chasuble, or being temporarily mistaken by Jack for his unmarried mother are so effective on the stage.<sup>4</sup>

There are many pen-portraits of well-intentioned and frequently successful teachers, in which the authors select certain features, habits or idiosyncrasies to make the characters appear slightly comic or ridiculous. Frequently they do not appear absurd either to the children or to the parents, but the reader is invited not to take them wholly seriously. Although different from the broad caricatures of earlier years, they share the same belittling intention. Throughout the following descriptions, for example, runs the suggestion that a woman teacher cannot be a wholly human and sympathetic person, that the reader will almost inevitably find her socially inadequate. Miss Bloomfield is "kind to every one" and an effective governess, but Mrs. Ewing suggests that even her kindness is a peculiarity, and that her other peculiarities included

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1 George Meredith, The Egoist, (1879) 1972, p. 76.

2 *ibid.*, p. 263.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 263-4.

4 Oscar Wilde, The Importance of Being Earnest, (1899) 1957, pp. 35-8, 42-3, 107-110.



"conscientiousness and the fidgets, and tendencies to fine crochet, calomel, and Calvinism, and an abiding quality of harassing and being harassed ... " <sup>1</sup>

The same author describes Miss Mulberry, the presiding schoolmistress of Bush House, as conscientious, kind-hearted, hard-working to support her family and well-liked by parents and guardians. Again, though, the goodness of the character has to be deflated by making her appear somehow ridiculous:

Miss Mulberry was stout, and I think by nature disposed to indolence, especially in warm weather ... in the timidity, fidgetiness, and primness of her dealings with girls, she was essentially a spinster. 2

Mrs. Broadbent is described as the headmistress or proprietress of one of the two "celebrated" girls' schools in Manchester, a "shrewd" person who "turned out first-class pupils". <sup>3</sup> As a person, however, she is presented as comically pretentious: insisting on being called Madame Broadbent, making in her affected speech "almost as many errors as Mrs. Malaprop", and forever publicising her own academy. Mrs. Banks ends her initial description:

She had other peculiarities, had Madame Broadbent - but my portrait is growing too large for its frame, and she was not a large personage at all. 4

"Winifred Urquhart, Materialist" describes the narrator's memories of her days at Prinkle's Establishment, a kind of girls' finishing school.

Old Prinkle I took for a prude,  
With her hands in her black thread-mits,  
Chap-fingered, and painfully good,  
Yet half-scared out of her wits ... 5

Prinkle had simultaneously to be worldly-wise to prepare her girls for marrying well, and religious and moral to survive in her "highly respectable station".

Miss Winchelsea, in a short story by H. G. Wells, is an educated schoolmistress of the new kind, a teacher at a Girls' High School, very concerned

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1 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, A Flat Iron for a Farthing, (1873) 1908, p. 34.

2 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, Six to Sixteen, (1875) 1910, pp. 112-3.

3 Mrs. G. L. Banks, The Manchester Man, (1876) Altrincham, 1954, p. 91.

4 ibid., p. 92.

5 W. C. Smith, Hilda Among the Broken Gods, Glasgow, 1878, in Poetical Works, 1902, p. 181.



with genteel, ladylike behaviour and the appropriate aesthetic stances. It is, indeed, her refinement that brings about disaster. On a culturally improving holiday visit to Florence and Rome, with two friends who had been fellow students at training college, and who look up to her as a model, she meets a very eligible young man. He is also a teacher, well-mannered and knowledgeable about art. Their developing relationship is brought to an abrupt end when she discovers that his name is Snooks.

From the moment that it first rang upon her ears, the dream of her happiness was prostrate in the dust. All the refinement she had figured was ruined and defaced by that cognomen's inexorable vulgarity.

What was that refined little home to her now, spite of autotypes, Morris papers, and bureaus? 1

Miss Amelia, in A Little Princess, 1905, is the classic type of the well-meaning teacher under the thumb of a dominant personality.

Miss Amelia was fat and dumpy, and stood very much in awe of her sister. She was really the better-natured person of the two, but she never disobeyed Miss Minchin. 2

Always blamed for saying the wrong thing, Miss Amelia does sometimes speak the unpalatable truth and it is not a complete surprise, therefore, that finally she gathers enough hysterical courage to express her real views, and to see herself as "a weak fool ... vulgar and mean".<sup>3</sup>

The supposed graduate teacher narrator of Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, describes one of her colleagues, Miss Wamble, in terms that are clearly meant to make her seem comical. Although she is also characterised as "good-natured" and "by no means unintelligent", Miss Wamble has to contend not only with her name and her habit of swigging port wine out of a bottle in school, but with the mispronunciation and misattributions that are put into her mouth.

"Oh;" she said, on entering, "I see you like 'The House Beautiful' and all that." And then: "I see you are fond of litracher; I took English litracher for the Queen's Scholarship, though I should say King's now, and I had to know all

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1 H. G. Wells, "Miss Winchelsea's Heart", 1903, The Short Stories of H. G. Wells, 1927, pp. 1108-9.

2 Frances Hodgson Burnett, A Little Princess, (1905) Harmondsworth, 1976, p. 17.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 214-5.

about Cowper and the 'Tea-table' Wordsworth and the 'Task',  
and all that."

1

Only occasionally, by a writer like H. G. Wells, are the educational and social ideas of the characters the chief target for satire. Miss Murgatroyd, founder of the School of St. George and the Venerable Bede, is a woman of "progressive" principles, "a born teacher" with a humanitarian concern and "a passion for the plastic affections of children". Her school was "healthy and pretty and full of physical happiness". For Wells, though, her Rousseau-esque enthusiasms are also richly comic.

Her place was in the van. She did not mind very much where the van was going so long as she was in it ... Miss Murgatroyd was indiscriminately receptive of new educational ideas; she meant to miss nothing; and some of these ideas were quite good and some were quite silly; and nearly every holiday she went off with a large note-book and much enthusiasm to educational congresses and conferences and summer schools and got some more ... Also she had a natural proclivity towards bare legs and sandals and hatlessness, and only a certain respect for the parents kept the school from waves of pure vegetarianism.

2

Her assistant, Miss Mills, is an equally well-intentioned exponent of kindergarten methods, who encourages the children to sing and act songs about shoemakers, woodcutters and cowherds.

All these little songs dealt with the familiar daily life - as it was lived in South Germany fourscore years ago ... It had never dawned upon Miss Mills that such types as these were rare objects upon the Surrey countryside.

3

In an earlier sketch of a progressive teacher, H. G. Wells presented Mr. Goopes who "was a mathematical tutor and visited schools", as one of the more ludicrous minor figures of Ann Veronica, 1909. He and his wife embody superficial "advanced" ideas; they are "the oddest little couple conceivable, following a fruitarian career upon an upper floor in Theobald's Road", and given to vegetarianism, campaigns against vivisection, "and the Higher Thought generally".

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1 Anna B. De Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 44.

2 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., pp. 93-4.

3 ibid., p. 97.



Their very furniture had mysteriously a high-browed quality, and Mr. Goopes when at home dressed simply in a pyjama-shaped suit of canvas sacking tied with brown ribbons ... He was a small, dark, reserved man, with a large inflexible-looking convex forehead ...

1

Among men teachers who are shown in a comic light, perhaps the commonest qualities are conventionalism and ineffectualness. It is arguable that these figures are shown as having been over-influenced by existing stereotypes of teacher behaviour, that they embody an insecure longing to be like successful teachers of fiction. There is the repeated suggestion of men of limited ability trying to project a schoolmasterly image, endeavouring to conform to a pattern. There is a gulf between the man and his pretensions. At its most extreme, in a man like Herbert Pembroke, the rôle seems to swallow up the man whole.

Mr. Blinkhorn, the senior assistant master in Vice Versa, 1882, is a decent, well-meaning, rather dim character. The word repeatedly used of him is "conscientious"; it even describes his football, where he performs "evidently more from a sense of duty than with any idea of enjoyment".<sup>2</sup>

In character he was mild and reserved, too conscientious to allow himself the luxury of either favourites or aversions among the boys, all of whom in his secret soul he probably disliked about equally, though he neither said nor did anything to show it.

3

His Latin teaching is equally orthodox, and equally uninspired. When Paul tries to confide in him, Blinkhorn's notions of how to behave are drawn straight from Eric or St. Winifred's.<sup>4</sup> Books have provided his models of teacher behaviour.

Kipling's housemaster Prout is another conventional man who lives by stock views both of himself and of pupils. He has convinced himself that the "honour of the house" and success at games are matters of the utmost importance.

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1 H. G. Wells, Ann Veronica, 1909, p. 138.

2 F. Anstey, Vice Versa, (1882) 1969, p. 121.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 89-90.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 105-10



"Boys that he understood attended house-matches and could be accounted for at any moment."<sup>1</sup> His failure to understand other kinds of boys and pressures from other members of staff combine to produce his frequent misapprehension of the true course of events in his quite genuine desire to do his duty. Words like "conscience", "duty", "moral effect" are frequently in his mind or on his lips, but the contexts generally indicate uncertainty about their practical implications.<sup>2</sup> For example, after a singular failure to cope with the Stalky trio, Prout "lurched out with some hazy impression that he had sown good seed on poor ground".<sup>3</sup>

As a junior teacher, Mr. Lewisham is an idealistic, ambitious young man, desperately trying to give a performance as a mature teacher:

... his face was downy and his moustache incipient. He was a passable-looking youngster of eighteen, fair-haired, indifferently barbered, and with a quite unnecessary pair of glasses on his fairly prominent nose - he wore these to make himself look older, that discipline might be maintained. 4

Mr. Byles, whose career at the tough Muirtown Seminary was "short and inglorious", is a young master who attempts to play the part of a progressive, understanding teacher, without grasping the nature of the actual boys in his charge. His talk is presented as full of unthought clichés: "I have always had a love for boys", "ruled by kindness and not by force", "not a master, but the boys' friend, to whom the boys will feel as a mother", the cane "brutalized boys", and so on. The pupils treat him with derision, and the leading member of the staff advises him contemptuously to seek a post "in a lassies' school" because he is too "dainty" for dealing with boys.<sup>5</sup>

Samuel Butler and E. M. Forster analyse and undermine the pretensions of their teacher figures with greater subtlety. On the surface, Dr. Skinner of Roughborough might appear an outstanding teacher. He is famous; "everyone"

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1 Rudyard Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 13.

2 ibid., pp. 14, 102, 104.

3 ibid., p. 66.

4 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 1.

5 Ian Maclaren, Young Barbarians, 1901, pp. 22-5.

says he is "a very great genius" and a man of "many great qualities"; he won many scholarships and became a successful headmaster in his mid-twenties.<sup>1</sup> However, Butler undercuts all this by an ironic view of Skinner's actual practice: his portentousness over trivialities, his bullying determination to have his own way, and the element of sham in his educational principles. Some of his characteristics seem to be those which Butler may have attributed to Arnold of Rugby. His pupils all distinguished themselves at university, but according to his pattern.

He moulded their minds after the model of his own, and stamped an impress upon them which was indelible in after life ... Some boys, of course, were incapable of appreciating the beauty and loftiness of Dr. Skinner's nature. Some such boys, alas! there will be in every school; upon them Dr. Skinner's hand was very properly a heavy one.

2

The determination to turn out boys as copies of himself, the reciprocated hatred for those not willing to be thus dominated, and the intensification of his dislike into a moral principle are the less attractive side of what Butler shows as an only superficially effective schoolmaster. The additional graphic details are designed cumulatively to call in question the whole notion of the "great headmaster", and to reveal Skinner as essentially a comic figure: the unprepossessing appearance, with a wig, the pretence of abstemiousness accompanying actual indulgence, his cribbing of other men's work, his lack of taste in collecting pictures, his sentimentalism, and his pride in his own works and words.<sup>3</sup> Butler demands:

Could it be expected to enter into the head of such a man as this that in reality he was making his money by corrupting youth? - that it was his paid profession to make the worse appear the better reason in the eyes of those who were too young and inexperienced to be able to find him out? - that he kept out of the sight of those whom he professed to teach material points of the argument, for the production of which they had a right to rely upon the honour of anyone who made professions of sincerity?

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1 Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh, (1903) 1965, pp. 97-8.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 98.  
3 *ibid.*, pp. 98-106.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 101.



Skinner is essentially absurd - or even pitiable - because his efforts go into presenting false values, because the qualities on which he prides himself are actually damaging.

The same judgment is applied, but in more specific detail, to Herbert Pembroke in E. M. Forster's The Longest Journey, 1907. The conventionalism of Pembroke's attitudes is intensified by his pontifical manner of speech which - like his clothes and features - "had the clerical cut".<sup>1</sup> He reproves Agnes for going ahead to visit Rickie alone in his rooms, an action he describes as "a most elementary transgression". A few moments later he proclaims, "The army is the finest profession in the world".<sup>2</sup> All issues seem clear-cut to him. There is no real problem about Stephen Wonham:

"To me Mrs. Failing's course is perfectly plain. She has a certain responsibility. She must pay the youth's passage to one of the colonies, start him handsomely in some business, and then break off all communications." 3

Judgments of character are equally straightforward:

"If a man shoots straight and hits straight and speaks straight, if his heart is in the right place, if he has the instincts of a Christian and a gentleman - then I, at all events, ask no better husband for my sister." 4

The echoes of Tom Brown's Schooldays emphasise the stock, traditional pose that is being taken up. The strings of clichés suggest a man who is determined to let no awkward questions unsettle him. When he becomes aware that two of his positions are apparently irreconcilable, he simply re-defines the situation to his own satisfaction. These attempts to reconcile the irreconcilable are symbolised by the replica of the Hermes of Praxiteles, "Of course only the bust",<sup>5</sup> outside his study; the moral and the classical allegiances balanced.

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1 E. M. Forster, The Longest Journey, (1907) Harmondsworth, 1960, p. 15.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 16-8.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 204.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 52.  
5 *ibid.*, p. 38.



Apparently established and at ease in Sawston School, he is genuinely concerned to offer practical help to Rickie. His dangerous generalisations embody the tradition of staff-room experience: "Discipline must be established first"; "We masters make a point of never minding nicknames - unless, of course, they are applied openly"; "Masters must present a united front".<sup>1</sup> Although Forster comments that "the elder schoolmaster could suggest nothing but a few formulae", Rickie is influenced, and does learn "by sedulous imitation of the more experienced masters".<sup>2</sup> The central criticism of Herbert Pembroke is suggested implicitly in the repeated contrast with Jackson and explicitly in the often-quoted passage at the end of Chapter 17, where the viewpoints of Rickie and the author merge a little uneasily. There is a clear conflict of attitudes between Forster and those authors whose most praiseworthy figures were those characterised as justified disciplinarians. Jackson was, apart from the headmaster, "the only first-class intellect in the school. But he could not, or rather would not, keep order."<sup>3</sup> Herbert was efficient, kept effective discipline, but "his whole life was coloured by a contempt of the intellect".<sup>4</sup> Within the school community, Herbert "was generally acknowledged to be the coming man",<sup>5</sup> and he, not Jackson, is given the vacant housemastership of Dunwood House.

It is made clear that Herbert's activities are almost entirely bounded by the school, and although he insists that "an organization ... is after all not an end in itself. It must contribute to a movement", it is ironically clear that nothing he organises actually serves a function beyond the school:

The school caps, with their elaborate symbolism, were his; his the many-tinted bathing drawers, that showed how far a boy could swim; his the hierarchy of jerseys and blazers. It was he who instituted Bounds, and Call, and the two sorts of exercise-paper, and the three sorts of caning, and

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1    ibid., pp. 164, 160, 168.

2    ibid., pp. 168-9.

3    ibid., p. 152.

4    ibid., p. 170.

5    ibid., p. 48.

'The Sawstonian', a bi-terminal magazine. His plump finger was in every pie.

1

By contrast, Jackson's classes may be chaos, but his influence is of real effect on individuals and exists beyond the school: "Half the boys got scholarships at the University, and some of them ... remained friends with him throughout their lives."<sup>2</sup>

The issue is whether a man can be judged separately as a teacher and as a human being. For Herbert, "school is the world in miniature",<sup>3</sup> and it is clear that he simply projects into the larger world the values of the public school community: team work, conformity, industry, self-sacrifice. It remains for Stephen, at the very end of the novel, to proclaim angrily, "There's no miniature world. There's one world, Pembroke, and you can't tidy men out of it."<sup>4</sup> For him, people have to be judged as a whole. Early in the novel, Ansell had made the balancing comment that

"... there is no great world at all ... The little earth is full of tiny societies, and Cambridge is one of them. All the societies are narrow, but some are good and some are bad ..."

5

For him too, from a quite different standpoint, values are greater than the societies in which they operate. Herbert's success and failure both come from a restricted view which identifies values with a narrow society.

An examination of these comic figures suggests a continuing tendency to see teachers as physically and socially ludicrous, although the portraits are frequently in a milder vein than before. The significant developments, particularly by major authors, are to shift the satirical emphasis away from appearance and habits to concentrate on the individual's educational principles and practice, and to show how the attempt to "perform" a stock teacher's role out of keeping with the personality can itself be ridiculous.

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1    ibid., p. 48.  
2    ibid., p. 152.  
3    ibid., p. 161.  
4    ibid., p. 285.  
5    ibid., p. 68.



## COMIC SUBJECT TEACHERS

Although in this period there was a refreshing tendency to differentiate teachers according to their particular subjects, and to present them more frequently in action in the classroom, this sometimes meant a reliance on stock figures. Teachers of modern languages and, to a lesser degree, of science are nearly always presented as figures of fun.

Foreign teachers generally seem to embody authors' chauvinistic contempt for continentals. They either have comic names, like Egger, Stohwasser and Klotz, or are known by such familiar terms as Mosoo, Frenchy or Moossy. It will be seen that the recurrent elements in the descriptions of such teachers are their broken English, shabbiness, excitability, lack of control, and a ludicrous pride in their own country. On the rare occasions when foreign teachers are not made ridiculous, they are usually sinister or feebly pathetic.<sup>1</sup> Indeed, when Arnold Lunn describes the able Monsieur Anatole, he makes it clear that such a personality runs counter to the accepted stereotype.

When Monsieur Anatole arrived at Harrow the school expected him to carry on the tradition which saw in the French hours the comic relief. They were rather disappointed. 2

There is a suggestion in one of Gissing's novels that the reason for the "tradition" may lie in the way that such teachers were recruited. Herr Egger was an uncouth figure in un-English dress, with little English and inaccurate French and German, whose classes were riotous and before whom he habitually burst into tears. The motives for employing such an unsuitable man are purely financial.

Dr. Tootle never kept his foreign masters long. His plan was to get hold of some foreigner without means, and ignorant

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1 For example, Madame in J. H. Ewing's Six to Sixteen, 1875, is efficient but sly and untruthful, Mademoiselle in L. T. Meade's Betty, A School Girl, 1895 is "unscrupulous and wicked", and Fräulein Stauer in L. M. Gray's Nelly's Teachers, 1898, is feeble, enervated and lachrymose.

2 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 179.



of English, who would come and teach French or German in return for mere board and lodging; when the man had learnt a little English, and was in a position to demand a salary, he was dismissed, and a new professor obtained. 1

Although he is actually a good teacher one "quaint little German" is tormented by a class of girls, and his reproofs, "from his imperfect knowledge of English, were often comical, and roused more amusement than shame".<sup>2</sup>

In Vice Versa, the German teacher at Crichton House is Herr Stohwasser:

He was by no means a formidable person, though stout and tall. He wore big round owlsh spectacles, and his pale broad face and long nose, combined with a wild crop of light hair and a fierce beard, gave him the incongruous appearance of a sheep looking out of a gun-port. 3

He is presented as comic because of his devotion to Schiller, the ease with which he can be sidetracked, his pride in his new Grammar and his bizarre sense of humour. Most of all, he is made absurd by the representation of his pronunciation and word order. He introduces a scene in Schiller's Wilhelm Tell with the words, "Tell is vid the carpenter axe, Hedvig vid a domestig labour occupied. Walter and Wilhelm in the depth sport with a liddle gross-bow ..."<sup>4</sup> Egged on by the pupils, he explains at length his pun (or "vort-blav") on the Schleswig-Holstein question he has sent to a German comic paper. Most of this seems to have been drawn from life.<sup>5</sup>

Monsieur Lablache, a shabby figure with a large, curly moustache, is the "best-hated" person in Grandcourt School. He likes the boys, but they have nothing but contempt for him. The author's attitude is ambivalent. The reader is occasionally encouraged to feel pity for the man, slaving away in an uncongenial position to provide for a paralysed father and three motherless girls - another stock touch - but more frequently the impression is given that Lablache really is rather ridiculous and feeble and that Railsford is noble

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1 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 57.

2 J. H. Ewing, Six to Sixteen, (1875) 1910, p. 126.

3 F. Anstey, Vice Versa, (1882) 1969, p. 111.

4 ibid., p. 111.

5 See F. Anstey, A Long Retrospect, 1936, pp. 47-8.

to befriend him. His pronunciation is given the standard treatment:

"I have much to do wiz ze young gentlemen of the Sell.  
Helas! they try my patience; but I like them, Meester  
Railsford, I like them." 1

Although it is implied that the boys are hardly gentlemanly in hissing him, trying to trip him down the stairs and shouting insults such as, "He's going to raise money on his old clothes at last!",<sup>2</sup> it is also suggested that it is his incompetence that prevents him from keeping order.

Poor monsieur, he was no disciplinarian, and he knew it. His backbone was limp, and he never did the right thing at the right time. He shrugged when he ought to have been chastising; and he stormed when he ought to have held his tongue. Nobody cared for him ... 3

Monsieur Michel, known as Frenchy, is "a rum, oldish chap" of erratic temper, who tells the boys his nerves are "frightfully tricky" and who "pretty nearly cried" on some occasions when provoked and went "raving mad" on others.<sup>4</sup>

"Moosy", French master at the seminary in Young Barbarians, 1901, described initially as "a quantity not worth considering" is another conventional foreigner as figure of fun. He is described as abject, little, bearded, dirty, flat-footed, ill-dressed and poor. "It is certain he had very little education and no confidence in himself." He cannot keep order, cannot punish and is universally despised by the pupils.<sup>5</sup> With one of the many abrupt emotional shifts of the book, the author describes how two of the boys discover Moosy dragging a battered invalid-chair containing his sick wife for whom he is gathering flowers. They give him a hand, responding to his care for his wife, and miraculously, "the troubles of Moosy in the Seminary of Muirtown were ended".<sup>6</sup>

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1 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, [1894] [1913], p. 41.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 79.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 193.  
4 Eden Phillpots, The Human Boy, (1899) 1910, p. 49.  
5 Ian Maclaren, Young Barbarians, 1901, pp. 121, 166-8, 190-2.  
6 *ibid.*, p. 179.



In a book for girls, Mademoiselle - typically she never seems to be called by her name - begins as a conventional caricature, caught in a lasso by the new pupil, and expostulating in broken English.

... Mademoiselle struggled to express herself in sufficiently expressive English. "You bad girl! You rude, bad girl! What 'ave you done? What you mean playing your treecks on me? I will not 'ave it. I will complain to Miss Phipps. How dare you throw your strings about to catch me as I come upstairs! Impertinent! Disobedient!" 1

In another girls' school where Herr Goldschmidt is being replaced by Signor Salviati, one girl tells the others not to get excited at the prospect of a romantic Italian, because "he's a nasty little fat oily kind of man, with a pointed beard ...".<sup>2</sup> At Moffatt's, Monsieur Pons, "an agitated little Frenchman", goes about perpetually expecting - with reason - that he will be the victim of a practical joke, and suffering the sarcasm of other masters whose classes are interrupted by the misbehaviour in his.<sup>3</sup> Gaston Desroux, at Middleton College, is said to be "hopeless", a "poor wretch", held "in contempt" by boys and masters. His manner in class is "flustered and nervous", his voice "tremulous and hesitant"; discipline habitually breaks down in shouting and disorder; pupils throw missiles at him; "Once he was said to have broken down and blubbed in school".<sup>4</sup> Monsieur Bernier spoke English in a nasal accent and so inaccurately that it was virtually incomprehensible, but this was hardly noticed because his lessons were drowned in noise of which he seemed oblivious.<sup>5</sup>

During the war years the life of German masters was particularly hard. According to one study of popular fiction, in the Magnet of 1916, Herr Gans, "the hysterical but harmless Greyfriars German master" is tormented by boys who try to make him believe himself mad, who put kippers in his hat and glue in his shoes, and who make drawings of him in German uniform impaling a baby

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1 Mrs. G. de H. Vaizey, Pixie O'Shaughnessy, /1903/, pp. 65-6.  
2 Angela Brazil, The Fortunes of Philippa, (1907) /1937/, p. 43.  
3 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 18, 108, 125.  
4 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 140-5.  
5 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 30.



on a bayonet.<sup>1</sup> Even in books for adults the picture is not very different. Mr. Klotz, a patriotic Prussian, is tormented by boys who insult his country, break up in tumult, and mock the broken English in which he tries to control them: "He who rount the corner looked when op the stairs I game," he announced, "after lonch goms he!"<sup>2</sup> Herr Koenig is unmercifully ragged, because he had "no idea of keeping order". S. P. B. Mais indicates the emotions with which other members of staff view him:

... 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. 3

One book which makes some appearance of condemning the prejudice of boys against a foreign teacher is A. D. Fox's novel Follow Up!, 1908. However, the author also reinforces a number of prejudices in the conventional picture he gives of the bearded Monsieur Despain's behaviour. Although Monsieur deals effectively with Dick's nonsense ("a dose of Racine" followed by "an excellent tea")<sup>4</sup> and although he was "generally liked", "the fact of his being a foreigner caused the liking to be mingled with a mild and foolish contempt".<sup>5</sup> Fox describes this temporary teacher as a man given to strong emotions and gestures, in terms which make it clear that he finds him essentially comic. He writes of his "inability to control his feelings", his arguing "with a heat and wealth of gesture which produced smiles among the onlookers". Reading to a class an eloquent passage about "the shot-torn banner of France", he is supposed to have "burst into copious tears". When Dick is striving to pass his swimming test, Monsieur shrieks, "Ah the brave boy!" with his beard "waving in an agitated fashion". On another occasion, "he had once embraced the Headmaster after a peculiarly fine sermon".<sup>6</sup>

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1 M. Cadogan and P. Craig, Women and Children First, 1978, pp. 71-2.

2 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 85.

3 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 93.

4 A. D. Fox, Follow Up!, 1908, p. 55.

5 *ibid.*, p. 81.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 81, 89.

The anti-chauvinist sentiments are belied by many details chosen to characterise the man.

Science generally seems to be regarded as a dubious curricular innovation in the novels of this period, and the teachers of science are presented with a partly mocking, partly indulgent humour. Perhaps because of the limited experience of most of the authors themselves, science tends to be seen in simple terms as collecting animals or making smells in laboratories. The credulous but kindly Hartopp, in Stalky & Co., 1899, is seen chiefly as organiser of the Natural History Society (known to the boys as the Bug-hunters) or - in the later story "Regulus", 1917 - as the producer of chlorine gas which wafts into King's classics lesson. The modern side is only "newly established" in that school.<sup>1</sup> Science is no regular part of the curriculum, though vaguely thought to be desirable in the school which serves as setting for the sketches, The Human Boy, 1899. Briggs, a teacher whose "regular work ... was writing and drawing and such-like", asked the Doctor if he might "instil the lads with a wholesome fondness for natural history".<sup>2</sup> The boys soon see this as a device for breaking bounds, and for keeping lizards, dormice, spiders, guinea-pigs and blindworms in their desks. They notice that Briggs is different:

... he doesn't much care for natural history objects while they're alive; he likes them dead and dried, or stuffed and pinned on cards, or in glass cases all labelled and neat. 3

It was the damage done by a piebald rat in the headmaster's study that "finally made the Doctor so unfavourable to natural history generally and old Briggs for starting it".<sup>4</sup>

A similar individual interest leads to the sudden enthusiasm for and equally sudden disillusion with chemistry. The class is started for one boy,

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1 Rudyard Kipling, A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, p. 247.

2 Eden Phillpotts, The Human Boy, (1899) 1910, p. 77.

3 *ibid.*, p. 79.

4 *ibid.*, p. 77.



whose father apparently said that he would not enter his son for the school unless he could be taught chemistry, so an outside teacher is employed once a week to take classes.<sup>1</sup> This enthusiasm leads to a home-made firework display on November 5th, with an awkward climax when the final set-piece in green and yellow fire proclaims: "Doctor Dunston is a Brute!" instead of "a brick!".<sup>2</sup> Broad touches like these do little to realise science teachers with any individuality; they do, however, suggest something of the incomprehension and prejudice with which they were met in school. The opportunities of the subject matter and the uncertain status of the teacher combined to make him a target for ragging.

One celebrated science master in a certain school had various degrees of temper duly registered by the boys, and whole forms used to plot before going to be taught by him to which degree they should work him up. The first degree was when he bit his nails till they bled, the second when he threw books, the third when he chased boys and beat them with bits of old packing cases. 3

Mr. Grady, the science teacher in that essentially classical establishment, Chiltern School, habitually wore a "hunted" expression, and "sometimes came out of school with mice in his pockets and his hair full of flour".<sup>4</sup>

The situation was changing during the period under discussion, as can be seen in the differing pictures of H. G. Wells's science teachers. Writing in 1914, Ian Hay contrasts the past with the present. He refers to science teachers as "members of that once despised race",<sup>5</sup> whose position is now more secure, while the supremacy of classics is passing.

Formerly these science teachers maintained a servile and apologetic existence, supervising a turbulent collection of young gentlemen whose sole appreciation of this branch of knowledge was derived from the unrivalled opportunities which its pursuit afforded for the creation of horrible stench and untimely explosions. Now they have uprisen, and, asseverating that classical education is a pricked bubble, ask boldly for expensive apparatus and a larger tract of space in the timetable. 6

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1 *ibid.*, p. 118.

2 *ibid.*, p. 127.

3 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 138-9.

4 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 40.

5 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 16.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 16-7.



## VICTIMS OF RAGGING

The terms in which masters are shown as being victimised by their pupils are markedly different from those which obtained in previous periods. The emphasis then was almost always on justified retribution: boys "scored", with the reader's sympathy, over teachers who had been harsh and unjust. The revenge nearly always tended to be at a basic, physical level: the master was assaulted, injured or poisoned; in some cases he lost his position. Such a pattern is rare in the period under review, and where it does occur, as in Mrs. Ewing's We and the World, the setting is usually in the past and there is a clear sence of the author drawing on existing literary tradition rather than on direct experience. In Mrs. Ewing's novel, very much as in Peregrine Pickle or Rattlin the Reefer, the boys who suffer from "Old Snuffy's" beatings and cruelty set booby-traps for him with trip-wires and cans of water balanced on doors, and eventually Colonel Jervois destroys "Mr. Crayshaw's hollow reputation", so that:

... one morning he got up as early as we had done, and ran away, and I never heard of him again. And before nightfall the neighbours, who had so long tolerated his wickedness, broke every pane of glass in his windows. 1

There is even less conviction, and less suggestion of appropriate retribution, in the scene where the seventeen-year-old Cashel Byron fells Mr. Wilson, the mathematics master. Mr. Wilson has not been shown as any kind of ogre; all that he has done is to arrest a runaway schoolboy. Shaw himself, in his later Preface to the novel, ridiculed what he called the "abominable vein of retaliatory violence" in nineteenth century literature.<sup>2</sup>

Instead of the notion of physical retaliation against a bullying master, the emphasis in books of this period is on the acceptance of limited, general misbehaviour as "natural", on more sophisticated forms of tormenting teachers,

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1 J. H. Ewing, We and the World, 1881 1910, pp. 96-7, 112-3.

2 Bernard Shaw, Works, vol. 4, 1930, p. xviii.

and frequently on the undeserved sufferings of masters. The reader's sympathy is more evenly balanced, or even enlisted on the side of the teacher.

The change of attitude is shown in one book of the nineties in which boys who have a supposed, though mistaken, grudge against a young master fill his bed with thistles and nettles. In dealing rationally and understandingly with the matter, the master tells the chief culprit: "You ought to have known that such coarse jokes are not the fashion nowadays for public schoolboys to play on their masters."<sup>1</sup> The impression created in a number of novels early in the twentieth century is that "such coarse jokes" are indeed out of fashion. Misbehaviour is to be attempted almost for its own sake, as an essential element in school life, but it is to be stylised and without malice. The incidents tend to be referred to as "pranks" or "jokes". So it is in one novel that Lycidas Marsh is inveigled into turning the housemaster's spaniel loose: a feeble piece of mischief which goes wrong.<sup>2</sup> Towards the end of the book, Russell's escapades are described to Lycidas, then head of the house, as

... practical jokes of every possible description, mainly committed on the houses and property of other masters. They were very mild, and the masters next morning had probably taken them for accidents rather than jokes. They were also singularly harmless. 3

Perhaps in keeping with the aim of presenting a "commonplace Harrovian", Follow Up!, 1908, gives a mild picture of boyish indiscipline. There is "no general ragging" of one "uninspiring teacher", and the devices of the few who misbehave are "not brilliant".

One would fall with a bang under the desk, and pulling himself up with a rueful countenance, ask if he might go back to his house to brush his clothes. A neighbour would drop matches on the floor and cause miniature explosions. A third, more greatly daring, sucked peppermint, and on the master inquiring what was the smell, suggested that it might come from the flower in that dignitary's buttonhole. 4

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 149.  
2 Desmond Coke, The Bending of a Twig, 1906, pp. 132-7.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 241.  
4 A. D. Fox, Follow Up!, 1908, pp. 24-5.



Similar, relatively harmless, tricks are practised by Michael and Alan, who are said to have "enjoyed themselves boundlessly in Mr. Caryll's form". Their naughtiness consists of "deliberately" misconstruing Cicero, using a whole box of matches to light the gas, letting loose blackbeetles in class, filling inkwells with blotting paper, or feigning nosebleed to get out of class.<sup>1</sup>

An essentially light-hearted attitude towards indiscipline runs through F. R. G. Duckworth's From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912. A senior teacher tells a fearful new colleague of the tameness of modern boys, compared with his own experiences when younger of a stand-up fight with a boy in a classroom, and of being screwed-up in his rooms.<sup>2</sup> A mischievous boy stands to win a shilling if he can succeed in being caned a hundred times within a time limit. Stuck on ninety-nine he tries every kind of offence without success:

He had broken bounds and bedroom furniture, refused all work, catapulted the Head's hens, made his neighbours laugh in chapel, let loose fifty cockchafers in school. 3

He eventually wins his bet by launching an ink torpedo at "Jolty" Farrar in the middle of a Latin lesson.

The significant development in teacher-baiting shown in Kipling's Stalky stories is the shift in emphasis from physical revenge to the psychological. The climax of each incident is the moment when the boys indicate to a master that they know of his foolishness, embarrassment or humiliation. The "ambush" of the first story in the volume is only partly the physical ambush in which the boys lure King and Prout into confrontation with the irate landowner, Colonel Dabney. More important is the ambush in Prout's study, when they lead King on to accuse them of trespassing and drunkenness and then appeal to the Headmaster.

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1 Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, vol. 1, 1913, pp. 190-1.

2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 53.

3 ibid., p. 155.



They were learning, at the expense of a fellow-countryman, the lesson of their race, which is to put away all emotion and entrap the alien at the proper time.

1

The two masters subsequently have an uncomfortable interview with the Head, but worse still, just as Prout is about to bat in a cricket match, the three boys indicate in his hearing that they had observed his discomfiture at the hands of the Colonel.

The pattern in the other stories tends to be similar. Stalky's ploy in getting the drunken carter to wreck King's study with a fusillade of stones is the preliminary to a scene in which the boys discuss the event, and King's reprehensible behaviour, knowing that he is listening. Their speciality is to leave the master with the uneasy suspicion that they are responsible for his discomfiture while being quite unable to prove it. In "An Unsavoury Interlude", the device of insinuating a dead cat under the floorboards in King's house, thus eventually making the place noisome, leads to a scene outside the staff common-room. Several masters overhear the boys describing the situation in parodies of the speech style of different members of staff.<sup>2</sup> Making havoc with King's Latin prose examination paper at the printer's gives Beetle an opportunity to hint at everything from carelessness to drunkenness on the master's part when the examination is actually taken.

The Chaplain, the Rev. John Gillett, is clearer than most about what has been happening. He says to a group of his colleagues:

"I impute nothing. But every-time that any one has taken direct steps against Number Five study, the issue has been more or less humiliating to the taker ... Observe how, in each case, the punishment fits the crime ... Leave them alone or calamity will overtake you ... "

3

When Mason turned them out of their study, his rooms were infested with rats until they went back. When Prout did the same thing, the moral tone of the house suddenly seemed to degenerate until he changed his mind.<sup>4</sup>

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1 R. Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 26.

2 *ibid.*, p. 94.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 99-104.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 47, 122-4.

Beetle described their technique to the Chaplain as one practised by Japanese wrestlers: they use "some sort of trick that lets the other chap do all the work. Then they give a little wriggle, and he upsets himself."<sup>1</sup> Intelligent boys like these know how to torment less-experienced masters by creating the impression of guilt while being innocent. Even at prep. school David Blaize is shown practising this skill on Mr. Dutton: tempting the master to accuse him of eating in class, when he is actually chewing his pen, or looking shifty when out after lock-up although he has a perfectly good excuse.<sup>2</sup>

In general, the masters who are shown as being most vigorously ragged are no longer those who have deserved to suffer by their maltreatment of pupils, they are those who simply cannot keep order. They may be shown as good scholars, kindly men or pathetic figures; their sufferings are not related to any specific qualities except their inability to enforce discipline. Sometimes the process is described as though it were natural or inevitable; sometimes there is an emotional loading of sympathy for the teacher. A quick impression can be given by assembling details from episodes in a number of books published in the later part of this period.

Masters have fireworks let off under their desks, they are shot at with catapults, they are locked into cupboards,<sup>3</sup> and pelted with fruit,<sup>4</sup> they are greeted by fizzing inkwells, exploding "bombs" and boys in a fighting mass,<sup>5</sup> by upset equipment and spilt ink,<sup>6</sup> by riotous singing and dancing, clouds of snuff and fancy-dress processions,<sup>7</sup> or by fires in waste-paper baskets.<sup>8</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 125.

2 E. F. Benson, *David Blaize*, /1916/ /1929/, pp. 6-7, 74-5.

3 Ian Maclaren, *Young Barbarians*, 1901, pp. 24-5, 189-90.

4 F. R. G. Duckworth, *From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book*, 1912, pp. 140-1.

5 Arnold Lunn, *The Harrovians*, 1913, pp. 171-6.

6 Ivor Brown, *Years of Plenty*, /1915/, p. 53.

7 Alec Waugh, *The Loom of Youth*, (1917) /1930/, pp. 114-23, 180-2.

8 S. P. B. Mais, *A Schoolmaster's Diary*, 1918, p. 93.



Releasing animals in class to cause a commotion seems to have been a popular pastime: kittens and blackbeetles in classics,<sup>1</sup> frogs, mice and terrier puppies in French lessons,<sup>2</sup> mice in mathematics,<sup>3</sup> mice, grass-snakes and hedgehogs, also in mathematics,<sup>4</sup> and mice yet again in German.<sup>5</sup> In the books from which these incidents are taken, the boys' behaviour is described in such terms as: exploits, devices ... for enjoying themselves, fun, saturnalia, jests, wild disorder, sport, chaos, entertainment, farce, knockabout performance, buffoonery, or a Bacchic festival. The implication is clearly that from the pupils' point of view misbehaviour is to be seen as a branch of sport or of public entertainment. In almost all the novels, however, there is the balancing consideration of the situation from the outside or from the master's point of view, the acknowledgement that "ragging is a kind of bullying on the part of boys", or that "the human boy is merciless". The word 'torture' is frequently used. Boys are said to have shown "the unerring cunning of savages"; they have "a fine instinct for torturing"; they are "torturers of a fiendish devilry"; their behaviour is "outrageous" and "without mercy". Alec Waugh writes, "Even masters have souls. Boys don't realise this."

The teachers who suffer are described in such words as poor, helpless, timid, peevish, flustered, nervous, tremulous, hesitant, feeble, miserable, never strong, inexperienced, pitiable, impotent, weak. A tormented master is typically referred to as a poor wretch, poor chap, wretched man, weak man in a temper, who "prayed for peace", was "afraid to complain", was "helplessly ineffective" or "beaten all along the line". The impression of weakness is not attractive, but it does not exclude sympathy. For "those unfortunate beings who seem to be born to be ragged", school life can be "peculiarly

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1 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, pp. 8, 416.

2 Ian Maclaren, Young Barbarians, 1901, pp. 171-4.

3 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 101.

4 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 53.

5 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 93.



refined hell", in which it can be said of a well-intentioned man that "he broke his soul upon a rock". Pupils' insensitivity can extend beyond the classroom and involve masters' homes and families. Mr. Joyce has rubbish thrown into his prized garden, his flowers are destroyed and his chickens killed.<sup>1</sup>

A number of these books refer to the good qualities of masters who suffer; men who are "held in contempt" despite their good qualities, their ability and their genuine concern for their pupils. Arnold Lunn comments:

... a man may possess many gifts, yet find them vain if he lacks this power to extort respect from boys. He may be far more attractive than the colleagues who survey with priggish satisfaction the contrast between his methods and their own iron discipline. All this will avail him nothing. 2

Edmund Gosse describes how, at boarding school in his teens, he once locked an unpopular young usher into the long cellar-like room from which he had been driving the dawdlers. Looking back, he describes the shift in sympathies which the incident produced.

I suppose, poor half-starved phthisic lad, that he was the most miserable of us all. He was, I think, unfitted for the task which had been forced upon him; he was fretful, unsympathetic, agitated. 3

When eventually released by a servant, the usher sank half-fainting in a chair, his hand pressed to his side.

... his distress and silence redoubled the boys' surprise, and filled me with something like remorse. For the first time, I reflected that he was human, that perhaps he suffered. 4

One master whose ragging by the boys is described in The Loom of Youth, 1917, is no tyrant but another essentially pathetic figure, to whom Gordon comes to owe a debt:

Mr. Finnemore was an oldish man, getting on for sixty, and his hair was quite white. He had a long moustache, his clothes carried the odour of stale tobacco, his legs seemed hung on to

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1 Alice and Claude Askew, The Etonian, 1906, p. 278.  
2 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 169.  
3 Edmund Gosse, Father and Son, (1907) 1928, p. 281.  
4 ibid., p. 282.

his body by hooks, that every day appeared less likely to maintain the weight attached to them. He wore a continually sad smile on his face, a smile that was half self-depreciatory, as though uncertain of its right to be there. He was most mercilessly ragged.

1

After describing some of Finnemore's sufferings, Waugh adds that "by many little things his life was made wretched for him. But yet he would not have chosen any other profession."<sup>2</sup>

Drawing on his own experience, S. P. B. Mais summed up the situation in 1916, attempting to establish a distinction between "healthy" (natural and spontaneous) and "unhealthy" (insensitive and malicious) ragging. He noted that the "first essential" for any schoolmaster was the ability to keep order. "Excellent" men who lacked it had to abandon teaching; unpleasant and incompetent men who possessed it seemed to flourish. In a vivid evocation of boyish cruelty he urged those who could not control a class to choose any other career.

... do not stay to be harried and bullied to death by a crowd of merciless little gnats who despise you for not killing them, and whom you despise for their utter inhumanity and savagery. There is nothing more pitiable in school life than the crushed man, the man who knows that all his colleagues laugh at him for being so ineffectual, who goes into form sweating with apprehension, dreading every footstep of approaching "boy," wondering what devilish device the wretches have got in store for him today.

Remember, please, that boys have no imagination. Consequently they never tire of being cruel: they are precisely on the same moral level with snakes and cats in this, that their absolute lack of any imaginative faculty makes them smack their lips over the sight of an old man in pain at their malicious efforts to drive him out of his mind again and again and again. They never tire.

3

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1 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) /1930/, p. 180.

2 ibid., p. 183.

3 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 76.



## FIGURES OF PATHOS

Although a number of teachers are described as essentially pathetic figures after 1870, the concentration on this one quality is less unremitting and less emotionally loaded than in the characters of Dickens discussed previously. Rather than being presented as pitiful in every respect, they are shown as unfortunate in more specific ways. For example, a good instructor is unable to relate to his pupils, a successful teacher is forgotten by those he has helped, or a schoolmaster's ambitions come to nothing. In addition, the pathos is more usually moderated by direct or implied judgments on the character; our pity is modified by awareness that these individuals are partly responsible for their misfortune. It is not simply Fate or external forces that create the situation.

For example, "That Cad Sawyer", in Mrs. Molesworth's "Grandmother Dear", 1878, is on the surface to be pitied for the way in which everything seems loaded against him. When he takes up a post at Ryeburn, there is an "unreasoning prejudice" against him throughout the whole school", partly because he has replaced a very popular master.<sup>1</sup> The description of him seems in the tradition of Dickens's "poor" schoolmaster; he is "a pale, thin, rather starved-looking young man ... It was not so much that he was downright ugly ... but he was poor looking."<sup>2</sup> His poverty is accounted for by the stock details of the dependent mother and the younger brother to be saved from disgrace and imprisonment. Hounded by the boys, he resigns his place uncomplainingly, and eventually dies in the Crimea, virtually alone and friendless. However, as is argued in the following chapter,<sup>3</sup> below the story-line the author's sympathies seem to be naturally with the public school boys, later army officers, rather than with the teacher, later a journalist. His failure

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1 M. L. Molesworth, "Grandmother Dear", (1878) 1887, pp. 172, 169.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 170-1.

3 See pages 421-2.



to fit into their world is seen as almost culpable. Favourable comments tend to be qualified by Mrs. Molesworth in clauses that begin "Unfortunately ...". Sawyer liked Jack, whose behaviour was "respectful and friendly", but "unfortunately, the junior master was no hand at expressing his appreciation of such conduct".<sup>1</sup>

Unfortunately too, Jack's lessons were not his strong point, and Mr. Sawyer, for all his nervousness, was so rigorously, so scrupulously honest that he found it impossible to pass by without comment some or much of Jack's unsatisfactory work.

2

In such contexts, scrupulous honesty and conscientiousness are made to appear misguided. When Sawyer, "alas", enforces a school rule which other masters have largely ignored, Mrs. Molesworth comments, in her "Grandmother" persona:

I cannot go into the question of how far he was wrong and how far right. He meant well, of that there is no doubt, but as to his judiciousness in the matter, that is another affair altogether. He had never been at a great English school before; he was conscientious to the last degree, but inexperienced.

3

When he reports Carlo for disobedience,

... it was not zeal which actuated him - it was simple conscientiousness, misdirected perhaps by his inexperience. He could not endure hurting any one or anything, and probably his very knowledge of his weakness made him afraid of himself.

4

The impression throughout is that "poor" Sawyer gets it all wrong, because he cannot establish the right relationship with pupils. He is continuously aware of this, full of "anxiety to conciliate", "reluctance to cause pain", making "a little nervous attempt at off-hand friendliness of manner", longing for a chance to win "some degree of the popularity" he had hitherto failed to gain.<sup>5</sup> In this story there is the clearest dichotomy between two of the teacher's rôles; as instructor and as trusted guide and friend. Sawyer is described as a "capital teacher" despite his unpopularity, strange appearance,

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1    ibid., p. 172.

2    ibid., pp. 172-3.

3    ibid., p. 175.

4    ibid., p. 182.

5    ibid., pp. 171, 174, 186, 187.

"ill-assured" manner, "peculiar accent", lack of presence, "nervous indecision", and the fact that "he did not understand his pupils, and still less did they understand him".<sup>1</sup> He is called a "capital teacher" solely on the grounds that he is patient and can make his subject clear, so that "in class, it was impossible for the well-disposed of his pupils not to respect him".<sup>2</sup> Both at the time and later he himself realised the distinction. On his death bed, he tells Jack Berkeley, "I knew I could teach ... but that was all. I did not understand boys' ways."<sup>3</sup> It appears to him almost as a kind of technique which he has never acquired:

"I have not a good way with them - that must be it," he had said to himself sadly ...

"I have not the knack of it. The boys will never like me, and I may do harm where I wish to do good."

"I had not the knack of it - I was not fit for the position." 4

The elderly teacher, forgotten by those whom he has loved and helped, is an obvious invitation for pathos, and that note is certainly there in one of William Chalmers Smith's dramatic monologues, "Dr. Linkletter's Scholar", published in a volume called North Country Folk, 1888. Again, however, the pathos is modified by the other qualities which the Doctor reveals in himself: the disregard for the less able, the pride, the desire to manipulate, the wish to live vicariously through another's life. He looks back to recall the prize pupil, who has since won fame at the University and at the Bar, and has rejected his old master. The ending of the poem stresses the pathos of that rejection, shown when the schoolmaster first went proudly to see his scholar pleading a case.

Of course it was wrong in me to go  
In the hour of his triumph thus, and show  
My threadbare coat, and my withered face  
At such a time, and in such a place;

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1    ibid., p. 171.  
2    ibid., p. 172.  
3    ibid., p. 210.  
4    ibid., pp. 186, 190, 209.

Though it's true my coat was thin and bare  
That he might be garmented fitly there,  
But it cut me, at first, to the quick, when he  
Turned with a freezing look from me -

1

Although the Doctor proclaims that he does not grudge the young man his fame and wealth, there is a suppressed note of resentment at the lack of acknowledgment.

I spent the wealth of my life on him,  
And all the knowledge of studious years,  
And filled his cup, as it were to the brim,  
With the lore that now in his life appears.

2

Earlier in the poem there are hints that the Doctor himself is not free from blame. He loved the boy because he was so different from the other pupils, with whom he toiled, "sharpening tools on the grinding stone".

But oh the joy! when you chance to find  
One who can answer to all your mind,  
Who hungers for learning, as hawk for its prey,  
And never forgets a word you say -

3

The image of the malleable pupil, obediently taking his master's impress, is suggested here in the notions of answering and never forgetting, and later in metaphors of clockwork driving hands and of filling empty bottles. There is the suggestion that the Doctor had previously overworked a sickly, intelligent boy until he died. His ambition is dominant: the boy is to be an expression of his master.

For I said, he will carry to many lands  
My name like Ascham's, and for his sake  
I too of fame shall yet partake;  
For I am the clockwork, he the hands.  
Oh, I was proud of him; who but he?  
For was he not also a part of me?

4

His hopes proved idle. Even the boy's mother says "He cared for us only as his tools".<sup>5</sup>

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1 Walter Chalmers Smith, Poetical Works, 1902, p. 304.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 304-5.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 300.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 302.  
5 *ibid.*, p. 303.



I was foolish and vain, sir; for I thought  
I was filling his mind like an empty bottle ...  
But he was not a vessel that I could fill;  
He was a man with his own strong will,  
And I was wrong when I took it ill.

1

The less dramatic, but possibly more real, pathos lies in the sense of personal inadequacy, the inevitable isolation of the schoolmaster.

Why is it people smile at me  
In a pitying, patronising way?  
They've always done it, even when they  
Were learning with my eyes to see  
The beauty of classic verse or prose: -  
They tried to hide it, but yet I saw.  
What can it be?

2

An example of a teacher characterised particularly in terms of dreams which shrivel and die is Richard Phillotson in Jude the Obscure, 1895. The difference between Jude's boyish memories and fantasies of Phillotson, and the actuality when they meet again, dominates the description of the mature man. He appears "thin and careworn", "homely", "much chastened and disappointed". His ambitious ideas, of a degree and ordination, he had "given up years ago". The lamp-light shows him:

... a spare and thoughtful personage of five-and-forty, with a thin-lipped, somewhat refined mouth, a slightly stooping habit, and a black frock coat, which from continued frictions shone a little at the shoulder-blades, the middle of the back, and the elbows.

3

The earlier professional dreams he abandons for a new domestic one, which leads him to quit the mixed village school at Lumsdon, near Christminster, for a large boys' school at Shaston.

Essentially an unpractical man, he was now bent on making and saving money for a practical purpose - that of keeping a wife, who, if she chose, might conduct one of the girls' schools adjoining his own; for which purpose he had advised her to go into training ...

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1 *ibid.*, p. 302.

2 *ibid.*, p. 302.

3 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, pp. 108-9.

4 *ibid.*, p. 167.

From this time, Phillotson is presented largely in terms of his relationship with Sue, and the pressures of this on his profession. Hardy says that the reason he had not married previously was "almost certainly a renunciation forced upon him by his academic purpose, rather than a distaste for women".<sup>1</sup> However, his long-suffering acceptance of her changeable behaviour is balanced by a strangely insensitive side to his nature. When she is clearly in a tense mood over her relationship with Jude, he spends the evening checking attendance numbers, and talks of such matters as faulty copy-books and the ventilator in the classroom.<sup>2</sup> Phillotson, then, is by no means a stock figure of pathos, still less of ridicule, but nor is he a sympathetic figure. We pity him, we may even admire some of his qualities, but he is not an endearing character.<sup>3</sup>

The many-sided view of character, the fact that a man may arouse compassion and sympathy in some hearts and situations, and anger and resentment in others, is manifested in Hugh Walpole's Mr. Perrin. He himself thinks of his character as divided between Perrin No. 1 and Perrin No. 2, and as he awaits death at the end of the book, he wonders to himself: "Was every one made of so many different people ... ?"<sup>4</sup> The well-intentioned Perrin No. 1 certainly has much of the conventionally pathetic about him, trying unsuccessfully to convince himself that everything "shall be all right this term", anxious to get on with Traill and to be popular with the boys, and full of love for his mother. His appearance is all too expressive:

He was long and gaunt; his face might have been considered strong had it not been for the weak chin and a shaggy, unkempt moustache of a nondescript pale brown. His hands were long and bony, and the collar that he wore was too high, and propped his neck up, so that he had the effect of someone who strained to overlook something. His eyes were pale and watery, and his eyebrows of the same sandy colour as his moustache.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 169.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 228-9.

3 Similar comments could be made on other characters, like the "bleached ... grey ... tired, worn" figure of Miss Mott in *Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls*, 1901, p. 168, or the "pitiabile ... despised" figure of Mr. Copplestone in *S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary*, 1918, pp. 116-7.

4 Hugh Walpole, *Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill*, (1911) 1925, p. 299. Significantly, in this study Perrin demands to be examined in at least two quite different contexts.

5 *ibid.*, p. 2.



Walpole not only describes Perrin's feelings initially in terms that create a sense of pathos, he also puts similar judgments into the minds and mouths of other characters. Isabel Desart feels his "pathos"; she is "sorry, and more than sorry" for him. Mrs. Comber is "really quite sorry for the poor man".<sup>1</sup> He himself is all too conscious of his own lack of success as a man, a teacher and eventually as a lover.

He knew, he savagely knew, in his heart of hearts, that he was a failure; he was determined that the world should never know it; he covered his knowledge with a multitude of disguises ...

2

On the other hand, there is the combative, disturbed Perrin No. 2, who sees the men at his club as "idiots and fools", who scores off boys, who externalises his feelings of strain and irritation into other people and other forces. Walpole describes this side of his nature as:

... the ill-tempered, pompous, sarcastic, bitter Mr. Perrin ... when Perrin No. 2 was in command he saw nothing but a spiteful and malignant world trying, as he phrased it, to "do him down". 3

Isabel does not simply see him as a pathetic figure, demanding sympathy; she can also see him as "cross, irritable, violent, even wicked".<sup>4</sup> Both the pathos and the less attractive side of his character are grounded in his inability to form adequate relationships: with colleagues, boys, or women. Crucially, the failure of his dream of Isabel as his wife coalesces with his rage against Traill; the infuriating colleague is also the successful rival. His fantasy of her as shining light, beacon, salvation, associated with a new and successful life, a house and children, is as abruptly smashed as he smashes the little china man.<sup>5</sup> The reader has to pity the man sobbing in his room, but also to fear him as he paces "like a wild animal in a cage".<sup>6</sup>

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1    ibid., pp. 154, 194, 202.  
2    ibid., p. 35.  
3    ibid., p. 154.  
4    ibid., p. 194.  
5    ibid., pp. 154-7.  
6    ibid., p. 157.



What characters like these illustrate is that whereas Dickens's pathetic teachers demand one response, the same is not so true at a later period. Either Dr. Strong and Mr. Marton have to be read in the intended way, or they have to be rejected as sentimental or implausible. Sawyer, Phillotson, Perrin, and others, arouse different responses simultaneously, and a reader may choose to emphasise one rather than another.

## LOVABLE ECCENTRICS

Whereas oddities and idiosyncrasies in a teacher were almost always a reason for ridicule in the eighteenth century, they became more acceptable in the nineteenth, in Monsieur Paul or Bartle Massey, say. In the period under review, eccentricities are seen in a number of figures as marks of merit; authors invite the reader to approve of the individualist.<sup>1</sup> The process has begun that culminates in Mr. Chips and Mr. Thompson,<sup>2</sup> the cultivation of oddities and mannerisms that eventually becomes deliberate.

Approval of the odd man out is clear in the only developed description of a teacher in The Manchester Man, 1876, by Mrs. G. L. Banks. Joshua Brooks, the clerical second master of the grammar school, is a lonely figure, isolated by his own humble origins, by his intellectual intolerance, and by his "constitutional impatience and irritability".<sup>3</sup> The poor are over-familiar with him and the middle-class look down on him. He lives

... at odds with his clerical brethren, with his pupils, and half the world besides ... He was a man to be respected, and they slighted him; a man to be honoured, and they snubbed him. 4

This sense of isolation, and the clash between opposing extremes of judgment, are typical of the presentation of several of these figures. In this case, the author's sympathies are clearly with the "rough, crusted, unpolished black-diamond, hasty in temper, harsh in tone, blunt in speech and in the pulpit, but with a true heart".<sup>5</sup> His rough manners, his idiosyncratic speech style, his habits of feeding his pupils with humbugs, his uncontrolled passion for learning and his odd generousities are meant to make him simultaneously

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1 That this reaction was one which authors themselves experienced can be seen from autobiographical accounts of schooldays in this period, for example W. B. Yeats, Autobiographies, (1955) 1961, pp. 41-2, or Henry Newbolt, My World as in My Time, 1932, pp. 48 ff.

2 James Hilton, Good-bye, Mr. Chips, 1933-4, and Anna Gordon Keown, Mr. Thompson in the Attic, 1933.

3 Mrs. G. L. Banks, The Manchester Man, (1876) Altrincham, 1954, p. 43.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 40, 43.

5 *ibid.*, p. 14.

unusual and endearing. At the end of his life he presents Jabez Clegg, the boy he has befriended, with his worn copy of Terence, into which he has pinned a bank-note for £300.<sup>1</sup> Mrs. Banks makes it clear that she is writing what she calls a "defence of a misunderstood man", who has a "thankless" office as a teacher working "at a terrible disadvantage".<sup>2</sup> She also makes it clear that she sees him as an "eccentric",<sup>3</sup> whose tendencies have been intensified by his circumstances: "What wonder, then, that eccentricities grew like barnacles on a ship's keel ...?"<sup>4</sup>

One of the major characters in Mrs. Ewing's Jan of the Windmill, 1876, is Master Swift, the village schoolmaster, a celebrated and idiosyncratic local figure. When Jan first sees him, alone in the wood, he does not know who this strange figure is:

He was a coarsely-built old man, dressed in thread-bare black. The tones of his voice were broad, and quite unlike the local dialect. He was speaking as Jan came up, but to no companion that Jan could see, though his hand was outstretched in sympathy with his words ... In truth, the stranger was speaking poetry. 5

The features of this first impression - the shabby clothes, the striking voice, the solitary performing of poetry - are selected to suggest an oddness that is increased by later details: the repeated business with the spectacles, the extravagant care for his mongrel dog, the "curiously mixed" flowers and vegetables in his garden, his cooking style, making coffee "in a shaving-pot", and his lonely habit of gazing "spellbound" at the scenery.<sup>6</sup>

Master Swift, though, is presented with much more sentimentality than Joshua Brookes. His eccentricities, it is suggested, spring from the tragic deaths of his wife and his beloved only son ("I was off my head a bit, I believe"<sup>7</sup>) and from the disappointment of his early dreams. His goodness, kindness and

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 259-60.

2 *ibid.*, p. 43.

3 *ibid.*, p. 14.

4 *ibid.*, p. 43.

5 J. H. Ewing, Jan of the Windmill, (1876) 1909, p. 147.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 152, 161-7.

7 *ibid.*, p. 176.



religious faith are heavily insisted on in language which is often slack and weary: "With his horny hands he hid the cheeks down which tears of gratified pride would force their way."<sup>1</sup> His uncomplaining acceptance of paralysis and his eventual death ("In the very peace and beauty of his countenance Jan saw that he was dead"<sup>2</sup>) load the presentation too heavily. It is as though Mrs. Ewing set out to create a schoolmaster who would be an eccentric individualist, and provided the superficial details that would suggest this, but that the stock story line and the conventional appeal of pathos became too much for her.

Such impressions of a crusty exterior with a warm heart, a personality marked by a few odd traits, became a popular convention. The Rev. James Shelford has a highly irascible manner with boys, but in private looks "very like Mr. Punch". He has become a legend for his odd appearance ("like an angry parrot"), his punitive dashes from his classroom, and his sharp tongue, but Anstey comments that "his years amongst boys had still left a soft place in his heart, though he got little credit for it".<sup>3</sup> Denis Yorke's housemaster, Mr. Lister, is another "formidable" and apparently intransigent figure with a human side, who is set up as a "character" with a few marked but innocuous habits, like reading Tennyson aloud rather badly, and refusing to countenance illness. He calls every boy "my person", he has a high-pitched voice and a habit of wagging his bald head, and snorts and barks when giving his conventional harangues.<sup>4</sup> When told that Denis is delicate, he retorts:

"That's all very fine, but it won't do in my house. Boys who sneeze in dormitory get the cane. Boys who snuffle in form go down ten places and write out the lesson. Understand that, my person."

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1 *ibid.*, p. 286.

2 *ibid.*, p. 290.

3 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, pp. 6-8.

4 St. John Lucas, The First Round, 1909, pp. 28-9, 189.

5 *ibid.*, p. 28.

When Denis does dare to be ill, his housemaster visits him in the sanatorium to tell him gruffly that "he had no excuse for falling ill, and that he was a disgrace to the House, like every other boy in it".<sup>1</sup> He had previously told Dr. Yorke that, "I've been a master for twenty years, and I assure you that boys are black beasts, destitute of any spark of honour and decency and gratitude."<sup>2</sup> Lister's "taste for picturesque and hyperbolic invective"<sup>3</sup> is meant to be seen as a transparent cloak for kindly feelings. The reader is intended to find his performance endearing, and to understand why Denis leaves his housemaster with sincere regret.

Dr. Burgess is another deliberate eccentric with a gruff manner and a warm heart. His "quaint" manner and his strange style of speech are intensified by his appearance and surroundings. Nobody has ever seen him in any other garb than his "old silk cassock"; he lives in "the untidiest room in England" amid a mass of books and papers; he tries one pipe after another as he talks.<sup>4</sup> The author clearly intended the Doctor's speech to be wise and inspiring in its unorthodox way, but modern readers are more likely to find him diminished by the mixture of arch intimacy and playful allusiveness represented here:

"When the sun of yestere'en sank to rest, laddie, I sat in judgement on these verses. And when he rose in the east this morning, lo! I laboured still at my task. Peradventure thou didst write them in thy sleep. Peradventure as in the book of 'Trilby' - nay, laddie, start not! it is no play of Sophocles. But why vex the soul with idle questionings? Should thy feet bear thee to the Common Room, laddie, I pray thee ask Mr. Bracebridge to commune with me in my house. Mine eyes are dim, yet I descry a young man by the steps of the Temple. Thou sayest it is the young O'Rane? Bid him to me, an he be not taken up with higher thoughts. Good night, laddies!"<sup>5</sup>

The way in which mythology can build up around a teacher of decided personality is a major theme of Ian Maclaren's Young Barbarians, 1901. Dugald MacKinnon is known to generations of Muirtown boys as "Bulldog", and wherever

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1    ibid., p. 58.

2    ibid., p. 29.

3    ibid., p. 115.

4    Stephen McKenna, Sonia, 1917, pp. 6-7.

5    ibid., p. 33.

they meet they share their memories of him, his severity and his unchangingness.<sup>1</sup> "His rôle was to be austere, unapproachable, and lifted above feeling", to maintain a "reserve" that was "severe and lonely".<sup>2</sup> Words that are used to describe him include inflexible, obdurate and uncompromising. His writing and his dress "exhibited the most exasperating regularity".<sup>3</sup> His behaviour was marked by "rigid", even "sinful" punctuality,<sup>4</sup> and his school routine was exact and unvarying. His prowess as a beater was famous.<sup>5</sup> When eventually he left the school, his situation is described as

... having reigned like Caesar Augustus for fifty-eight years without contradiction and without conciliation, giving no favours and receiving none ... He had reigned longer and more absolutely than any master in the annals of the Seminary, and to the last day he had held the sceptre without flinching. As a king, strong, uncompromising and invincible, he would lay aside the purple, and disappear into private life. 6

With the exception of his one serious illness, "he was never known to be ill, not even with a cold; and it was said that he never had been for a day off duty".<sup>7</sup> Nobody knew whence he had come or what his real age was. At the end of his career he foiled every attempt of the Council to mark the occasion, declining to see a deputation, refusing the pension which they voted him, rejecting an invitation to a banquet and a presentation of plate.<sup>8</sup> Like Joshua Brooks, Bulldog is a strange mixture of toughness and sentimentality, but whereas Brooks is rejected by most of those around him, Bulldog is self-isolated in a community that idolises him and finds all his oddities endearing. Renowned for his sternness and the vigour of his punishments, he also takes in the orphan boy ("I'll be father and mother to ye, Nestie"<sup>9</sup>); his public toughness

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1 Ian Maclaren, Young Barbarians, 1901, pp. 26-8.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 86-7, 307.

3 *ibid.*, p. 185.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 86, 185.

5 See the end of the section "Justified Beaters", earlier in this chapter.

6 *ibid.*, p. 307. (Young Barbarians)

7 *ibid.*, p. 185.

8 *ibid.*, pp. 306-7.

9 *ibid.*, p. 57.



is matched by a surprising private mildness and boyishness, feeding lads on strawberries and lemonade.<sup>1</sup>

In the same novel, the suggestion that it is the peculiarities themselves that are endearing, not just the good qualities, is made even more directly in the portrait of the Headmaster, or Rector. The reader is assured that "it was not for his scholarship, but for his peculiarities that the School loved him".<sup>2</sup> He is seen as "an honourable gentleman, with all his eccentric ways", and "one of the recognized glories of Muirtown".<sup>3</sup> Being loved and celebrated for the eccentricities themselves is a long step towards Mr. Chips. The Rector seems a strangely unworldly figure to be in charge of a tough Scottish school. He is described at first as "an absent-minded scholar of shrinking manner",<sup>4</sup> and later as a man who "was also careless of his dress, and mooned along the road", although "everybody knew that he was a mighty scholar, and that if you woke him from his meditation he would answer you in Greek".<sup>5</sup> This connection between the scholarly and the absent-minded is insistent. When the Rector misses a class, it is "because he was a scholar and absent-minded to a degree".<sup>6</sup> The pupils love him because he puts on heavy coats in summer and leaves them off in winter, eats and goes to bed at the most irregular times, comes late for classes or not at all, gets so carried away by Horace that he forgets his pupils in his private enjoyment, and communicates by signs when he is hoarse.<sup>7</sup>

It is striking that when Michael Fane looks back on his schooldays, he realises that the only master whose image promptly materialises, and the only one who had taught him anything, was the eccentric Mr. Neech, who serves as "a grotesque symbol of public-school education". Neech's personality remains

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1    ibid., pp. 96-100.  
2    ibid., p. 183.  
3    ibid., p. 184.  
4    ibid., p. 9.  
5    ibid., p. 167.  
6    ibid., p. 183.  
7    ibid., pp. 183-4.

"clear-cut", whereas the other teachers seem "nebulous" by comparison.<sup>1</sup>

Michael's initial impressions of Neech are of an outsize figure who seems to belong to an earlier and racier age: "Michael recognized him as a character in those old calf-bound books he loved to read at home."<sup>2</sup> The association with figures in fiction is itself significant. The bursts of invective, the appearance of ungovernable rages, the love of books, the idiosyncratic views of education are all large-scale. Boys listen in fear and fascination to Neech, "lamenting the old days long gone, thundering against modernity and denouncing the whole system of education that St. James' fostered".<sup>3</sup> Compton Mackenzie suggests that the teacher's eccentricity does not rest simply on being out of sympathy with his age, his colleagues and his school, but in the kind of personality to which legends accrete.

He always wore a frock-coat green with age and a very old top-hat and very shiny trousers. He read Spanish newspapers and second-hand-book catalogues all the way to school and was never seen to walk with either a master or a boy. His principal hatreds were Puseyism and actors; but as two legends were extant, in one of which he had been seen to get into a first-class railway carriage with a copy of the Church Times and in the other of which he had been seen smoking a big cigar in the stalls of the Alhambra Theatre, it was rather doubtful whether his two hatreds were as deeply felt as they were fervently expressed. He was reputed to have the largest library in England outside the British Museum and also to own seven dachshunds. 4

As far as Michael is concerned, the idiosyncracies and the good qualities as a teacher seem to go together; it is because Neech is different that he responds to him:

Michael enjoyed Mr. Neech's eccentricities after the drabness of the Special ... Michael had a dim appreciation of his excellence, even in the Shell ... Mr. Neech ... was almost the only schoolmaster with a positive personality whom Michael ever encountered. 5

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1 Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, vol. 1, 1913, p. 494.

2 *ibid.*, p. 156.

3 *ibid.*, p. 157.

4 *ibid.*, p. 155.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 156-7.

An example from the last year of this period can show that love of unconventionality had become potent with some authors. Whereas eccentricity had been presented as an amusing or endearing garb for a good heart or for teaching ability, it comes to be seen increasingly as important in its own right, as deliberate nonconformity. Mr. Neech is defined in part by contrast with the more conventional teachers whose views he rejects. The process is taken further in A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918. The narrator, a progressive young teacher, is out of sympathy with most of the staff at Marlton, whom he characterises as games-loving, beauty-hating figures with private means who ride to hounds. He forms a "strong alliance" with an eccentric new teacher, who has joined the school from the Foreign Office. The description of Wriothesley juxtaposes items of information which individually could be seen as recommendations or disqualifications for a teacher. His scholastic and poetic abilities are balanced by stammering, nervousness and unreliability, and these are mixed with more neutral indicators of eccentricity. The tone, however, suggests that the whole description is meant to be seen as endearing, that a "character" can survive damaging weaknesses. If the school believe he is "quite mad", that is a condemnation of the school, not of the man. This is emphasised by the context, which places Wriothesley just after the criticism of the other masters, and follows his description with the words, "The rest of the staff are not inspiring".

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.

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 219.



## FRIENDS AND GUIDES

Looking back into the middle of the nineteenth century, one of the characters in From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, says:

In the old days, the Fifties and Sixties, masters kept quite aloof from boys, except in school, and did not wish to make friends. Then came a new period, when the masters wished to be the intimate friends of their boys. 1

This "new" image of the teacher, wishing to be friend and guide, sometimes successfully and sometimes not, is the subject of this section. "Friendship" is a word often on the lips of characters in novels of this time, most frequently in retrospect. Miriam looks back in Pilgrimage to try to distinguish the quality which separated those who had taught her as a girl from the German teachers she later knew. She suddenly realises that it depended on attitudes: the teachers she recalled behaved "as if it were worth while, as if they were equals ... interested friends - that had never struck her at the time".<sup>2</sup> Public school novels frequently suggest that the relationship extends far beyond/schooldays themselves. Ian Hay's old boys "never lose touch with their old Housemaster". They write from all over the world, and "no Old Boy ever comes home from abroad without paying a visit to his former House--master".<sup>3</sup>

They confide in him. They tell him things they would never tell their fathers or their wives ... And he listens to them all, and advises them all, this very tender and very wise old Ulysses. 4

Such a sentimental but powerful image must have exerted a strong attraction for potential teachers, but the discrepancy between dream and reality must have been disillusioning for many. Although this image of the teacher as friend came to be powerfully established by 1918, it existed alongside the

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1 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 39.  
2 Dorothy Richardson, Pointed Roofs, (1915) 1967, p. 78.  
3 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 51-5.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 55.

earlier tradition of ill-will between teacher and taught, which continued to be expressed in this period.

In another of his books Ian Hay wrote in a cool understatement that the schoolmaster learns early in his career "that he is not a universally popular person".<sup>1</sup> How far is this the result of the rôle itself, and how far does it vary from individual to individual? A number of writers at this time continue to suggest a natural or instinctive antipathy. For one young man, the use of the word "Sir" establishes "a gulf ... which he was sure he would never succeed in crossing".<sup>2</sup> Another loathed the abstract concept of masters: "They were all right in themselves; but as a whole they were to him essentially vile."<sup>3</sup>

Shaw wrote that the function of schools itself meant that teachers and children "hate each other as no human beings possibly could hate each other in natural and humane relations".<sup>4</sup> The conventional view of natural animosity expressed in terms of warfare remained common. The notion of teachers and pupils as "natural enemies" is used almost unthinkingly in some of the triter novels.<sup>5</sup> School is "a place where boys and masters carry on warfare",<sup>6</sup> "one long warfare" between the two sides,<sup>7</sup> a "truceless war",<sup>8</sup> "war ... to the knife".<sup>9</sup> Boys can say, "My hand is against the masters",<sup>10</sup> or "Duels with them fall beneath the head of war, where all is fair and possible".<sup>11</sup> From their side, "every master" is said to have "at least one bête noir among the boys,"<sup>12</sup>

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- 1 Ian Hay, "Pip", 1907, p. 55.
  - 2 A. W. Clarke, Jaspar Tristram, 1899, p. 4.
  - 3 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) /1930/, p. 58.
  - 4 "Does Modern Education Ennoble?", 1905, in The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, p. 352.
  - 5 For example, Charles J. Mansford, Bully, Fag, and Hero, 1897, p. 71; E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, p. 71; Mrs. Alfred Hunt and Violet Hunt, The Governess, 1912, p. 8; A. B. De Bary, Letters of a Schoolmaster, 1913, p. 19; Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 54.
  - 6 A. H. Gilkes, The Thing that Hath Been, 1894, p. 2.
  - 7 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 17.
  - 8 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 54.
  - 9 A. W. Clarke, Jaspar Tristram, 1899, p. 163.
  - 10 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 107.
  - 11 Desmond Coke, The Bending of a Twig, 1906, p. 141.
  - 12 Ian Hay, "Pip", 1907, p. 111.

someone into whom he has "got his knife".<sup>1</sup>

Increasingly, however, there is a balancing suggestion that this sense of inevitable antagonism is learned rather than natural behaviour, kept in being by metaphors like these, and perhaps by literary conventions. One teacher-author discovered a shift in pupils' reactions when he changed schools. In his new post he was unable to join in the boys' pastimes because of their suspicions, and he suggests that this was because they had acquired a different way of considering teachers from that which had been current in his previous school.

They had clearly been in the way of looking on a school-master as a kind of licensed ogre, who had a right to as much obedience as he could get out of them, but to not a particle of their trust or respect out of school hours. 2

It is not just in The Bending of a Twig that fictional stereotypes are found unhelpful guides to practice. The aristocratic Harry is amazed to discover that not all pupils share the common sentiments:

... it appeared that Gerald had not come to school with any thought of waging war against the masters, or with any animosity towards them as the natural enemies of boyhood ... 3

Here that celebrated phrase is put in a very different context.

Often it is suggested that hostility is an immature stage through which pupils pass on the way to developing respect, affection - or possibly simply pity - for those who have taught them. The author of Sonia looks back on the "mellowing" through which he came to find human and friendly masters whom he had previously "disliked or despised".<sup>4</sup> In The Harrovians, one boy says to another that at sixth form level "it's rather classy to love the beaks".<sup>5</sup> Such a pattern is seen in The Bending of a Twig, 1906, in "Pip", 1907, in The First Round, 1909, in Fathers of Men, 1912, in Sinister Street, 1913, and

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1 P. G. Wodehouse, Mike, 1909, p. 240.

2 /A. R. H. Moncrieff/, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 232.

3 J. E. C. Welldon, Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895, p. 14.

4 Stephen McKenna, Sonia, 1917, pp. 49-50.

5 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 287.



in Years of Plenty, /1915/. In the last of these, for example, almost the same words that Martin used about his teachers are applied to himself when he becomes a prefect, and his attitude changes:

... when Martin discovered from his own experience that to be ragged is torture, he began to regard the doings and sufferings of the masters in a different light. It suddenly struck him, with all the vivid effect of a surprise, that these people were human beings of like passions with himself.

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The possibility of not one but a series of changes is shown by the way that E. F. Benson presents Mr. Adams, David's Marchester housemaster in David Blaize, through David's eyes at different stages in his school career. At first, seduced by a superficial view of a friendly master surrounded by boys - whom he calls by their nicknames - enjoying themselves with croquet, golf and magazines, he feels that the House "was like some new and entrancing kind of home, with the jolliest man he had ever seen as a master and father".<sup>2</sup> Once David is established in the school, his view changes. Adams is still "a splendid chap, of course", but the father image has been given a significant shift:

... it was undeniable that he didn't want to be bothered. He liked things to be pleasant; ... but he did not like to know that school-rules were being broken, or that the house was not getting on in a saintly and successful manner. He wanted it to manage its own affairs, while he, like a genial father coming home in the evening to his family, saw only bright and cheerful faces round him.

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Later in David's school career, Adams surprises him by the extent of his knowledge of what is happening in the house, by his understanding, and by his practical suggestions. Later still, David can confide to Bags:

"I say, Adams is rather a wise sort of man, and he sees just about three times as much as I thought ... I always imagined that as long as he wasn't bothered, he didn't mind much what happened, short of a public row. But I believe his funny old eye is on us more than we think."

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1 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 121.  
2 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, /1916/ /1929/, p. 107.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 161.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 292.

Even this judgment is not final, for Bags can add the information that the apparently secure house which David first entered was hell at that time, "and Adams hadn't a notion of it". This series of reappraisals is at a very simple level, but it does reflect a boy's developing understanding that masters can rarely be painted in stark black and white. The method of presentation also means that the reader is also invited to reassess simple responses to the teacher as the narrative continues.

Frequently the popular, understanding master is shown as an exception to the generalisations: a novelist can make his virtues more apparent by contrast with less enlightened teachers.<sup>1</sup> Throughout the period there seems an unremitting desire to distinguish that particular quality which marks off the teacher who is liked and trusted, and to realise this quality in action. Few of the attempts, it must be said, are particularly successful. Some authors simply assume that the charismatic quality cannot be described. According to one it is a "mysterious charm" given to only one person in twenty, a "knack" which is instinctive and cannot be sought.<sup>2</sup> When he attempts to describe one master, Jones, who possesses that power, the description consists of surprised assertions of the apparently popular qualities which the man lacks.

It is extraordinary how popular that man is. He isn't a great scholar or athlete, nor brilliant in any way. He never lays himself out to be popular, nor assumes any extra suavity of manner, as the custom of some is ...

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In some twenty of the novels considered, mostly written between 1890 and 1918, there are significant scenes between masters and pupils that seem designed

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1 Like Mr. Brandiston, with his lack of insight, in Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895, the ineffectual Mr. Bright in Bully, Fag and Hero, 1897, Mr. Clarke with his favouritism in Jaspar Tristram, 1899, the gullible Mr. Rutford in The Hill, 1905, the vindictive Mr. Downing in Mike, 1909, the well-meaning but ineffectual Mr. Perrin of Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, the morally over-tense Mr. Cholmeley in From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, Mr. Dutton with his liking for "pink pretty little boys" in David Blaize, 1916 or the loquacious Mr. Rogers in The Loom of Youth, 1917.

2 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, pp. 31-4.

3 ibid., p. 66.

to show a special quality of understanding on the master's part, and to imply that this quality is what makes him respected, trusted or liked. The most frequently specified or suggested features of this understanding are what can be called clumsily "knowingness", about the nature of pupils in general, or about a particular individual or situation, openness to ideas or to confessions that will be treated in confidence, concern for individuals with a certain suggestion of intimacy, and the ability to give unobtrusive guidance at an appropriate level. It is this last which marks off these books from those by Farrar and others in the previous period. Guidance in conventionally religious terms is almost unknown after 1890, and so is the rather overheated atmosphere in the relationship that goes with it. The vogue is now generally for the unemphatic and understated. Ian Hay writes that the only test of a born Housemaster is his possession of instinct and intuition: "All his flock must be an open book to him". In the passage which follows, the Housemaster's abilities are indicated by such verbs as being able to understand, to decide, to distinguish, to separate, to discriminate, to adjust and to balance.<sup>1</sup> In such terms as these, the essential rôle of the teacher is to be concerned with the personalities, the characters, of his pupils rather than with their academic success. Mr. Bevan sees that "without gaining his boys' trust and affection he would never do anything for their minds and characters".<sup>2</sup> A similar concern for entering "deeply into all the interests of a boy",<sup>3</sup> to "suffer with others" understandingly<sup>4</sup> is expressed in a number of books. Matthew Weyburn sees the teacher's essential concern as understanding boys ("One gets to interpret by degrees, by observing their habits") and then designing a programme of shared activities, in which companionship is possible.<sup>5</sup> When Matthew has opened his international school in Switzerland, Mr. Calliani's

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1 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 45-7.

2 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 168.

3 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 15.

4 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, We and the World, (1881) 1910, p. 66.

5 George Meredith, Lord Ormont and His Aminta, (1894) 1899, p. 58.



praises of him are chiefly in terms of his relationships with his pupils:  
comrade, friend, "loved all over Europe".<sup>1</sup>

For the housemaster Robert Heriot the school is "wife and child ...  
the vineyard in which he had laboured lovingly for thirty years". He tells  
his sister,

"We don't go in for making scholars. We go in for making  
men. Give us the raw material of a man, and we won't  
reject it because it doesn't know the Greek alphabet ... " 2

He complains that popular articles make out that the public schools destroy  
individuality and turn out boys from the same mould.

"As if real character were a soluble thing! As if it  
altered in its essence from the nursery to the cemetery!  
As if we could boil away a strong will or an artistic  
temperament, a mean soul or a saintly spirit, even in the  
crucible of a public school!" 3

There seems some inconsistency in these two assertions: if character is as  
unchangeable and consistent as he suggests, how can the school "make" men out  
of "raw material"? Although the author asserts that from his eyes shines  
"the zeal of the expert to whom boys are dearer than men or women",<sup>4</sup> Heriot's  
relationships with his pupils rarely ring true.

How are the dedicated, "understanding" teachers presented? One early  
example is Mr. Rastle in The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, 1881-2. His early  
scene with Stephen is presented in the simplest terms. He knows how Stephen  
feels about having copied his work, he makes it easy for the boy to admit this  
and to talk about his home, he establishes contact over the tea-table by talking  
of the boy's interests in a friendly way (described as "cheerily", "kindly",  
"pleasantly" and in a "sympathetic" manner), he guides him into an appropriate  
resolution without putting the words into his mouth and offers him further help  
when necessary.<sup>5</sup> This is one of the few cases in which there is a traditional

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1 *ibid.*, p. 402.

2 E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, p. 5.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 8-9.

4 *ibid.*, p. 6.

5 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, [1881-2] 1971, pp. 66-8.

religious exhortation, but it is tacked on at the end as a kind of appendix and concludes with a rather abrupt modulation to the original tone. God, he tells Stephen, "will always be ready to help you and to guide you with His Holy Spirit. Have another cup of tea?".<sup>1</sup> Talbot Baines Reed glosses the incident as coming to the "rescue", and "saving" Stephen. From that time on the boy,

... felt that his master had an interest in him, and that acted like magic to his soul ... He now and then, though hesitatingly, availed himself of Mr. Rastle's offer, and took his difficulties to head-quarters; and he always, when he did so, found the master ready and glad to help, and not only that, but to explain as he went along, and clear the way of future obstacles of the same sort. 2

There are very similar scenes of teachers piercing through misunderstandings to establish a fruitful new relationship in other books. For example, Miss St. Leger takes the "angry" and "defiant" Betty to her room for breakfast, and then and in later scenes strives to develop her character ("character" is a word much on the teacher's lips).<sup>3</sup> Mr. Selby, with his "almost intuitive understanding of boys' thoughts", helps Gerald to confide the problems of his situation, and guides his responses to a practical conclusion.<sup>4</sup> Mr. Warde has a challenging encounter with John Verney, prefaced by the author's description of it as

a memorable talk ... recorded because it illustrates Warde's methods, and because, ultimately, it came to be regarded by John as the turning-point of his intellectual life. 5

Mr. Maxwell invites Peter to tea and a "jaw about mountains" - an enthusiasm which the master shares with the boy's father - and in slippers and an old smoking-jacket talks to him as one individual to another, not as master to boy. "And so began a friendship that outlasted Peter's Harrow days."<sup>6</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 68.

2 *ibid.*, p. 68 and compare pp. 118-20.

3 L. T. Meade, *Betty, a School Girl*, 1895, pp. 70-3, 107-8, 219-21.

4 J. E. C. Welldon, *Gerald Eversley's Friendship*, 1895, pp. 120 ff.

5 H. A. Vachell, *The Hill*, (1905) 1945, p. 133.

6 Arnold Lunn, *The Harrovians*, 1913, pp. 62-5.

The relationship may turn on a new experience or interest to which the teacher introduces the pupil, usually outside the classroom. Over supper in his rooms, Mr. Smith opens a new world to Percy Twyman in the poetry of Keats.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Hepworth holds a kind of salon in which able boys can be pushed on by talk of pictures and books.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Finnemore spends evenings over coffee with Gordon in which "the two would talk about poetry and art and life", gives the boy a present of a volume of his own verses, and enables him to see life "from a different angle".<sup>3</sup>

The degree to which masters show this quality of understanding is the supreme discriminator in Kipling's sketches of school life, Stalky & Co., 1899. The teachers there are seen largely through boys' eyes, and are differentiated in terms of the trust that may be confided in them. The conventional Prout, their house-master, does not understand them, is suspicious and endeavours to entrap them. Beetle says that Prout "means well. But he is an ass. And we show him that we think he's an ass. An' so Heffy don't love us."<sup>4</sup> The more intelligent, acidulous King is "a zealous hater of Stalky & Co.",<sup>5</sup> ever anxious to score off them. A second group of masters consists of the more gullible, less experienced, members of staff who can be exploited. Hartopp "believed in boys and knew something about them"<sup>6</sup> but is sufficiently naive to accept the trio's sudden interest in natural history. Mason, "credulous and enthusiastic, who loved youth",<sup>7</sup> was lured into believing fictitious devilry culled from Farrar's school novels.<sup>8</sup>

The two masters who understand and cannot be deceived are the Headmaster and the Chaplain, and they are treated with respect and trust, because they

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1 Henry Newbolt, The Twymans, 1911, pp. 117-8.  
2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 91-2.  
3 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) /1930/, p. 184.  
4 Rudyard Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 17.  
5 *ibid.*, p. 14.  
6 *ibid.*, p. 14.  
7 *ibid.*, p. 181.  
8 *ibid.*, pp. 48-9.



know boys. It is significant that the Head confides to an old boy that "It isn't the boys that make trouble: it's the masters".<sup>1</sup> The Rev. John Gillett, the school Chaplain, is very much a man's man, not a withdrawn clergyman. After the Headmaster, he is the most understanding and wise member of the staff. He is also "buffer-state and general confidant". He disapproves of the legalism of some of the staff, takes care to remain on good terms with study number five, and uses them to help a miserable boy in a way that suggests that for him the ends justify the means. He gets the truth from the boys, and is a guest "desired and beloved".

Number Five had spent some cautious years in testing the Reverend John. He was emphatically a gentleman. He knocked at a study door before entering; he comported himself as a visitor and not a strayed lictor; he never prosed, and he never carried over into official life the confidences of idle hours.

2

The chief feature of the Headmaster on which Kipling insists is his ability to understand situations and the characters of his boys and masters. Repeatedly he sees what others miss. The reader is assured, for example, that "the Head saw - saw even to the uttermost farthing", or that "the Head had seen all that was hidden from the house-master".<sup>3</sup> There are references to his characteristic "cock of one wise eye-brow", his "inscrutable" face, his "half-shut eyes above his cigar".<sup>4</sup> Old boys return to talk to him, "father-confessor and agent-general to them all"; whatever their problems

... each carried his trouble to the Head; and Chiron showed him, in language quite unfit for little boys, a quiet and safe way round, out, or under.

5

Unfortunately, although so many authors coincide in their view that a good teacher is an understanding one, few prove able to convey a real sense of this quality in action. It is as though once the convention is established it

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1    ibid., p. 180.  
2    ibid., p. 130.  
3    ibid., pp. 34, 127.  
4    ibid., pp. 167, 194, 218.  
5    ibid., pp. 170-1.

ceases to be necessary to demonstrate it; an appeal to boyish interests and some glib, vague counsel seem to be enough. The inadequacy of the language put into some masters' mouths can be illustrated from three public school stories written in the years before the Great War: "Pip", Follow Up! and Fathers of Men. The popular Mr. Hanbury, known as "Ham", has been examining some particularly bad work by young Pip, and says to him:

"Well, trot down and change, and then we'll go to the field and I'll run over your points at a net. We will see if you are as good a cricketer as you are a scholar. Stay and have some cake first. Perhaps you will excuse me if I smoke a pipe. Masters have their vices, you see. I haven't smoked for nearly three hours."

1

The deliberate boyishness, meant to be endearing, comes across as superficial.

Even in the occasional scene where he is developed, the Harrow housemaster, Mr. Castle, is never more than a conventional figure, meant to be shown as understanding boys and giving good advice in language they can understand. In fact, this usually means platitudes:

"It's the comradeship, the give-and-take, and the sportsmanship," he continued after a pause, "that's the best part of cricket and football. Don't forget that."

"No, I don't think I shall."

"And, remember, you've got a much bigger game to play when you come to leave Harrow than you'll ever see or play in here. You'll want all your nerve for that."

2

"Everything, every single little trivial thing you do here that's worth the doing, is something done for Harrow." ... This view had not occurred to Dick before, and it impressed him a good deal.

3

"The world's a big place. You'll meet a great many people. Make the most of them. But read too, and watch."

4

The convention of the wise, understanding housemaster is so firmly established that authors can suggest that boys will accept banalities as wisdom because of the accepted valuation of the office which the speaker holds.

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1 Ian Hay, "Pip", 1907, p. 71.

2 A. D. Fox, Follow Up!, 1908, p. 70.

3 ibid., p. 71.

4 ibid., p. 318.

When the young cricket master, Dudley Relton, discovers the boy Jan out at night visiting the fair, a crime for which expulsion is the automatic penalty, he suppresses the information in order to preserve his best bowler.

They faced each other in the empty class-room, the very young man and the well-grown boy. In actual age there were only some seven years between them, but at the moment there might have been much less. The spice of boyish mischief made the man look younger than his years, while a sudden sense of responsibility aged the boy. 1

Hornung's sentimental treatment of indefensible partiality is intensified by the stock language put into the master's mouth. He says:

"Remember at any rate that you're my dark horse, Rutter. Run like a good 'un, and you'll soon be even with me. But never you run amuck again as you did last night! ...

"Run as straight as a die, Rutter, and let's hope you'll bowl as straight as you run!" 2

Hornung himself describes as the clinching moment in this growing relationship the occasion when Relton discovers that Jan will not be attending the *Conversazione* after the Old Boys' Match because he has no dress suit.

"What infernal luck!" Relton looked as indignant as Jan felt - and then lit up. "I say, though, we're much the same build, aren't we?" I suppose you wouldn't let me see if I can fix you up, Jan?"

Had it been possible to strengthen the peculiar bond already existing between man and boy, these words and their successful sequel would have achieved that result. 3

Some of these examples have demonstrated what Hornung calls a "peculiar bond", the strong emotional feelings of teachers for pupils and vice-versa. The housemaster Warde is "profoundly moved", affected to sleeplessness and tears, by the suspicion that one of "his" boys has broken out at night to go to London, saying to him:

"... you" - his voice trembled - "have shaken my faith in all I hold most dear. I say to you - I say to you that I believed in you as I believe in my wife." 4

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1 E. W. Hornung, Fathers of Men, 1912, p. 223.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 223-4.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 228-9.

4 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 220.



S. P. B. Mais wrote of the intensity of those friendships between masters and boys:

I suppose no letters are more treasured than those natural outpourings of youth's desire which come from the heart of a well-loved boy friend; no moments in one's life could be more precious than those all too short minutes on Sunday evenings when the boy escapes to your room, and, lying on the carpet, gazes into the fire and almost as it were in a trance unburdens his mind of all the troubles that beset it, emptying himself to you as to a real friend, asking for help in the sure knowledge that in you he will get it. 1

Years later, it seems strange that such intensity of relationships could be lauded at a time when the notion of actual homosexuality was treated with such horror that it could only be referred to in guarded terms. In another book, only two years later, Mais writes through his schoolmaster persona of a housemaster dismissed for interfering in some way with a boy. It is "revolting", "malpractice"; the man has gone "wrong" and is "undone"; he is "seriously ill" and there are fears that he will commit suicide.<sup>2</sup>

Passionate feelings were apparently more easily accepted between girls and mistresses. Annie Forest "very nearly worshipped" Mrs. Willis, her headmistress; Marcella Boyce felt "one emotion only - a passion, an adoration" for Miss Pemberton. When Mrs. Willis was ill, Annie lay all night outside her door, giving herself a severe cold in the process. Marcella found every excuse for intense interviews with her idol, whose "picture was stamped on Marcella's heart".<sup>3</sup> Mrs. Willis is quite prepared to threaten withdrawing her "love" from another girl in order to obtain information from her.<sup>4</sup> Sentimental relationships between girls and - still more - between girls and mistresses form the staple material of Pixie O'Shaughnessy. At the school dance, pupils compete for the privilege of dancing with the mistresses, "and

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 53.

2 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 126-7.

3 L. T. Meade, A World of Girls, 1886, p. 60 and Mrs. Humphry Ward, Marcella, (1894) 1897, p. 14.

4 A World of Girls, pp. 82-6.

it was a proud girl who had Miss Phipps for a partner".<sup>1</sup> The outspoken but lovable Irish girl of the title develops strong feelings for Mademoiselle, clasping her hand "eagerly" in a scene when the two of them are in sympathetic tears together.<sup>2</sup> She takes the mistress home with her for the Christmas holidays which form a large section of the book. At the climax of the novel, Miss Phipps reassures Pixie of her love, clasping her in "outstretched arms".

"Little Pixie," she said softly, "never say again that no one loves you in this house. I have loved you from the first ... and now I love you a hundred times more ... "

3

It sometimes almost seems to be suggested that girls are deliberately introduced to the world of intense, if stylised, relationships from the very beginning of their school careers. When Terry arrives at the station for her new school, and meets Rose, the head girl, the "exceedingly pretty" Miss Redding hurries up to her.

Terry had no cause to complain of the warmth of Miss Redding's welcome. The mistress kissed her even before shaking hands with Rose, explained that she was Miss Redding, head of Terry's House, and she was quite sure she and Terry would be friends!

4

Shortly afterwards, Terry meets the Headmistress, who greets her equally warmly, and tells her: "You are coming to have tea with me to-night, you know, and tell me about everything."<sup>5</sup>

By modern standards, the relationship between Rhoda Chester and her young housemistress, Miss Everett, in Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, is alarmingly intimate. Miss Everett is a pretty young mistress "only a girl herself", whose manner is "delightfully unprofessional" and sympathetic, and who invariably seems to speak or behave "kindly" and "affectionately".<sup>6</sup>

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1 Mrs. G. De H. Vaizey, Pixie O'Shaughnessy, 1903, p. 91.

2 ibid., pp. 66-71.

3 ibid., p. 149.

4 Dorothea Moore, A Plucky School-Girl, 1908, p. 31.

5 ibid., p. 34.

6 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, pp. 65, 103, 64.

She always relates the girl's problems to her own, and from the beginning

Rhoda idolises her:

To say that Rhoda adored her is to state the matter feebly. She could have knelt down in the passage and kissed the ugly little feet; she could have done homage before this young mistress as before a saint; when the light streamed out of a window and rested on her head, it seemed to take the form of a halo. 1

The physical contacts become more frequent and intense. At first, the mistress "laid her hand affectionately on the curly head"; when Rhoda is ill, there is "the kiss of farewell"; in thanks for the gift of a hamper for Miss Everett's sick brother, the teacher "kissed her on the cheek".<sup>2</sup>

Later on:

"Kiss me!" replied Miss Everett simply, lifting her dark eyes to the girl's face with an appeal so sweet that it would have touched a heart of stone. 3

Miss Everett seems to permit Rhoda to use endearments that are a kind of courtship, and rather coyly provokes more. The girl exclaims,

"... I wanted you so! It's nice to see you; you look so sweet and pretty!"

"Oh, you flatterer! I'm surprised at you. As if it matters what a staid old teacher looked like; I'm above such silly vanities, my dear."

She looked, however, extremely pleased, quite brisked up in fact, and so delightfully like a girl ... 4

Before long Rhoda is calling Miss Everett "Evie". In turn, Miss Everett repeatedly calls Rhoda "dear", and eventually "darling", thanks the girl for treating her as a human being, for being "affectionate" and liking her, and breaks off a tête-à-tête when other girls are heard coming, lest they should be found "sentimentalising". When the mistress has a headache, Rhoda tucks her up in a hammock and cares for her, so that Miss Everett exclaims: "It's - beautiful! It's perfect. I'm so happy!"<sup>5</sup> She gives Rhoda "a long, tender

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1 *ibid.*, p. 66.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 64, 106, 123.

3 *ibid.*, p. 155.

4 *ibid.*, p. 106.

5 *ibid.*, p. 155.



gaze" and invites her to "spend Sunday afternoon with me in my den, dear".<sup>1</sup>

The problem of concluding such a relationship is solved by having Miss Everett marry Rhoda's brother Harold so that they need never be parted again.

The unquestioning acceptance of such a pattern of intimate affection between teacher and taught, accompanied by some kind of physical expression, became hard to sustain in a period of increasing uncertainty about motivation, rationalization and the nature of sexuality.<sup>2</sup> Two novels of the war years, The Rainbow and Regiment of Women, look much more critically at the potential dangers of the close relationship which had previously seemed such an ideal after the earlier patterns of dislike and suspicion. In the first of these novels, the passionate Ursula is given to intense love-hate relationships with those who teach her. When she cannot immediately grasp what is being presented,

... her mad rage of loathing for all lessons, her bitter contempt of all teachers and schoolmistresses, her recoil to a fierce, animal arrogance made her detestable. 3

Lawrence details the stages of her developing intimacy with her class-mistress, the twenty-eight-year-old Miss Inger, shifting from "the professional relationship of mistress and scholar", through the sense of being "good friends" to an undefined "queer awareness", an "unspoken intimacy" that leads to the moment of physical contact in which "love was now tacitly confessed".<sup>4</sup> The idealising passion of the girl for her mistress is expressed in images of heat and light, the elements of air and fire: Miss Inger is "her very sun"; the girl sits "as within the rays of some enriching sun"; her own heart is "blazing", it "burned in her breast", her thoughts "burned up like a fire", she is "in inflamed bliss".<sup>5</sup> After the intimacy, the time when "their lives seemed

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1 *ibid.*, p. 169.

2 Freud published The Psychopathology of Everyday Life in 1901 and Three Treatises on the Theory of Sex in 1905.

3 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1915) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 269.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 336-9.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 336-9.

suddenly fused into one, inseparable",<sup>1</sup> come the separation during the long vacation, and Ursula's gradual revulsion against the "perverted life" of the older woman. The images become heavy and clogging, the elements of earth and water. Winifred now appears through such terms as "earthy ... thick ... heavy cleaving of moist clay", "gross, ugly ... clayey, inert unquickened flesh, that reminded her of the great prehistoric lizards", "marshy, bitter-sweet corruption", "foetid".<sup>2</sup> Ursula's own feelings seem somehow contaminated in a similar way, with "a heavy, clogged sense of deadness"; when Winifred asks if she should marry Tom Brangwen, "the clinging, heavy, muddy question weighed on Ursula intolerably".<sup>3</sup>

Clemence Dane's Regiment of Women, 1917, is not free from sensationalism, but it is interesting as an early study in some depth of a charismatic teacher who deliberately uses her powers to attract the love of children in her classes, eventually with disastrous results. The relationships she establishes sometimes have a beneficial effect (some old girls "owe Clare Hartill the best things of their lives") but the dominating motive is not their good but her own gratification.

Love of some sort was vital to her. Of this her surface personality was dimly, ashamedly aware, and would, if challenged, have rigidly denied; but the whole of her larger self knew its need, and saw to it that that need was satisfied.

4

She has favourites, whom she keeps "feverishly at work to please her", and whose occasional attempts to escape from her power she crushes relentlessly, without apparently realising that "the strain upon her childish opponents was very great".<sup>5</sup> Clare also attracts the lasting devotion of a younger teacher, Alwynne, whom she dominates. Clare alternately indulges and torments her new admirer, determined that she "should become Clare's property ... should be

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1 *ibid.*, p. 341.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 344-51.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 344, 351.

4 Clemence Dane, Regiment of Women, (1917) 1927, p. 30.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 30-1.



given up to no living woman or man".<sup>1</sup> Indeed, Alwynne tells Roger she would like to marry him, but "Of course, I can't. There's Clare ... Clare wants me. We've been friends for years ... Do you think I'm going to desert Clare for you, even if - even if - ".<sup>2</sup>

Clare's influence over Alwynne does not prevent her from continuing her habit of exerting a morbid power over her pupils. The novel deals in particular with her effect on Louise Denny, a precociously intelligent thirteen-year-old. One piece of kindness and praise in class has Louise day-dreaming of "that golden hour", seeing Clare as a Madonna, a substitute for her dead mother. "Her mind was contemplating Clare as a mystic contemplates his divinity; rapt in an ecstasy of adoration, oblivious alike of place and time".<sup>3</sup> When she admits to the mistress that she has been thinking of her for two hours,

A touch of colour stole into Clare's thin cheeks. She took the small face between her hands and kissed it lightly. "Silly child!" said Miss Hartill.

4

Problems arise when the girl's loyalties are divided between Clare and Alwynne. Clare's destructiveness, her refusal to allow Louise independence, her revelation of her own religious disbelief, her refusal to forgive academic failure and her deliberate unkindness are presented as leading directly to Louise's suicide after the play.

"Clare," said Alwynne uneasily, "you hurt that child."

Clare looked at her oddly.

"Do her good," she said. "Do you think no one has ever hurt me?"

Alwynne was silent. At times her goddess puzzled her.

5

Although these dangers of the over-intense relationship are realised in a number of novels, the establishing of the figure of the teacher as a kindly, approachable friend marked another stage in the gradual humanising of impressions

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1    ibid., p. 71.  
2    ibid., p. 314.  
3    ibid., p. 47.  
4    ibid., p. 48.  
5    ibid., p. 165.



of masters and mistresses. The emphasis on this quality as the supreme mark of the good teacher, however, also meant a progressively more acute awareness of the problems of teachers who lacked it, and of the dangers of accepting popularity too easily as a yard-stick for measuring ability. Boys and Masters, 1887, is interesting in the way it presents the interaction between Mr. Scott and a group of pupils of different characters who go up the school together. At first sight this seems to be yet another study of the influence of a good teacher, and of the mutually beneficial effects of his relationship with the boys in whom he takes an interest. What saves the book from becoming cloying is that Gilkes sees that Scott is over-dependent on his function as guide and counsellor, that he cares too much about being liked. Mr. Foot recognises in his speech,

... the complaint of a lonely man when those whom he liked wouldn't like him. And yet the boy did like him quite as much as was natural, and more than foolish Mr. Scott would admit to himself ... His happiness really depended a great deal upon the liking of the boys for him, and thus he would compel a boy too strongly to himself, and when he wouldn't come took a kind of mocking tone ...

1

In his unpopularity about the regatta, at the end of the book, Scott longs unavailingly that the boys should remember him pleasantly. "The school and the boys had become to him in the place of a wife, and his wife hated him."<sup>2</sup>

In "The Photograph", Duckworth considers Mr. Cholmeley as an example of the over-serious young master who seeks conscientiously to give himself up wholly to the interests of his boys, as friend and confidant. He "quite honestly imagined that a schoolmaster was able, and indeed bound, to design and build up the whole of a boy's immortal soul".<sup>3</sup> His tragi-comic attempts to understand and improve a boy called Thornborough, who insists on solving his own emotional problems of which the master knows nothing, form the

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1 A. H. Gilkes, Boys and Masters, 1887, p. 179.

2 *ibid.*, p. 218.

3 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 237.

substance of this episode. All Cholmeley's willingness is unavailing.

After the situation is closed, the boy says to him, "Well, sir, I really would have told you about everything if it had been the slightest use; but I couldn't."<sup>1</sup>

At the opposite extreme from men like Scott, Cholmeley and the more extreme figures like Perrin, who long unavailingly to be liked and trusted, are the characters who lack any real feelings for those they influence, playing on a relationship which does not really exist on their side. Mark Ashburn, for example,

... was not unpopular with his boys: he did not care twopence about any of them, but he felt it pleasant to be popular, and his careless good-nature secured that result without much effort on his part.

2

The potential dangers of implying an unmeant intimacy are shown in the behaviour of Phillotson, the village schoolmaster in Jude the Obscure, 1895. His farewell to the young Jude Fawley on the opening page of the novel is well-meaning but potentially dangerous. He encourages the boy's sentimental regrets, confides his own dreams, gives unreal assurance and words of advice that will shortly lead to trouble. Hardy notes that the regular pupils, who knew the schoolmaster best, were significantly out of the way at his departure.<sup>3</sup> The advice to "be kind to animals and birds" only earns Jude a thrashing at the hands of Farmer Troutham; the holding up of a dream of Christminster causes more lasting pain. Phillotson himself later wishes that he had kept his own counsel.<sup>4</sup> The words, "I shan't forget you, Jude ... And if ever you come to Christminster you hunt me out for old acquaintance' sake",<sup>5</sup> look forward ironically to the moment of that meeting, when Phillotson says, "I don't remember you in the least ...".<sup>6</sup> Of course, Jude has himself inflated the relationship in the

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1 *ibid.*, p. 242.

2 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, pp. 3-4.

3 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, pp. 13-5.

4 *ibid.*, p. 109.

5 *ibid.*, p. 15.

6 *ibid.*, p. 109.



interim. His appeal to the man he thinks of as "his much-admired friend" for books produces two very old, dirty and scribbled volumes.<sup>1</sup> As he grows older, his mind turns increasingly to following "his friend the schoolmaster";<sup>2</sup> he describes Phillotson to Sue as a "very old friend"<sup>3</sup> and thinks of him as "the great Phillotson", but the reality is a disappointment.

A number of books hint at the difficulties that make it hard for teachers and pupils to share a genuine friendship. A master's well-meaning attempts to find common ground may be misguided. A pair of prose sketches contrast a scholarly teacher of the 1870s, unable to understand the games talk of his boys, and a master of future days who bores his intellectually eager prefects by his obsessive interest in cricket.<sup>4</sup> Teachers have to deal with such numbers that they may miss individuals with special needs by proffering similar treatment to all.<sup>5</sup> They may be attracted by the popular pupils, rather than by those who really need help.

It is only here and there that a master has the courage and the self-denial to leave the popular, pleasant, responsive boys to themselves and seek those who are destitute and out of the way. There are masters who do this, and they deserve great credit for it. But too often masters waste their favours upon those who do not need them, and the misunderstood boys whom their schoolfellows neglect are equally neglected by their masters.

6

G. F. Bradby, who taught at Rugby from his graduation to his retirement, views sardonically in The Lanchester Tradition, 1913, most pretensions to a mutual understanding between boys and masters. Precocious, non-sporting boys see in the affected Mr. Tipham "a breath from a wider world and a champion of intellectual liberty".<sup>7</sup> Little Simpkin knows all too well how to get round Chowdler with his "wistful smile" and boyish references to the Lanchester

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

2 *ibid.*, p. 84.

3 *ibid.*, p. 108.

4 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 146-53.

5 For example, St. John Lucas, The First Round, 1909, p. 115.

6 J. E. C. Welldon, Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895, 3rd ed., pp. 78-9.

7 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 60.



tradition and the benefits of games.<sup>1</sup> Pupils loved to appeal to the old headmaster, Dr. Gussy, since this usually meant avoiding punishment. "For Dr. Gussy believed in talking - earnest, practical, confidential talking. As the boys said, 'Gus treated you like a gentleman ...'."<sup>2</sup> Mr. Bent is the one master who seems to realise that boys learn to provide teachers with what they want to hear:

"... boys encourage us in our illusions by quoting at us our own pet ideas and phrases. It isn't conscious hypocrisy - merely an instinct of self-preservation, or an amiable desire to please."

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1    ibid., p. 97.  
2    ibid., p. 71.  
3    ibid., p. 79.

## TEACHERS AS LEARNERS

An apparently sudden and strong interest in new entrants to the profession, their training and methods of learning to become teachers, is revealed in books written between the 'nineties and 1918. It seems not unreasonable to see in this some shift both in what authors saw as significant (and were capable of writing about) and in their assumptions about what readers would enjoy. The young teacher learning the job is in different ways at the centre of such stories as Our New Mistress, 1888, The Master of the Shell, 1894, The Longest Journey, 1907, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, and A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918. The problems of the new teacher are also an important element in books like Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, The Rainbow, 1915, Backwater, 1916 and Regiment of Women, 1917, as well as being considered more briefly in such works as Love and Mr. Lewisham, 1900, From a Pedagogue's Sketch Book, 1912, The Lanchester Tradition, 1912, A College Girl, 1913, and The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914.

One result of this increased attention to the teacher as learner is to make the figure of the teacher essentially more human. Instead of the set, fixed personality type there is concern for development; instead of presenting the teacher from the outside, there is concern with his or her thoughts and feelings. The teacher is seen essentially sympathetically as vulnerable rather than antagonistically as ogre or buffoon. Writing admittedly from within the profession, A. R. H. Moncrieff expressed the feeling that too much attention had been given to schoolboy stories about "domineering pedagogues", and "wondered why somebody should not write stories for schoolmasters, putting the case for them in a vice-versa point of view".<sup>1</sup> Four of the books mentioned above are organised simply as a narration of the early stages in a teacher's

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 1.

career. Two of these are presented as orthodox novels, and Letters of a Schoolma'am and A Schoolmaster's Diary, as their titles suggest, use conventional devices for revealing the teacher's developing reactions.

The earliest of the four, The Master of the Shell, 1894, by Talbot Baines Reed, is interesting but ultimately disappointing, because it takes a serious theme and then abandons it. The novel begins by being told largely from the point of view of a new and inexperienced master who takes up a post at a public school, Grandcourt. Reed analyses quite acutely the pressures on the young man, the mistakes into which his impetuosity leads him, and the growth of tension between the newcomer and some boys and other members of the staff. Reed gives quite a convincing impression of Railsford's hesitant manner in dealing with problems, his rashness of judgment and the way in which he sets up good and bad relationships almost without understanding how. Quite suddenly the style of the book shifts. The plot is given over to stock ingredients: an unpopular master is tied up in a sack, a boy is nursed through diphtheria by the young master, another is trapped on a dangerous ruin. The focus is increasingly on the boys rather than on the master, and the emphasis falls on major school events: the sports, the outing, the speech day. Most seriously of all, the tone changes: the analysis of situation and character dies out, the language becomes more juvenile, solutions are manipulated. The Master of the Shell might have been one of the earliest books to examine closely what a new teacher's life is like, but instead it turns into another yarn for boys.

Roger Wray's book, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, is one of the earliest systematic attempts to sketch out the developmental history of a teacher. The first book is concerned with Alan Clay's schooldays on a scholarship at Wellington Grammar School; book two describes his experiences as a student-teacher in a boys' board school at Pendlebury; books three and four are concerned with his college career; at the beginning of book five he starts work as assistant master at a large school in Gunningham; in book six after his marriage he is transferred abruptly from Martin Lane School to Loaf Street Boys' School, where he experiences



difficulties; in book seven his educational experiments meet with criticism, and he is driven out of the school; in the Epilogue he travels, faces death and re-experiences "the preciousness of life". There is no mention of school in the Epilogue.

These two novels represent the two chief routes into the profession illustrated by the books of this period: as a graduate into a public school and as a pupil-teacher, trained in college, into an elementary school. The general impression is given that new masters in public schools were expected to be untrained in teaching, indeed that the study of education was seen as a hindrance rather than a help. Learning to teach is presented as something that must be done on the job, by a process of trial and error, supported by an unwritten core of folk-tradition. Significantly, virtually all the advice offered by characters in novels is about discipline, not about what to teach, or how. A Headmaster's total advice to one new entrant is as follows:

"There is only one way to teach boys. Keep them in order: don't let them play the fool or go to sleep; and they will be so bored that they will work like niggers merely to pass the time. That's education in a nutshell. Good night!"

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So it is that Mark Railsford in The Master of the Shell, 1894, takes on a house as well as a form without any apparent feeling on his part or by those who appoint him that any preparation for these tasks was necessary. The same seems to go for teachers in Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, and The Lanchester Tradition, 1913. Ian Hay deals ironically with the collapse of the proposed legislation intended to ensure that "in future all teachers must be trained to teach", which he stigmatises as a "joke" and a "bad fright" for Headmasters. He contrasts unfavourably with those young teachers who continued on "the old lines" the few who studied Education, and "discoursed learnedly to Headmasters" for a short while, before eventually realising "the one fundamental truth which governs public-school education - namely, that if you can keep boys in order

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1 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 63.

you can teach them anything ... ".<sup>1</sup> One of Hay's headmasters enquires of a new teacher if he has "any theories" about teaching, and when he gets the frank reply, "None whatever," his response is "Good!".<sup>2</sup> Patrick Traherne's Headmaster similarly dislikes theories, and declines to accept any man who has studied Education. His simple advice is also about "the necessity of exercising firmness from the start". When Patrick quotes at dinner from a new book on education, the Headmaster takes him on one side, and kindly but firmly, stressing his age and experience, assures the young man that writers operate "in total ignorance of the conditions under which we labour".

"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 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." 3

Although Mais was writing partly satirically, whereas Hay implies that he supported the Headmaster's views, the overall impression from much of the fiction is that training was seen as unnecessary, even undesirable, for public school masters. Not all writers, of course, agreed with this point of view, or with the simplistic distinction between theory and practice. Wells, for example, puts into the mouth of Mr. Mackinder a lament for the fact that in Britain almost all the teaching in schools for the upper classes was done by "unskilled workmen".

He told of the difficulties he had encountered in his attempts to get any pedagogic science or training. "This is the most difficult profession in the world," he said, "and the most important. Yet it is not studied; it has no established practice; it is not endowed. Buildings are endowed and institutions, but not teachers." 4

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1 *ibid.*, p. 21.

2 *ibid.*, p. 63.

3 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 26-7.

4 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., p. 221.



When Mr. Lewisham is advised to take a Diploma at the College of Pedagogues, it is frankly admitted that very few people obtain this qualification, and that most of these are women, because men prefer to learn as they go along.

"It is the only examination in the theory and practice of education for men engaged in middle and upper class teaching in this country. Except the Teacher's Diploma. And so few come - not two hundred a year. Mostly governesses. The men prefer to teach by rule of thumb, you know." 1

Wells's bleakest picture of the untrained teacher was the incompetent and bullying Mr. Mainwearing, proprietor of a private school in Joan and Peter, 1918. After a description of the way in which he had drifted into teaching with a Cambridge degree and a love of games, Wells added:

Of course Mr. Mainwearing had no special training as a teacher. He had no ideas about education at all. He had no social philosophy. He never asked why he was alive or what he was up to. Instinct, perhaps, warned him that the answer might be disagreeable. Much less did he inquire what his boys were likely to be up to. And it did not occur to him, it did not occur to any one in those days, to consider that these deficiencies barred him in any way from the preparation of the genteel young for life. He taught as he had been taught; his teachers had done the same; he was the last link of a long chain of tradition ... 2

The depiction of Mr. Mainwearing is unflattering, but the major attack is on the system rather than on the individual. Mainwearings are the inevitable result of the "long chain of tradition", Wells seems to say, where "of course" teachers are untrained, and "it did not occur to any one" to question the fact.

The books of this period give a very different impression of the entry to teaching of those who were not university graduates and who were not entering the public schools. The combination of learning with teaching had long been the chief method of academic advancement for poor but able young people.<sup>3</sup> There were, however, inevitable tensions between the two rôles, especially when they had to be practised in the same school, and when the same individual was both instructor of a student and head-teacher to an assistant. A good impressior

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1 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 176.  
2 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., p. 138.  
3 For example, Thomas Cooper, Life, [1872] Leicester, 1971, pp. 32-3.



of some of the problems of the pupil-teacher system comes in Our New Mistress, particularly through Charlotte Yonge's device of narrating the same events through the eyes both of the new, qualified, schoolmistress and of an able, but troublesome, student-teacher, Bertha Hewitt. She is a gamekeeper's daughter, and one of three student-teachers "apprenticed" at the school. According to Bertha, one of these, Rose Shepherd, "never liked study much; but she is very fond of little children"<sup>1</sup> - an indication both of the familiar clash between academic and personal factors in selecting teachers and of the tension between the two rôles of the student-teacher.

The conflict between the views of the schoolmistress and of the three youngsters can be illustrated by one early, trivial incident over their reading. According to Bertha's account, she was reading the other two "a lovely story called 'Bootles' Baby', that I had bought at the station", when Miss Martin returned to say that she could not have books like that brought into the school. Bertha "spoke up and said there was no harm in it; I could tell her of those who said so". When Miss Martin replied that reading story-books would spoil their taste for better things, and recommended books from the library which would contribute to their teaching, Bertha commented, "Wanting us to read stupid improving books out of school! Wasn't that too bad of any one?"<sup>2</sup> Miss Martin's account of the same incident begins with a previous occasion, when she had discovered Rose hiding "a foolish cheap novel" which she had been reading when she should have been teaching. She then records in her log-book how she found them reading Bootles' Baby "to beguile the time".

I know it is not a bad book; I found it among Amy's things, and was diverted by it; but if they read such things they will read worse, so I gave them all a talking to, on the folly and temptation and mischief of idle reading, and told them how they might help themselves on by reading the improving books in the library; but they only looked very cross in their different ways - Bertha as if she would be saucy and defiant if she dared; Frances dull and sullen; and Rose half crying, half angry.

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1 C. M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, [1888], p. 7.  
2 *ibid.*, pp. 18-9.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 82.

The real clash, here and elsewhere, is over what the girls are meant to be learning, what is involved in professional preparation. Bertha initially regrets the "good old times" when it was enough if they could recite "events and dates, and countries, chief towns, and productions" and get the right answers to sums.<sup>1</sup> By contrast, Miss Martin pushes each of them according to her ability, tries to make them understand the principles of mathematics and language, and to relate history and geography to actual people and places, not to a series of facts learned "like parrots". According to Bertha, Miss Martin was "horribly tiresome" over their lessons.

... making us look out every stupid place in the map, and teasing about subjects and objects in our analysis, and telling the reasons of everything we did in our sums, and even wanting us to care about the people in our history. 2

She feels that it is unjust that Miss Martin expects more of her than of the other two, but the log-book indicates that this is because the schoolmistress sees her as "by far the cleverest of the pupil-teachers, as well as the handsomest ...".<sup>3</sup> She is anxious that the girl's potential should be developed, and this leads to conflict over methods as well as over learning.

I fancy Miss Bertha is as dressy as she dares to be, but she does her lessons much the best, and has some idea of teaching and of keeping order, though I was obliged to interfere with her for striking a child - not hard, but blows must not be suffered. She did not take rebuke at all well, declared that it was necessary: "Governess always struck, and permitted the teachers to do so ... " 4

To re-enter the disciplined world of the student proves even harder for Sue Bridehead, who had previously taught for two years in London, but "abandoned that vocation" for the ecclesiastical art work in Christminster. It was Jude who persuaded her to think of teaching again, and Phillotson is inclined to take her on as a stop-gap pupil teacher. He asks Jude, "Does she really think of adopting teaching as a profession?" and urges that training in a College will

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1    ibid., p. 18.  
2    ibid., p. 128.  
3    ibid., p. 64.  
4    ibid., p. 65.



be a necessary second stage.<sup>1</sup> She works with a class under his supervision during the day and receives tuition in the evenings. After the visit of Her Majesty's school inspector, Phillotson says to her, "You are the best teacher ever I had".<sup>2</sup> Having passed an examination for a Queen's Scholarship, Sue goes to a training college at Melchester, but she soon writes to Jude to say that she is unhappy, and wishes she had never taken Phillotson's advice. "She hated the place"; she was "lonely and miserable"; the rules were "strict to a degree". The food was inadequate, the living conditions were rough, and she had to get up early to work by gas-light.<sup>3</sup> The school emphasis of the College is indicated by the routine, the dormitories with cubicles, the fact that the staff are referred to as "mistresses", the teaching style ("The geography mistress began dictating her subject") and the strict rules by which girls are sentenced to solitary confinement for a week or are "expelled" for running away.<sup>4</sup>

The experiences attributed to Alan Clay in The Soul of a Teacher and to Ursula Brangwen in The Rainbow (both books published in 1915) concentrate much more on their rôles in the classroom, their attempts to learn in practice how to teach. The separation of the academic and the practical is partly symbolised at this time by the idea of attending at a "Centre" for tuition, separate from the school in which the teaching is undertaken. An authorial aside by Roger Wray adds that the system had been "radically changed" again before the publication of his novel, and that

... a modern pupil-teacher spends only about half a day per week in the school, the rest of the time being devoted to his own education. He is practically a Secondary School scholar, and he frequently goes through College and wins a degree before he attempts to control a class of his own.

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- 1 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, pp. 111-2.
  - 2 *ibid.*, p. 116.
  - 3 *ibid.*, pp. 137-9.
  - 4 *ibid.*, pp. 146-9, 177.
  - 5 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 77.



Although entrants to the profession come by these different routes, are of different personalities and work in different situations, many of their responses as new teachers are common: the fears of adopting a new rôle, problems of discipline, uncertainties about methods, and difficulties in adjusting to other members of staff. These similarities can be briefly illustrated by examining the treatment of first lessons, staff relationships and rôle conflict in some books of this period.

The first lessons of new teachers are characterised by such words as combat, horrors, disorder, torture, panic. The discrepancies between their own intentions and the reality and between the apparent success of other teachers and their own failure feature in book after book. Sometimes the details are superficial, but sometimes the analysis is more acute.

When Mark Railsford begins teaching the Shell, a group of sixty or seventy boys, "the opening performance was not calculated to elate his spirit". He felt that it would have been as easy "to instruct the monkey-house at the Zoological Gardens", that he was engaged in "hand-to-hand combat with the forces of anarchy and lethargy". His chief problem was to reconcile the needs and behaviour of the different groups in his class: the few workers anxious for instruction, the "half-bored loungers" who habitually misunderstood and forgot everything, and the "turbulent skirmishers" at the back. Beset by ignorance, excuses, evasions and misbehaviour, "his spirits sunk to zero".<sup>1</sup>

Another new teacher wrote ruefully afterwards, "I forget all the horrors of that first morning". She had difficulty in making herself heard, in using the blackboard so that all the girls could see, and in completing the work in the time allocated. Like Mark Railsford, she found the range of abilities and personalities too great for her; she could think of no way with a class of forty both to "detect and avoid all false or careless work" and at the same time "not bore the quick girls and afford them opportunity for mischief".

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1 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, [1894] [1913], pp. 58-9.

To her chagrin, the headmistress twice intervened in her class to cane two of her girls whose misbehaviour she had not noticed.<sup>1</sup>

A similar humiliating sense of his own inadequacy as disciplinarian occurs to Alan Clay on his first day as a probationer. All seems to go well in his lesson until the Headmaster leaves the room, when

Simultaneously the whole class sprang into disorder. The lads began to talk loudly across the room, to shout, to punch one another, to laugh at Alan himself, and one small boy was pushed on the floor. 2

The moment the head is seen returning, the whole class returns to perfect order. The problem of discipline overrides every other consideration. Maurice Denyson uneasily goes over in his imagination the ways that his class may "try it on" when he begins to teach, and the night before his first day in school he dreams,

... that he was in school and that the Third Form refused point-blank to obey his very first command - to sit down; whereupon he burst into tears and fled from the room. 3

The first note written by Patrick Traherne in his fictional diary concerns his similar fears and dreams:

I confess that 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. 4

At this time, Lawrence's description of Ursula's problems of control in The Rainbow, 1915, was possibly the best description and the clearest analysis in literature of a young teacher's difficulties in coming to grips with a class. At that time it seems that it could only have been written by somebody who had undergone the experience himself. Lawrence's three years of teaching at Croydon and the earlier, more autobiographical, sketches like "Lessford's Rabbits" and "A Lesson on a Tortoise"<sup>5</sup> underlie these pages, and the theme that "in school

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1 Anna Bunston De Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, pp. 18-9.

2 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 67.

3 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 52.

4 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 21.

5 As these were not published until 1968, they are not discussed in detail here.



it was power, and power alone that mattered".<sup>1</sup> Ursula's sufferings in her first weeks in school - "She did not know how to teach, and she felt she never would know"<sup>2</sup> - are vividly realised from the inside. She is aware that although as a person she feels superior to some of the other teachers, people like Violet Harby "succeeded where she failed".<sup>3</sup> Squeezed between the assertiveness of the school system on one hand and the mass will of the children on the other, she feels herself "utterly non-existent", "a stranger to life". Her observations of the children continually present them as a threat, conscious as they are of her newness and uncertainty. They are "smirking", "nudging, writhing, staring, grinning, whispering and twisting", "tittering", "smirking their accusation", "jeering, furtive", "hostile, ready to jeer". She feels herself the focus of their attention, embarrassingly open to them: she "crimsoned", felt "ignominious pain", "waited painfully", "red and suffering", "exposed". "She felt as if she were in torture over a fire of faces. And on every side she was naked to them". The sense of the class as an anonymous mass, because she does not know them as individuals, oppresses her. The fifty-five boys and girls are a "block of children", "a squadron", "a collective, inhuman thing": "It made her feel she could not breathe: she must suffocate, it was so inhuman".<sup>4</sup>

The novice's awareness of other teachers may simply contrast his own insecurity with the apparent assurance of the in-group, or more profoundly it may combine criticism of their attitudes and practice with a sense of pressure to conform. Maurice Denyson and Arthur Robinson both approach the staff-room "timidly" and find that the assembled masters, "fierce of aspect", ignore them completely.<sup>5</sup> Patrick Traherne finds himself welcomed more genially, but his initial tendency to be favourably impressed by the staff is heavily qualified

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1 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1918) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 377.

2 *ibid.*, p. 377.

3 *ibid.*, p. 385.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 375-7.

5 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 50-1; Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 64.



later, as he becomes more perceptive of their weaknesses and aware that in reality he seems condemned to be "interminably friendless".<sup>1</sup>

The pressures, from within and without, to accept methods that more experienced teachers have found successful is frequently shown as powerful and insidious. Miriam struggles against this sense of being "taken over" in Backwater. Alan Clay, instinctively repelled by Mr. George's formal methods, still finds that the headmaster's stock advice about discipline does seem to work. When he loses his temper and thrashes a boy "with ungovernable fury", the class behaves obediently for the first time. Only by forsaking his own intentions for Mr. George's does he establish control, and discovers "a grim satisfaction in the consciousness of power".<sup>2</sup>

In The Longest Journey, the degeneration of Rickie is seen in the fact that although he recognises Herbert's essential stupidity, although he places him amongst the goats in humanity's Last Judgment, he separates these judgments of the man from those of the teacher. In house and school he comes increasingly to accept Herbert's values. He had accepted the post allured by Agnes's suggestion that "a schoolmaster has wonderful opportunities of doing good", determined to admit his own mistakes or ignorance, to be friends with his pupils, to help them through adolescent problems, to eliminate unfairness and unkindness.<sup>3</sup> In fact, though, he simply follows Herbert's lead in the house and his tenets in teaching:

In his form, oddly enough, he became a martinet. It is so much simpler to be severe. He grasped the school regulations, and insisted on prompt obedience to them. He adopted the doctrine of collective responsibility. When one boy was late, he punished the whole form. 'I can't help it,' he would say, as if he was a power of nature. As a teacher he was rather dull. He curbed his own enthusiasms, finding that they distracted his attention, and that while he throbbed to the music of Virgil the boys in the back row were getting unruly.

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 23, 128.

2 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 70-9.

3 E. M. Forster, The Longest Journey, (1907) Harmondsworth, 1960, pp. 156, 164, 168, 173.

4 *ibid.*, p. 169.

The clause "as if he was a power of nature" suggests the way in which the impersonal concerns of the school, summed up in words like regulations, obedience, responsibility, punishment, take priority over the personal values of enthusiasm and the music of Virgil. In brief, Rickie becomes Sawstonian. Forster ends Chapter 23 with the judgement: "Henceforward he deteriorates ... He remained conscientious and decent, but the spiritual part of him proceeded towards ruin."<sup>1</sup> Near the end of the book - and the end of his life - Rickie reflects on the wrong choices which he and the school have made. At this stage he can see the inadequacy of Herbert's school-based and mechanistic code as compared with wider personal values.

He saw that the little incident had been a quiet challenge to the civilization that he had known. 'Organize', 'Systematize', 'Fill up every moment', 'Induce esprit de corps'. He reviewed the watchwords of the last two years, and found that they ignored personal contact, personal truces, personal love. By following them Sawston school had lost its quiet usefulness and become a frothy sea, wherein plunged Dunwood House, that unnecessary ship. 2

In The Rainbow, before she begins teaching at his school, Ursula can think of Mr. Harby as "a short, thick-set, rather common man", and she can dream patronisingly of how he will soon have her "in such high esteem".<sup>3</sup> Once in the school, she finds him more imposing and dominant, a challenge.

The schoolmaster was a short, sturdy man, with a fine head, and a heavy jowl. Nevertheless he was good-looking, with his shapely brows and nose, and his great hanging moustache ... There was a pleasant light in his brown eyes. He seemed very manly and incontrovertible, like something she wanted to push over. 4

His ignoring of her, his "insulting geniality, his assurance, his "threatening" power all mean that from the first, "she set hard against him".

Soon Ursula came to dread him, and at the bottom of her dread was a seed of hate, for she despised him, yet he was master of her. 5

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1 *ibid.*, p. 197.

2 *ibid.*, p. 269.

3 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1915) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 367.

4 *ibid.*, p. 373.

5 *ibid.*, p. 377.



Her divided feelings about him lead her into contradictory behaviour: her passive antagonism to his methods enables the children to "harry" her, her fear of him leads her to try to be successful by his standards, her acknowledgement of his power forces her to establish discipline by the violence she hates.

The problems of adopting a new role may be more than the simple sense of strangeness and loneliness which Duckworth and Hay record in their sketches.<sup>1</sup> Dorothy Richardson and Anna de Bary both indicate the effect of a need to conform to certain views of appropriate teacher behaviour on a sensitive individual: "Once over the threshold of the school I am no more a human, responsible being, but one of 'my teachers'."<sup>2</sup> Lawrence characterised vividly the pigeon-holing tendency to see people solely in terms of their rôle, as teachers, pupils, headmasters, rather than as human beings with personal needs and concerns. When Ursula Brangwen becomes a teacher, she is conscious not simply that she now has a new function, but that in time this rôle may even usurp her individuality.

She had another self, another responsibility. She was no longer Ursula Brangwen, daughter of William Brangwen. She was also Standard Five teacher at St. Philip's School. And it was a case now of being Standard Five teacher, and nothing else ... As the weeks passed on, there was no Ursula Brangwen, free and jolly. There was only a girl of that name obsessed by the fact that she could not manage her class of children. 3

She must have nothing more of herself in school. She was to be Standard Five teacher only. That was her duty. In school, she was nothing but Standard Five teacher. Ursula Brangwen must be excluded. 4

The image used of her suffering is that of breaking in a filly to the loss of freedom.<sup>5</sup>

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- 1 F. R. G. Duckworth, "The New Boy" in From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 49 ff. Ian Hay, "The Novice" in The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 59 ff.
  - 2 Anna Bunston de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 33.
  - 3 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1915) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 390.
  - 4 *ibid.*, p. 393.
  - 5 *ibid.*, p. 406.



The potential threat to the personality is explored fully in The Longest Journey. Critics have pointed out that Forster himself is closely engaged with the problems of adjustment facing Rickie, since like his semi-autobiographical hero he had to reconcile the world and values of Cambridge, shortly after graduation, with the demands of ordinary life and work.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to tell from the way in which the story is presented whether Rickie's degeneration, seen in his increasing inability to detect the real from the spurious in the world of values as well as of experience, is meant to be specifically related to the malign influence of Sawston School, or whether a similar process would have been likely in other surroundings, given his personality. In other words, is what happens to Rickie shown as to a degree typical of what befalls all new teachers? That attitudes and functions are connected, but not in a purely causal way, is suggested by Forster's comment on the initial decision to teach: "Rickie's programme involved a change in values as well as a change of occupation."<sup>2</sup>

Several points have to be made about that decision. First, Rickie has no initial sense of vocation; he has never felt drawn to teaching; he tore up the circulars sent by scholastic agencies. Second, he deceives himself about his motives, in which the desire to be married plays a major part, and allows himself to be persuaded by the empty phrases of Agnes about seeing life and doing good. Third, he is hardly qualified for his role, as he and Herbert both admit in different terms. Indeed, his function is constructed rather than real; the head has to "create a vacancy" and Rickie is "worked in", prepared by "a brief visit to a Training College". His instinctive, repeated image for the school is that of "a beneficent machine" at which he will work. Despite his acceptance of so many features of Sawston, his heart would prefer the boys to be at home.<sup>3</sup> His position forces him to compromise his ideals, often at the risk of deceiving himself. In the initial case of the boy Varden, Rickie

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1 See, for example, Frederick C. Crews, E. M. Forster: The Perils of Humanism, 1962, p. 50.

2 E. M. Forster, The Longest Journey, (1907) Harmondsworth, 1960, p. 157.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 55-71.

understands that it is really the housemaster's business, not his; he suspects that he is being used, and feels that the whole affair "suggested intrigue". His way of over-ruling his doubts and scruples is to attribute them to his own weakness, which he can then repress. Forster comments:

... there is no doubt that on this and on many other occasions he had to do things that he would not otherwise have done ... As the term wore on he lost his independence - almost without knowing it.

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The recurrent note, as has been seen, is of new teachers learning to adapt themselves to a system. Public school masters must eschew theory and learn to imitate the old hands. Being a pupil-teacher lays even more stress on accepting the principles and practice of the supervising master or mistress. The beginners' inevitable sense of inadequacy makes them particularly suggestible. Progress is frequently associated with the loss of individuality, of accepting a rôle which takes over the personality. Although the notion of "the teacher as learner" may suggest a more human view, it is hardly one which can have increased the popularity of the profession among young men and women.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 168.

## CRAMMERS AND INSPIRERS

Perhaps the most striking single observation about the early depiction of teachers in literature is how infrequently they are shown teaching. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries there are relatively few scenes of any length set in classrooms, and those that there are tend to be either unrealistic, theoretical presentations of "ideal" teachers giving model lessons, or concerned with misbehaviour, discipline or some other form of pupil behaviour rather than with the process of instruction.

There are several possible reasons for this. Teaching itself may have been seen as an essentially dull topic, all too familiar to the reader. It may have been assumed that methods and subjects of instruction changed so little that it was unnecessary to describe them. At times when few authors had themselves been teachers they may have hesitated to write about a topic of which they had little first-hand experience. Or it may simply be that the stereotypes of teacher behaviour were so firmly established that writers felt there was no need to make more than a perfunctory reference to the actual work itself.

One mark of twentieth century school novels is an increased willingness to describe the classroom process itself, and to consider questions of methodology at a simple level. It is significant that science or mathematics lessons are hardly described at all in the years to 1918. Most is written about Classics; a certain amount about English and History. This probably reflects the traditional subject hierarchy of the time. What is more important is the tone in which these subjects are described. Nearly all the teachers of Classics, and many teachers of other subjects, are shown as "crammers" in an essentially unthinking, traditional way that had changed little over the centuries. Authors of the period are less likely to accept this style and are more likely to challenge it directly or by implication. By contrast, there are also



presentations of innovatory or inspiring teachers, frequently deliberately contrasted with the others.

There are many brief indications of teachers engaged upon the unchanging classical curriculum - the memorising of grammar, construing set books, making Latin verses - but only in the twentieth century are there what might be called imaginary transcripts of such lessons in progress. How automatic the curricular assumptions were can be seen from Thomas Cooper's Life, 1872. When he opened a school earlier in the century, particularly for the poor, he was an enthusiast with a number of enlightened ideas. He covered the walls with pictures, provided a miniature museum, did practical work and told stories. The arrival of four middle-class children, who required Latin, seems to have turned Cooper's mind back to conventional studies and methods.

There was no desire on the part of the parents of any other pupils in my school, that they should learn Latin. But I wished to teach it to all. Soon, I had copies of declensions and conjugations written out on sheets of paper, with lists of the prepositions, and so on; and gave them to a good number of the boys to commit to memory. And to the very last day of my life that I sustained the office of daily schoolmaster, I had the declensions, or conjugations, repeated by the boys, as they stood in class, every morning. The Latin Accidence, I may say, is so firmly fixed in my memory, from hearing these daily repetitions, for about nine years of my life, that I think I could as soon forget my own name as forget any part of it.

1

Trollope and Macready are among those whose autobiographies recall the concentration on classics to the exclusion of all else, the method of flogging those who made mistakes, and the ineffectiveness of what Trollope called a "waste of time".<sup>2</sup> One author gives a first-hand description of his method of teaching Greek grammar in this wholly traditional way, which he also records as being singularly ineffective: "This 'taking' means that I watch them learning it for the first half-hour, and hear them say it the second."<sup>3</sup> He is even more

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1 Thomas Cooper, Life, (1872) Leicester, 1971, p. 75.

2 Anthony Trollope, An Autobiography, (1883) 1923, pp. 16-7; William Macready, Reminiscences, 1875, vol. 1, p. 19.

3 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, p. 90.

critical of the gulf between the supposed aims of making Latin verses and the actual results achieved. He carries on the tradition

... with a secret misgiving that I am assisting, as it were, at an old world ceremony, and am far behind the times I live in. Nevertheless it has to be done. 1

It is a pity, he says, that at the end of the hour, there is no way of gauging:

... the extent to which by this hour's training the taste has been educated, the memory strengthened, and the mental powers generally developed. I have a suspicion that, in this instance, the result would be discouraging enough to make out a strong case against verses. 2

It is "notorious", according to one teacher, that a colleague "set one and the same Latin prose every term to his Form, and never looked it over".<sup>3</sup>

When authors present teachers of classics through the eyes of their pupils, their behaviour and the learning process itself seem even more incomprehensible, as three examples can show. Before he went to Roughborough, at the age of twelve, Ernest Pontifex knew "every page of his Latin and Greek grammars by heart", and had read much in the Classic authors.<sup>4</sup> He had also decided that "Latin and Greek had nothing in them which commended them to his instinct as likely to bring him peace even at the last".<sup>5</sup> At school, he was simply concerned to remain anonymously in the middle of the form, and to do the minimum of work. In Mr. Templer's form cribbing was a matter of course and the traditional punishments of copying out lines of Virgil were "often less trouble than the lesson".<sup>6</sup> The habitual use of punishment rather than encouragement as an incentive is indicated by the fact that, "only once in the whole course of his school life did he get praise from Dr. Skinner for any exercise", and this was the highly qualified commendation on his verse exercise: "In this copy of Alcaics - which is still excessively bad - I fancy that I can discern some faint symptoms of improvement."<sup>7</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 99.

2 *ibid.*, p. 105.

3 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 69.

4 Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh, (1903) 1965, p. 97.

5 *ibid.*, p. 114.

6 *ibid.*, p. 114.

7 *ibid.*, p. 167.



Joe Vance recalled that in his early schooldays he was expected

... to translate unconnected statements into Latin; as for instance, - The Cruel Slave-dealer anticipates the Scarcity - The Circumstance occurs to the Brother-in-Law - The Citizen encourages the Enthusiast - and so forth! I am not quite sure these are exact, but they are not far out. I know I translated large quantities of them at a great rate with the assistance of appropriate vocabularies at the foot of each exercise.

1

At a later stage, interrupted in class where he and others were "profitably employed in the making of bad Latin verses", he pleaded distraction to excuse making "an hexameter without a caesura - which, as all the classical world knows, is a thing it would have been soundly flogged for when it was a boy".<sup>2</sup> The narrator of The New Machiavelli remembers with sardonic amusement the classics teaching which he received as a boy at the City Merchants School.

We were taught very badly because the men who taught us did not habitually use either of these languages ... We were taught these languages because long ago Latin had been the language of civilisation ... So it was I occupied my mind with the exact study of dead languages for seven long years.

3

He describes the style of a charismatic teacher like Topham, doing "his considerable best to work us up to enthusiasm for, let us say, a Greek play".

If we flagged he would lash himself to revive us. He would walk about the classroom mouthing great lines in a rich roar, and asking us with a flushed face and shining eyes if it was not "glorious". The very sight of Greek letters brings back to me the dingy, faded, ink-splashed quality of our class-room, the banging of books, Topham's disordered hair, the sheen of his alpaca gown, his deep unmusical intonations and the wide striding of his creaking boots. Glorious! And being plastic human beings we would consent that it was glorious ...

4

In addition to these brief indications of the continuing tradition, there are a few more extended scenes in some works written early in this century. Lionel Portman gives an effective impression of a conventional Latin lesson in the hands of a master who himself has no belief in it. Mr. Allardyce thinks that a classical education is "mere farce for most boys" (and Portman adds,

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1 William De Morgan, Joseph Vance, 1907, p. 91.

2 *ibid.*, p. 144.

3 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, pp. 71-3.

4 *ibid.*, p. 73. Compare the style of Foskett, "the most unconvincing of enthusiasms", in Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, 1915, pp. 150-1.



" - like many others, though few dare say so").<sup>1</sup> Mr. Allardyce arrives late, "still apparently half-asleep", and during his lesson he is described as behaving "wearily", "in a daydream"; his voice is "dreary", he drones and sighs.<sup>2</sup> His role in the five pages taken by the author's running commentary on the lesson is limited to choosing the boys who will read and construe part of Virgil's Georgics, Book 1, stopping them when they make mistakes, and changing the order of the class when a boy lower down gives the correct answer. He seems to give no positive help or real instruction; the process is quite mechanical; his own lack of enthusiasm clearly transmits itself to the boys. The process can be illustrated from the point where Trollope begins to construe.

"Er," begins our interpreter - inevitably - and pauses for thought.

"Er - er - quid faciat - er - what shall make - er - laetas segetes the joyful crops - er - quo where - er - "

"What does that mean?" says the dreary voice at the end of the room.

Pause. Then -

"Well, sir, I don't quite see. I suppose it's er - sort of like making hay - he means, doesn't he?"

"Next!"

No response.

"Next. Tell him how to take it."

"Yes, sir. Certainly, sir."

Gurglings, but no definite result.

"Next."

"Please, sir, you ought to take your verb first. Incipiam, I may commence."

"Next."

"No, you oughtn't, sir. You ought to take segetes first - the crops glad."

"Well, how do you construe?"

"What will make the crops glad."

"Not 'glad' exactly."

"No, sir. I meant 'abundant!'"

"Right. Go up. You see that now, Trollope?"

3

The results of the lack of guidance are indicated when Trollope comes to a difficult point. The rules of the game do not permit him to ask the questions which puzzle him, and Mr. Allardyce does not help by breaking down the sentence, or by asking focusing questions, or by prompting. Trollope has to try,

1 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 49.

2 ibid., pp. 48-53.

3 ibid., p. 50.

unsuccessfully, to "worm" the meaning out of his master.<sup>1</sup> There is no teaching, and very little learning. At the end of a lesson of ninety minutes spent in this way, four boys have been put on to construe and have "limped through" nearly thirty lines, "with as much delay as possible". The other twenty-four boys "practically had their knowledge of these lines untested; at any rate, it remained where it had been when they entered the room". In laying the responsibility on the absurd system of instruction, Portman writes that Mr. Allardyce was "not wholly to blame".<sup>2</sup> Nevertheless, much of the blame was his; at least he could have carried out the task efficiently. The same criticism cannot be levelled at masters like King or Dumarescq, the efficient crammers.

One of the earliest detailed accounts of what a public school classics lesson must have been like, certainly one of the fullest, comes in Kipling's 1908 short story "Regulus", a Stalky/Beetle story separated from the others and printed in A Diversity of Creatures, 1917. The first thirteen pages of the story show King at work with the fifth form on the fifth ode of the third book of Horace. This is apparently the third time the boys have been through the ode, but they are still construing one or two words of Latin at a time, with King urging them to greater precision and the avoidance of poetic jargon. He also endeavours to bring alive for them the lasting significance of Horace's ideas, making them "a text for a discourse on manners, morals, and respect for authority".<sup>3</sup> Even Beetle comments after the lesson that, "When King's really on tap he's an interestin' dog."<sup>4</sup> The point of the subsequent events of the story is that boys can apply the lessons learned from their classical studies. The narrative ends with King saying to the Chaplain, "You see. It sticks. A little of it sticks among the barbarians ..."<sup>5</sup> Compared with Allardyce,

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1 *ibid.*, p. 52.

2 *ibid.*, p. 53.

3 Rudyard Kipling, A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, p. 250.

4 *ibid.*, p. 251.

5 *ibid.*, p. 270.

King is an effective teacher ("the best classical cram we've got," says Flint)<sup>1</sup> and this is suggested in the transcript of this imaginary lesson. He prods, asks supplementary questions, locates difficulties, offers variants of his own, seeks the cause of misunderstandings, makes digressions to retain interest, and pushes the abler pupils. Nevertheless, the basic method is virtually the same as Allardyce's: one individual after another is called on to translate, errors are presented to others to correct. Horace has to be "ground" through in detail to satisfy the needs of external examinations. Errors have to be punished. A boy who makes a syntactical mistake, treating an adjective as a verb, is set by King to write out for the next day "a word-for-word English-Latin translation of the Ode, together with a full list of all adjectives ... their number, case, and gender".<sup>2</sup>

What seems to mark off the classics masters of fiction from each other is not their choice of teaching methods; it is simply the efficiency with which they carry out the process, and the force of personality or the constraints which they employ to make the pupils work at a task which hardly any fictional schoolboy seems either to enjoy or to regard as having any point. Mr. Dumarescq is an unsparing master who pushes on his pupils at a great rate. He is "reputed to be the hardest slave-driver in Eaglescliff",<sup>3</sup> and is quite undeterred by the apparent absurdity of the tasks on which he is engaged. Before he enters the classroom, his voice can be heard bellowing out the first words of a Greek prose test.

"If you do this," announced Mr. Dumaresq truculently, as he swung into the doorway, "you will be wise."

Every boy began to scribble madly.

"If you do not do this," continued Mr. Dumaresq, "you will not be wise. If you were to do this you would be wise. If you were not to do this you would not be wise. If you had done this you would have been wise. If you had not done this you would not have been wise. Collect!"

4

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- 1 Rudyard Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 166.  
 2 Rudyard Kipling, A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, p. 247.  
 3 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 68.  
 4 ibid., pp. 68-9.



Any boy who makes an error is summoned to return in the afternoon for extra work. The next task is "Viva voce Latin Elegiacs!"

He declaimed the opening couplet of an English lyric.  
"Now throw that into Latin form. Adamson, I'm speaking to YOU! Don't sit mooning there, gaper. Think! Think!  
Come, lasses and lads, get leave of your dads -  
Come on, man, come on!

- And away to the maypole, hey!  
Say something! Wake up! How are you going to get over 'maypole'? No maypoles in Rome. Tell him, somebody!  
'Saturnalia' - not bad. (Crabtree, stand up on the bench, and look at me, not your boots.) Why won't 'Saturnalia' do? Will it scan? Think! Come along, come along!" 1

An hour's labours result in a version built up on the blackboard, and erased before the boys are set to make a fair copy. Eighteen of the thirty produced a "flawless" one, and the remainder are summoned to extra work after dinner. Again, there is no suggestion of suiting the teaching to the individual; everybody has to do the same work and to reach the same standard; it simply takes some longer than others.

Mr. Cardew in The Harrovians, 1913, is a similar figure. He himself sees the work as "the drudgery of routine", he takes no real pleasure in it, but he does it efficiently: "he certainly got more work out of his form than almost any other master". It is presumably on this sole criterion that Lunn claims that Cardew was "an excellent schoolmaster", indeed that "he was wasted as a schoolmaster ... a brilliant teacher ..."<sup>2</sup>

Men like Dumaresq and Cardew are presented with a glow of authorial approval, but what they are doing is hardly different from the more critically viewed slave-driver described by S. P. B. Mais through the eyes of his schoolmaster narrator. This man is another who goes in for quick tests on Greek irregular verbs, moving boys up and down places, driving them through the text. Mais sums up:

This man achieves very excellent results in all examinations: he is known as the best teacher of grammar in the school.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 70.

2 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, pp. 201-3.

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.

1

Terminology and attitude echo, perhaps deliberately, Mr. Stelling's in The Mill on the Floss. Unlike the others Mais sees this kind of crammer as doomed; his certainty of his own rightness making his downfall as inevitable as that of Coriolanus or the aristocrats in the French Revolution. He can conceive of no other form of real education. In this he is like Duckworth's Mr. Withers, who insists that Latin verses must be for all, and that they are of particular importance to the backward pupils. Making Latin verses, he insists, forces a boy to think, to exercise his powers of imagination, and to extend his knowledge of grammar and syntax. But above all, there is the moral benefit. To the applause of the rest of the staff he proclaims that there is too much molly-coddling of pupils.

"A boy who after a hard struggle has achieved a pentameter feels a certain moral exhilaration. He has stuck to an extremely distasteful task, and he has pulled the thing through. There is too much softness in modern educational methods." (Hear, hear.)

2

It is clear that most of the classics masters discussed here are viewed at best ironically and at worst with antipathy.

In the face of such an overwhelmingly unfavourable impression given of classics teaching in the schools, it would be hard to take seriously the praise of the tradition put into the mouths of fictional teachers, were it not for the fact that the same comments occur in factual educational works. Even in the Great War, Dr. Crees - himself a classical scholar, of course - could write magisterially that "no master, whatever his private predilections, can contemplate without dismay a School in which Greek does not flourish".<sup>3</sup>

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 299.

2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 32-3.

3 J. H. E. Crees, Didascalus Patiens, 1915, p. 172.

Even King in Stalky & Co. and the traditionalists of The Lanchester Tradition would hardly have gone so far. In Joan and Peter, 1918, when Oswald toured schools to examine the curriculum that would be offered to Peter, he became increasingly sceptical of the claims made for classics in "strengthening and disciplining the mind" or as an essential for writing English "beautifully and precisely" made by headmasters who themselves notably lacked these qualities.

These subjects were for the most part being slackly, tediously, and altogether badly taught to boys who found no element of interest in them, the boys were as a class acquiring a distaste and contempt for learning thus presented, and a subtle, wide demoralisation ensued. They found a justification for cribs and every possible device for shirking work in the utter remoteness and uselessness of these main subjects ... 1

It was not just because of the "utter remoteness and uselessness" of Latin and Greek that they were "slackly, tediously, and altogether badly taught". Much of the English teaching described in the period employs similar methods drawn directly from Classics: learning by heart, concentration on the meanings of words and allusions, formal analysis using the terms of Latin grammar. The range of literature is firmly restricted. In one girls' school there is a "stringent" rule that "no story-books are allowed to be concealed in a school-desk, or to be read during preparation", and Jane Eyre in particular is "not allowed to be read at any time".<sup>2</sup> When Doctor Senior takes a class for English literature, his method is to repeat lines from Gray's "Elegy", and to ask the class - sitting in order of ability - questions about words and phrases, passing them down the line when he gets an incorrect answer, but apparently never providing the correct one. So he asks: "The first boy - what can you tell me about the curfew?" and, when he reaches the line, "The rude Forefathers of the hamlet sleep" asks the second boy, "What does that line mean?".

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1 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., p. 207.

2 L. T. Meade, A World of Girls, 1886, p. 71.



Now and again he stopped short and demanded an explanation of some obscure phrase, the answers to which were now correct, now hazy, now brilliantly original. On the whole it was not satisfactory; and when for a change the Doctor gave up reciting, and made the boys read, the effect was still worse. 1

After a series of misreadings, the unfortunate boy at the bottom desk reads "swain" as "swine", and "This was a little too much". The Doctor denounces him as a dunce, and proceeds to examine him in a variety of subjects.

As might be expected, the exhibition was a miserable one; Bramble was found wanting in every particular ... The doctor did not spare him. He went ruthlessly on - exposing the boy's ignorance, first in one thing, then another. Bramble stood and trembled and perspired before him, and wished he was dead, but the questions still came on. 2

At the end of the lesson, after the Doctor has sternly told the boys that they must work harder and "stick like men" to their lessons, "most of them felt very much ashamed of themselves; and nearly everyone felt his veneration and admiration for the Doctor greatly heightened".<sup>3</sup> The tone of the whole passage suggests that the Doctor's behaviour is to be seen as entirely normal and acceptable and that the boys have indeed done badly. The clear implication is that the teacher's role is testing, not teaching; he sets the work to be done, and the pupils must learn it. Inability is not a handicap to be pitied but culpability to be exposed and punished.

Over thirty years later, a similar view of English in the Shell is embodied in a portly master in an M.A. gown whose opening instruction is, "Shut your books. Write out the Rep." He spends his time correcting work while the pupils write out the poetry they have been set to learn, or copy from each other, chat and read paperbacked novels. When he has completed his marking, the master turns his attention back to the class.

"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 Phillip she bethought ..." 4

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- 1 Talbot Baines Reed, The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's, 1881-2 / 1971, p. 127.
  - 2 ibid., p. 128.
  - 3 ibid., p. 129.
  - 4 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 295.

The rest of the lesson consists of "a long disquisition on adjectival adjuncts and subordinate clauses", supported by references to Latin, and some work on Twelfth Night, during which boys in the back row write lines or learn Greek irregular verbs. The method of teaching Shakespeare is for the master to read 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 watered-down details about the lives of Penthesilea, Ariadne, and other classical favourites.

... An air of supreme boredom and lassitude is evident on every face in the room ...

1

The same principles recur in the descriptions of teaching of other subjects, and they are essentially the principles of Dr. Blimber and of the school in Hard Times. The emphasis is on the acquisition of facts or words, divorced from experiences, and learned by heart; lessons are periods of testing, of reinforcement, of giving marks, of moving children "up" and "down", of preparing for examinations. The reduction of history and geography to lists of names, places and dates is graphically caught in the account of Mr. Polly's schooldays under an elderly teacher who "explained nothing". When he left school at twelve, Polly

... thought of the present world no longer as a wonderland of experiences, but as geography and history, as the repeating of names that were hard to pronounce, and lists of products and populations and heights and lengths, and as lists and dates - oh! and Boredom indescribable.

2

The same kind of learning by rote was inflicted at Cavendish Academy,<sup>3</sup> on girls who "knew the 'principal facts and dates' of the reign of Edward I by rote backwards and forwards",<sup>4</sup> and on public schoolboys who copy down dictated notes from the master's undergraduate days and learn them by heart: "Dates and comparisons of characters, knowledge of laws and deft little paragraphs about

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 296-7.

2 H. G. Wells, The History of Mr. Polly, (1910) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 14.

3 H. G. Wells, Kipps, (1905) Harmondsworth, 1941, p. 16.

4 Dorothy Richardson, Backwater, (1916) 1967, p. 249.

things like Habeas Corpus, Barebones, and so on ... "<sup>1</sup> When Alan Clay begins teaching, he is introduced to the appropriate methods by the experienced Mr. George. Geography is a matter of reciting lists of facts.

"Capes of England," announced the master.

"Flamborough Head, Spurn Point, Lowestoft Ness, Naze, North Foreland, South Foreland, Dungeness ... "

"Rivers on the East Coast."

"Tweed, Tyne, Wear, Tees, Ouse, Trent, Witham, Welland, Nen, Great Ouse, Yare, Orwell, Stour, Colne, Chelmer, Thames."

"Tributaries of the Ouse."

"Swale, Ure, Nidd, Wharfe, Aire, Calder, Don, Derwent."

And so on. They did equally well without a map. The lads had never seen photos of the rivers. They were not rivers at all: they were names on a map. The chief things to know about the Thames were its tributaries on either bank, its chief towns, and its tricky spelling.

Any boy who forgot his geography had to write it out after school. One boy had to write fifty times, "Leicester on the Soar". (As if people in Leicester ever noticed the Soar! As if it had any beauty or utility in Leicester! As if a builder's plank wouldn't reach across it! The thing was to know it.) 2

Mathematics is being "set sums to do that he did not understand, and that no one made him understand";<sup>3</sup> "The boys had to get four sums right out of four";<sup>4</sup> doing countless examples of one type of sum, and contriving in Euclid "to learn propositions as a species of very difficult prose repetition".<sup>5</sup> The automatic process discounts originality or power of reasoning. Mais writes that boys can be driven through quadratic equations and logarithms, but

... 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. 6

"Foreign Languages" means working automatically through a chapter of the First French Course,<sup>7</sup> or "parsing and analysis".<sup>8</sup> Religious Instruction involves

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 301.

2 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 68-9.

3 The History of Mr. Polly, p. 13, and cf. Kipps, p. 15.

4 The Soul of a Teacher, p. 68.

5 A Schoolmaster's Diary, p. 300.

6 ibid., p. 300.

7 Kipps, p. 15.

8 Dorothy Richardson, Pointed Roofs, (1915) 1967, p. 29.



reading the Bible and catechism "with the utmost industry and an entire disregard of punctuation or significance",<sup>1</sup> incantatory repetitions of the Beatitudes until they are memorised,<sup>2</sup> or learning Paul's missionary journeys for a test.<sup>3</sup> In Science, Mr. Pennington presented model notes and diagrams to learn. He never did experiments, preferring to describe in a simplified form what ought to happen, because real experiments had a nasty habit of turning out wrongly, and involved work and expense.<sup>4</sup>

In the books from which these examples are taken, the teachers are frequently shown as idle or uninvolved while the "learning" goes on. Mr. Woodrow is often in a mood of "lethargy", in which he sits "inanimate at his desk, heedless of school affairs".<sup>5</sup> Mr. Pennington is described "sitting on the edge of a table, smothering a yawn occasionally".<sup>6</sup> Neither of the Grammar School masters encountered by the young Alan Clay "attempted" to teach. While the boys studied, "the master sat at his desk, Mr. Rowe as indifferent as a Buddhist idol, Mr. Blinks assiduously paring his nails". The pupils "never had a word of guidance or exposition from the masters". After the period of learning, they were called forward to stand in a semi-circle "while their information was automatically tested and translated into marks". When copy-books were used, "Mr. Rowe did not look at the writing at all, but inquired how many lines each boy had done, and awarded marks proportionately".<sup>7</sup>

From time to time there is an underlying or explicit suggestion that the system itself demands a teacher's adherence, that it is almost impossible to work differently. The system demonstrated by Mr. George is characterized by words like automatic, fixed, repetitive, monotonous, routine. However, he is also described as "a most successful and scientific teacher" - successful in

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- 1 Mr. Polly, p. 13 and cf. Kipps, p. 15.
  - 2 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 7-8.
  - 3 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, /1916/ /1929/, pp. 17-18.
  - 4 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, pp. 30-1.
  - 5 H. G. Wells, Kipps, (1905) Harmondsworth, 1941, p. 15.
  - 6 The New Machiavelli, p. 29.
  - 7 The Soul of a Teacher, pp. 30-1.

that he drives home facts effectively, though not necessarily accompanied by any understanding.

The teacher had to supply a perpetual stream of information, and the lads had to soak it up like sponges. The power of absorbing facts was the prime faculty for getting to the top of the class ...

The headmaster did not deceive himself. He knew that the business was apt to be exasperating: but a teacher had to harden his heart and keep on. There was nothing for it but a steady and persistent grinding away ...

1

Examination success, and any form of payment by results, seem to establish a pattern of what the teacher "had to" do; there is "nothing for it" but to comply.

H. G. Wells similarly describes in the teaching style of Arthur Remington the mechanistic methods suited to earning grants through examination successes. It involved using textbooks that gave "copies and models and instructions" geared precisely to the tests.

Every section of each book was written in the idiom found to be most satisfactory to the examiners, and test questions extracted from papers set in former years were appended to every chapter. By means of these last the teacher was able to train his class to the highest level of grant-earning efficiency, and very naturally he cast all other methods of exposition aside. First he posed his pupils with questions and then dictated model replies.

2

There are fragmentary indications that some authors - particularly those who had taught themselves - were aware that livelier teaching was going on, and that some enlightened masters and mistresses actually tried to make learning easy and enjoyable. The overwhelming impression, however, is that they were a tiny minority. Mr. Gerant turned history into "a living romance", encouraging his pupils to re-live the issues and argue the motives of the past.

Gerant saw in history something more than a mere collection of examination questions. He taught boys to think out things for themselves. He made them realize that even in the Middle Ages men had reasons for what they did. The weekly debates were fiercely contested. Boys discussed with immense zeal the characters of statesmen long dead and turned to clay.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 69-70.

2 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, p. 29.

3 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 246.

However, it is also made clear that Mr. Gerant is an exception. Elsewhere in the school, the style of history teaching in fashion was the traditional one of boys learning and masters testing: "to set the form thirty pages of some text-book", followed by "twenty questions designed to baffle the lazy boy who had not got up the tricky points".<sup>1</sup> In an earlier novel, the usher, Mr. Shalders does something to bring history alive, by his own enthusiasm and by stirring up controversy when he champions the French general Murat against the patriotism of the English schoolboys.<sup>2</sup> Similarly, the young Miss Durand causes "amazement and annoyance", even outrage, to the traditionalists by her style of history teaching. She gets the girls out of their desks, arranges them in groups, encourages them to discuss pictures, talks "fast and eagerly" about living conditions in the past, and tells exciting stories which she knows will intrigue her girls. According to the author, she had "quaint and unorthodox ways of insinuating facts into her pupils' minds".<sup>3</sup> She exclaims to an older teacher in exasperation about the current syllabus and methods of teaching:

"Oh, Miss Hartill, doesn't it seem crazy, though, to keep those children at Latin exercises, and the exports of Lower Tooting, and Bills of Attainder in the reign of Queen Anne, before they know about things like Napoleon, and Homer, and the Panama Canal? ... Oh, it makes me so wild! It's like stuffing them with pea-nuts, when one has got a basket of peaches on one's arm. It isn't education! It's goose-cramming!"<sup>4</sup>

Much of the livelier teaching represented in novels seems to be in English lessons - perhaps because such lessons are easier to convey in print or perhaps because a number of authors had themselves experience of teaching English. Mr. Cranstone did not simply select unusual topics for writing, he encouraged his boys to write serial stories in weekly episodes, to imitate the style of other authors, to rehandle passages from novels, to "translate" pictures into

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1 The Harrovians, p. 246.

2 George Meredith, Lord Ormont and his Aminta, /1894/ 1899, pp. 9-15.

3 Clemence Dane, Regiment of Women, (1917) 1927, pp. 9, 28.

4 ibid., p. 19.



words and vice-versa. He would make pupils read their work aloud and get the rest of the class to criticise and discuss. In literature, he stirred up curiosity and created a desire to read rather than ordering his classes to read as a task.<sup>1</sup> S. P. B. Mais says of his fictional journal-keeper, Patrick Traherne, that "he laid immense stress on the teaching of English", and the diary contains a number of references to his developing practice. Getting the boys to act Shakespeare rather than reading in their desks was seen as "a grave departure from precedent". Rather than give them stock essays to write, he encouraged short stories, one-act plays and original verses. It was extraordinary, he thought, that in public schools boys were expected to produce original verse compositions in Greek and Latin, but never in their own language. He managed to convey something of his enthusiasm for books by reading interesting extracts to whet the boys' enthusiasm, by lending his own books (the school library being inadequate), by choosing works close to their interests, and by strewing his classroom with books, papers and magazines. He read them short stories, and asked them to re-handle the events from the viewpoint of another character. He looks forward to the production of form magazines, to boys presenting their own literary discourses to the class, and to plays "written, produced and acted by each form".<sup>2</sup> As with the history teaching previously mentioned, such work - which was later to become conventional practice in its turn - was thrown into relief by what other teachers were doing. Traherne comments that in the brief amount of time allocated to English, most masters do not know what to teach.

Some spend the time in parsing and analysing, though what utilitarian benefits are to accrue 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.

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1 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 51-3.

2 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 33-4, 49, 68-9, 129-31,

3 ibid., p. 33, and cf. p. 68.

314-6.

Another master was furious with Traherne for reading "The Everlasting Mercy" to his sets when the poem came out, on the grounds that "so foul-mouthed and immoral-minded a poet" as Masefield should not be introduced to boys.<sup>1</sup>

New methods, of course, are not necessarily good ones. There are ironic descriptions of the attempt by Mr. Simmonds to introduce Genesis in the light of higher criticism and comparative religion,<sup>2</sup> and of the hazily understood use of look-and-say reading, graphic arithmetic and "progressive" notions of art by Miss Mills, who "regarded kindergarten as a special subject".<sup>3</sup> There are also suggestions that quite conventional teaching methods can be successful if the teacher is a "good" one.

Apart from the generalised approving comments on particular individuals, there are occasional attempts to suggest in narrative what being a "good" teacher means. It is nearly always inspirational, defined in terms of influence on a particular pupil, and concerned with humane values.<sup>4</sup> It is also presented as being quite exceptional, outside the ordinary run of school experience. An occasion of this kind is described in such terms as a "gift ... that can never be exhausted", one of those "exceptional instances", "illuminating, extending, revealing", "vivid life", awaking "love" of the subject, making it "live", offering a sense of "significance". It is contrasted with the aridity of other lessons, in which pupils have "drudged" through texts, with masters who have to "mug up notes", "grinding" at "literal translation", bored with "routine" work, with the books "recommended by teachers of science" and the "arid realism" of novels or with humdrum vocational preparation to become "a stockbroker or an engineer".<sup>5</sup> The incidents in the three novels from which

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1 *ibid.*, p. 130.

2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 232-4.

3 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., pp. 98-101.

4 F. R. G. Duckworth writes at this time: "Teaching is a dramatic art, and the teacher must be prodigal of his personality, like the actor. His self must always be exceeding its bounds, and for a moment permeate all his pupils." From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 85.

5 Henry Newbolt, The Twymans, 1911, pp. 112-5; E. F. Benson, David Blaize, /1916/ /1929/, pp. 90-5, 250-1; Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, 1917 /1930/, pp. 92-3, 185-7.

these phrases come are concerned with quite different situations and with pupils of very different ages, but the essentials are the same in each case.

In Newbolt's story, Mr. Sherwin offers to read the Odyssey with Percival out of school hours. The boy accepts, hardly realising his "good fortune", because he thinks of the master as a friend, "a man whom he liked", and one whose taste had previously "confirmed and enriched his own". Little direct impression of the teaching is given beyond the fact that they read quickly, without needing dictionary or grammar, and that "the better part of every evening was consumed in digressions". The emphasis is given by the series of images used to describe the process. Studying with Sherwin was:

... to walk in a hall of mirrors, all the splendours of literature flashing back light upon each other, setting each other forth in new aspects, illuminating, extending, revealing.

1

Newbolt clearly approved of this metaphor, since he used it again, slightly varied, only a page later. A vaguely suggested thirst for "the waters that are beneath the earth and above it" is satisfied for those who "tramped with" Sherwin, for they "welled up on every page, or fell in the finest dew". In the texts, Percival felt "the presence of a supernal power", "a continual suggestion of feeling, of mystery, of the underlying significance of things". Sherwin himself has something "Pythian or Sybilline" about him; his tobacco smoke surrounds him like incense; his appearance is "as classic and as wise as Athene's owl"; his speech is "winged". The rather grandiose images are not supported by much specific reference to Sherwin's practice beyond praise of his "unwearying enthusiasm", his ability to find the "apt phrase", and his power "to touch the words he had just read with a meaning never before perceived, never afterwards forgotten".

E. F. Benson is prepared to take greater risks in David Blaize, where he gives more of the substance of the lessons that are alleged to have been so effective. There are two particular examples of what might be called "charismatic" teaching, conveying an experience rather than facts. There is

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1 Henry Newbolt, The Twymans, 1911, p. 113.



a direct description of David's prep. school headmaster teaching Keats's "Ode to a Nightingale" out of doors on a summer day, heavily emotionally based, though the master's introduction, with its links between the boys' world and Keats's and its deliberate shifts of register, rings true enough. The other lesson is presented at second-hand. Maddox describes to David a Greek lesson with the Head of Marchester, which awakens in him some sense of the humanity of Greek culture. The same basic idea, that the real purpose of teaching is to affect the personality, is implied by phrases in both. The words of Keats "became part of him", poetry and music "meant to you what you were capable of finding in them", "Some flower must have opened in his brain today", "It will mean that Greek has got into your blood, that it's part of you", "This sudden illumination with regard to the Greeks fed his contemplation." The images are organic.

The lesson on Keats is marked by its "entire informality", and by "the absence of the sense that they were being taught and had got to learn". The Head depends largely on the "extraordinary" power of his reading and the force of his own feelings; at times his voice "trembled" or "shook with emotion". He puts no questions to the class, but urges them to ask him questions, explaining words, and suggesting that there are often no simple answers because poetry "could mean different things to different people". The lesson ends with a silence after his second reading of the Ode, and as the class disperses David waits to ask about Keats, and to be lent the volume to read for himself. Because not too many claims are made for the lesson, because David is the only pupil apparently much affected (and even he hurries off after the others to the serious business of bathing), the incident is perhaps more convincing than the classics lessons with senior pupils in the novel or in The Loom of Youth. What is perhaps most important, though, in all these accounts of teachers' varying practice is that they centre attention on professional abilities. The representation of what seems good or bad teaching, the consideration of how individuals work with pupils, becomes an increasingly important element in the portrayal of teacher figures and in discriminating between them.

## TRADITIONALISTS AND PROGRESSIVES

One indication of increasing awareness of social and educational change, accelerated at the end of this period by the 1914-18 War, is the popularity of "traditionalists versus progressives" as a theme for fiction. In part this overlaps with a general tendency for the teachers of each new generation to imagine that their ways are superior to those of the old and tired whom they are replacing. S. P. B. Mais wrote in 1916:

There is always a danger in most masters' meetings of settling down into two rabid camps, age versus youth; the old men openly deriding the proposals of the young men; the young men covertly sneering at the antiquated, obsolete methods of the old.

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Another author catches the characteristic note of conviction that his ways represent progress when describing how he took over a small country grammar school from his predecessor,

... an easy-going, slovenly old gentleman, rather a favourite with the boys than otherwise, in spite of a somewhat violent temper, but rusty in his scholarship, and quite behind the age in all that relates to school management; his reign had evidently been an inefficient despotism tempered by many holidays. People spoke with a certain kindly regret of "old Grove" ...

2

The tone here is urbane, tolerant, amused; old Grove was basically likeable, even though "rusty", "inefficient" and "behind the age". Similar experiences must have been common at earlier periods, but it is the conviction that improvement is associated with new methods, and the making explicit of a struggle between old and new, that marks this period.

An expanded sketch of the pressures under which a new, innovatory teacher might have to work in the later part of the nineteenth century is given in Charlotte M. Yonge's Our New Mistress, appropriately sub-titled "Changes at Brookfield Earl". In this novel an efficient, trained teacher with moderately progressive ideas replaces an untrained, motherly woman as

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 156.

2 /A. R. H. Moncrieff/, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 214.

schoolmistress in a conventional village. The publisher's announcement says accurately enough:

It depicts with much truth to life the difficulties met with by a young trained schoolmistress in taking charge of a village school where innovations are not welcomed. Jessie Martin, however, is equal to the task before her. Animated by the highest motives and possessing a large fund of delicate tact and prudence, she overcomes the scruples of the villagers, by a timely display of firmness conquers the insolence of some vulgar bullying mothers, and finally emerges successfully from all trouble and difficulties. 1

Much of the effect is gained by the dual, at times multiple, focus of the book. The first six chapters, and others at intervals, are told by a girl student-teacher who resents the new mistress, a number of others are from the new teacher's log-book, and some consist of letters from other characters involved. The same events are thus shown from different viewpoints to demonstrate how misunderstandings can occur. Despite her occasional sulkiness, the student-teacher records a general improvement brought about by a reforming teacher:

There was no doubt that the children got on well, and were eager about their work and places, and cared to come to school. Nor was there near so much little foolish naughtiness ... Yes, the children did like her, and I am sure the vicar did; and we pupil-teachers enjoyed our lessons after the first, and felt ourselves to be getting on better than ever we had done before. 2

Mrs. Bolton, the infants' mistress and daughter of the previous schoolmistress, is a traditionalist. She is "really hurt to hear people say that the school was improved by all these new-fangled ways, which she hated". She rejects Miss Martin's offers of help and materials, saying that "she didn't want to make no change", and complaining at home of the "uppishness" of "young things" who thought themselves superior, and who practised new activities that were "mere stuff and nonsense, just wasting the children's time and saving oneself

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1 National Society's Depository list of books at end of volume, pp. 7-8.  
2 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, 1888, pp. 26-7.



trouble in teaching them what could be of use".<sup>1</sup> The book chronicles the way in which by degrees Miss Martin, with her new methods and attitudes, wins over the traditional villagers, the student-teachers and even the very conservative school governors.

In the early years of the twentieth century, the concern is not simply with the clash between youth and age, between new and old styles, but with an acknowledged struggle between teachers who consciously see themselves as representatives of traditional or progressive values. In Stalky & Co., 1899, Kipling caught the way in which this might be related to subject loyalties: the classicists resisting the advance of "modern" subjects in general, and science in particular. This half-playful, half-genuine antagonism is made more explicit in a later Stalky story, "Regulus", 1917. King's fifth form classics lesson is interrupted by whiffs of chlorine gas from Hartopp's science lesson on the "newly established Modern Side". He encourages his pupils to make jokes about the "so-called Moderns", and ends his period with a "discourse on manners, morals, and respect for authority as distinct from bottled gases ..."<sup>2</sup> In a later argument, the two men stigmatise each other's disciplines as "inculcating unrelated facts about chlorine, for instance, all of which may be proved fallacious by the time the boys grow up", and "Chinese reiteration of uncomprehended syllables in a dead tongue".<sup>3</sup> Hartopp suggests that from hundreds of hours of classics, King's pupils only take away twenty unrelated Latin tags. King retorts that even a smattering of Horace or Virgil attains "what we poor devils of ushers are striving after", "Balance, proportion, perspective - life. Your scientific man is the unrelated animal - the beast without background."<sup>4</sup> At ten o'clock that night the two men are still sparring

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1 *ibid.*, p. 27.

2 Rudyard Kipling, A Diversity of Creatures, 1917, pp. 247-51.

3 *ibid.*, p. 261.

4 *ibid.*, p. 262.

in the Chaplain's room, "classical versus modern as usual".<sup>1</sup> King seems to draw at times from Matthew Arnold, and his view of Hartopp's activities may have been intended to suggest acquaintance with Arnold's mocking sketch of Archimedes Silverpump in Friendship's Garland, 1871. This served to focus a wider attack on "modern" claims for "utility" and "relevance" in the curriculum. Silverpump's pretensions are meant to be undermined by the clash between the imposing title of Lycurgus House Academy and its locality in Peckham, by his foreign Ph.D., and by the fact that he prepared the wealthy radical manufacturer Bottles for his commercial career. Most of all, he is defined by the words put into his mouth:

"We must be men of our age," he used to say. "Useful knowledge, living languages, and the forming of the mind through observation and experiment, these are the fundamental articles of my educational creed." Or, as I have heard his pupil Bottles put it in his expansive moments after dinner ...: "Original man, Silverpump! fine mind! fine system! None of your antiquated rubbish - all practical work - latest discoveries in science - mind constantly kept excited - lots of interesting experiments - lights of all colours - fizz! fizz! bang! bang! That's what I call forming a man!" 2

In the later part of this period, however, the impression gained from books in which the ancients and moderns do battle is that "traditional" and "established" have ceased to be the potent terms of approval which once they were. The clash of attitudes is a major element in books like Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, Of Human Bondage, 1915, The Lanchester Tradition, 1915, The Loom of Youth, 1917, and several of the books of S. P. B. Mais. In these novels, although teachers with "advanced" views may be shown as comical or misguided, the conservatives are presented even more critically, and - most significantly - they are generally the losers.

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1 ibid., p. 269. - A similar clash, "science versus classics", is the basis of the short story "Powers of Observation" in F. R. G. Duckworth's From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 76 ff.

2 Matthew Arnold, Friendship's Garland, letter VI (1871), in Culture and Anarchy with Friendship's Garland, Ann Arbor, University of Michigan Press, 1965, pp. 70-1.

Some impression of what it seemed like to be deliberately "modern" at the time can be formed by putting together the brief sketches of three teachers: Mr. Tipham, Mr. Ferrers and Miss Inger. In each case, social and curricular views tend to be related, obviously or more subtly, to particular styles of dress or appearance and to certain patterns of behaviour. The two men are both exaggerated figures, creating very different impressions because of the authors' conflicting attitudes.

Bradby's Mr. Tipham is the first appointment made at Chiltern by the newly-appointed reforming Headmaster, Mr. Flaggon, a man with no previous experience of public schools from the inside. Anxious to strengthen the intellectual side at the expense of the athletic, Mr. Flaggon chose this Cambridge double first, who did not prove a success. Mr. Tipham's two fixed ideas were that "art consists in depicting disagreeable things in a disagreeable way" and that the significant conflict of the twentieth century was between "convention, which is always wrong, and Nature, which is always right".<sup>1</sup> Most of the details given about Mr. Tipham are those stock ones of the pretentious, grubby, opinionated man of strong aesthetic views who patronises those around him. He had been prominent at the University, where:

... he had worn strange clothes, founded a literary society ... and he had invented a new savoury. His slightly tilted nose and full cheeks gave him an air of confidence which unfriendly critics described as conceit, while the long brown hair, drawn back over the temples and plastered down with fragrant oils, the orange tie and loose green jacket, proclaimed that he was one of those for whom art is not merely a hobby but an integral part of life ... The late Victorians might have called him untidy and even unwashed; but at no period in English history would he have been branded as modest. 2

When he comes to Chiltern, Mr. Tipham deliberately defies the school's traditions "in most unnecessary and offensive ways", smoking in public, dressing with "unblushing aestheticism", showing no respect for age and experience, and

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1 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 53.  
2 ibid., p. 53.



spending his time "shocking the masters".<sup>1</sup> This introduction, his later intolerant behaviour with his colleagues, and the lack of success in the classroom which leads to his resignation, all suggest an incompetent teacher. It is interesting to contrast Mr. Tiphham with Mr. Ferrers in a novel only four years later. The difference, which might partly be explained by the discrepancy in age between the two authors, is not in the characteristics stressed on first appearance but on the valuation later placed on the teachers.

Ferrers is the representative of "progressive" ideas in The Loom of Youth, 1917. Like Tiphham, he also appears at first as an almost absurd figure, characterised by Tester as "a bounder". He also dresses unconventionally, draws attention by his enthusiasm, talks loudly with gestures, and seems out of place in the traditional school. Ferrers, writes Waugh,

... had banged into the cloistered Fernhurst life, bubbling over with the ideas of the rising generation, intolerant of prejudice and tradition, clamorous for reform ... Personality was written on every feature of his face, every movement was typical of youthful vigour and action. His half-contemptuous swing suggested a complete scorn of everything known before 1912.

2

Unlike Tiphham, however, Ferrers is presented as an effective teacher and a major influence on a number of the boys, especially Gordon. His effect is "startling" on pupils' tastes and opinions; individuals are "uplifted" by him.<sup>3</sup> His position is defined in the debate when he speaks passionately for modern, as opposed to classical, education.<sup>4</sup> He even greets the outbreak of war with enthusiasm, because "There's a real chance now of sweeping away the old outworn traditions".<sup>5</sup> Near the end of the book, in another debate, he makes "a volcanic attack on the whole Public School system", and significantly all the speakers support him.<sup>6</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 54.

2 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, 1917 [1930], p. 205.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 305-6, 222-3.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 171-2.

5 *ibid.*, p. 255.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 304-5.

In his picture of Miss Inger in The Rainbow, 1918, Lawrence stresses her independence as a deliberately "progressive" woman teacher, partly by using to describe her terms that were more conventionally used of men.

She was:

... a fearless-seeming clean type of modern girl whose very independence betrays her sorrow. She was clever, and expert in what she did, accurate, quick, commanding. 1

In the following lines he writes of the way she "carried her head high", her "look of nobility", her "ringing" voice, her "blue, clear, proud" eyes, her "fine-mettled, scrupulously groomed person", her "unyielding mind", her "fine, upright, athletic bearing, and her indomitably proud nature". All these qualities were frequently attributed to the romantic heroes of novels.

Lawrence himself clinches the impression in the sentence which ends the description: "She was proud and free as a man, yet exquisite as a woman."<sup>2</sup>

Winifred Inger is progressive in her views, interested in the Women's Movement, sceptical about conventional religion, introducing Ursula to the "strange world" of new ideas. Her chief break with tradition, however, is her acceptance of the idea of love, physically expressed, between teacher and pupil.<sup>3</sup> More seriously and less superficially than the two men, she is shown with her strengths and weaknesses as deliberately choosing a new "model" of teacher behaviour.

Two novels which deliberately examine the conflict between traditionalists and progressives are The Lanchester Tradition, 1913, and Of Human Bondage, 1915. Maugham's novel ranges much more widely, but Bradby's short book is almost wholly concerned with this topic. Set in an essentially conventional English public school, it is much occupied with the "tradition" of the title, which is very differently interpreted.

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1 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1918) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 336.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 336-7.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 341-3.

To the general public it stands for the Classics and faith in the educational value of Latin verse. To the masters it means a firm belief in the efficacy of the methods, or absence of methods, to which they have become attached through long habit.

1

In fact, it later transpires from a study of Lanchester's writings that, far from wishing to establish a tradition, he was an innovator of his own time, concerned to change the school. In the novel, a reforming headmaster, Mr. Flaggon, comes into conflict with the conservative Mr. Chowdler. Each man seems to embody for the other the worst features of the opposing party, so that both "become conscious of a kind of physical distaste for one another".<sup>2</sup> Mr. Chowdler embodies the traditional attitudes among the staff at Chiltern.

Mr. Chowdler owed his reputation for strength, not to any breadth of view or depth of sympathetic insight, but to a subline unconsciousness of his own limitations. Narrow but concentrated, with an aggressive will and a brusque intolerance of all who differed from him, he was a fighter who loved fighting for its own sake and who triumphed through the sheer exhaustion of his enemies ...

3

For years he had dominated the aging Dr. Gussy, and had largely controlled the destinies of the school by appealing to what he called "our grand old Lanchester tradition",<sup>4</sup> and to intense house and school patriotisms. It is inevitable that Chowdler should resent, and eventually confront, a young, inexperienced and reforming headmaster like Mr. Flaggon. Newspapers hail the new appointment as "the beginning of a new era", "the death-blow to an antiquated tradition", and "a daring but interesting experiment".<sup>5</sup> To many masters, the stress on reform, change and innovation seems unpalatable.

Flaggon's appointment may have been fortuitous, and his idealism may lead him into mistakes, but it is clear that the thrust of the book is to convince readers of his basic rightness, which carries all but the most intransigent members of staff with him. His attitude towards changes in the

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1 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 14.

2 *ibid.*, p. 29

3 *ibid.*, p. 22.

4 *ibid.*, p. 39.

5 *ibid.*, p. 21.



curriculum, the raising of the level of scholarship in the school, and the establishment of better discipline are all welcomed. After the climactic investigation into "hideous offences" (presumably homosexuality), Bradby comments:

Mr. Flaggon's prompt and fearless handling of the affair, the words which he had spoken to the school, his genuine hatred of the evil thing and, with it all, his buoyant faith in the ultimate triumph of good influences, had made a deep impression on the masters. They realised that, in spite of youth and inexperience, the new headmaster was a man ...

1

At the end of the novel, the detached, sardonic Mr. Bent, the one uncommitted character on the staff, allies himself with Flaggon. For fifteen years he had lived in "an atmosphere of bunkum and make-believe that have no relation to facts". He prefers to commit himself to working for the new headmaster's ideals, "decency, order, and an education that - that is educational".<sup>2</sup> It is not just Chowdler that is overthrown, but the reactionary attitude he embodies. When he is finally defeated by the casting vote in the Governing Council, he declines to withdraw before the end of the year. "No martyr has ever stood at the stake with a prouder or more defiant mien."<sup>3</sup> At the final chapel service this man, who has been presented as an insensitive burly figure, is suddenly racked by sobs. It is not remorse or regret, writes Bradby.

Something there was of the bitterness of defeat, and something of the grief of a sanguine man who has lost an only child. Mr. Chowdler had loved Chiltern with all the strength of a robust and unimaginative nature; and in a few short months he had seen his roots in the past and his heritage in the future destroyed, utterly and for ever.

4

Flaggon's victory, though deserved and necessary, is somehow muted. Bradby's own position comes through as moderate, not radical.

Maugham shows the intense conservatism of the staff of King's, Tercanbury, (which "prided itself on its antiquity") at the approach of change.

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1    *ibid.*, p. 133.

2    *ibid.*, p. 138.

3    *ibid.*, p. 146.

4    *ibid.*, p. 150.

The conservatism is partly social and party educational:

The masters had no patience with modern ideas of education, which they read of sometimes in The Times or The Guardian, and hoped fervently that King's School would remain true to its old traditions.

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It is rooted in the narrowness of the world from which the staff are drawn: all must be graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, ordained and bachelors, and at the time of the story all are middle-aged.<sup>2</sup> The dismay of the staff at the appointment of Tom Perkins as their new headmaster is partly because of their memories of him as "not a gentleman" and as "the son of a bankrupt linen-draper"<sup>3</sup> but more because of their realisation that an era is ending. One speaks for them all when he says, "The only thing is to prepare ourselves for changes".<sup>4</sup> They suspect the new headmaster's enthusiasm, which seems to them "ill-bred" and "ungentlemanly".

Enthusiasm meant change. They had goose-flesh when they thought of all the pleasant old habits which stood in imminent danger. They hardly dared to look forward to the future.

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Despite their "stubborn resistance" and cries of, "It's against all our traditions", the "character of the school" gradually alters as new men with professional skills are brought in.<sup>6</sup>

It might seem from this critical picture of the die-hards, that Maugham presents the new headmaster as an idealised reformer in a reactionary school society. Whereas the assistant masters are shown as absurd, vicious or incompetent - and possibly all three - Perkins was the school's "finest classical scholar", had "a brilliant career" at Oxford, gained a double first, entered Holy Orders, and showed himself "admirably suited" for teaching at Wellington and Rugby.<sup>7</sup> He arrived at Tercanbury as a dynamic man of

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1 W. Somerset Maugham, Of Human Bondage, (1915) 1966, p. 76.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 75-7.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 78, 80.

4 *ibid.*, p. 80.

5 *ibid.*, p. 82.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 84-5.

7 *ibid.*, p. 79.

thirty-two. Within a year, Perkins has begun a programme of innovation: new, well-qualified staff who are not ordained, a laboratory, army classes, plans for expansion, a stress on knowledge rather than cramming. He shows himself understanding and sensitive when Philip is sent to him by the furious Mr. Gordon, and it is not surprising that the boy "conceived for his headmaster a dog-like adoration".<sup>1</sup>

From this point on, however, the author's view of the Headmaster's character seems to shift as his function in the novel alters. At first he seemed to embody the attack on outworn and snobbish educational and social ideas. Later he seems to represent a conventional and conservative view himself which Philip rejects as he grows older. It could be maintained that this section of the novel is seen through Philip's eyes, but in fact the Head's character does not seem consistent. The change comes after the confirmation classes, when Perkins tries to suggest that Philip should think of his club-foot as a sign of God's favour.<sup>2</sup> Philip's rejection of school and religion, his yearning for freedom, should have been familiar enough responses to the experienced and sensitive teacher that Perkins has seemed to be. Yet he is presented as speaking accusingly, exclaiming that Philip's work is "slovenly and bad", threatening a bad report, telling him that this has cost his promotion to monitor, and using the scholarship exams as a lever. When these measures have no effect, he writes a report that is "vitriolic", curtly refuses Philip's requests and is taken aback when Philip sticks to his decision to leave the school. "Mr. Perkins, like many men who manage things by their personal influence, grew a little impatient when his power was not immediately manifest."<sup>3</sup>

By the end of the period, under the pressure of the war, and the accompanying sense of a need for change, the image of the enthusiastic young teacher shackled by a reactionary system became dominant. A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918,

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 91-2, 96.

2 *ibid.*, p. 99.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 113-4, 118, 122, 130.



is largely given over to chronicling the way in which a keen master with new ideas is unsympathetically greeted by his traditional colleagues. Anyone who has "the effrontery to propose any alteration or reform" is met with "a storm of abuse" and cries of "Sacrilege"; Traherne himself is ostracised for criticising "age-old traditions"; Rowntree takes no notice of the conventions, "and every one is moving Heaven and Earth to have him sacked".<sup>1</sup> Two years earlier Mais had described gloomily the traditionalism which older teachers embody and endeavour to inculcate in young colleagues and in their pupils.

... they take the age-long accepted opinions of their fathers, and eye with suspicious horror any theorists who dare to suggest that innovations might occasionally be beneficial to the country.

It is this stereotyped conservatism that is so dangerous a sign of the times in our great schools. Boys and masters alike are eaten up by tradition; it has become so much a religion to them that any suggestion of novel precepts is regarded as idolatry.

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<sup>1</sup> S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 38, 226, 111.  
<sup>2</sup> S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 88.

## TEACHERS AS ANTAGONISTS

Perhaps as a result of books more frequently being written from direct experience of teaching, tensions and antagonisms between members of staff are represented more often and more clearly in this period. Previously it had not been uncommon to suggest conflict between the headmaster as employer and his assistants; the situation inevitably predicted this. What seems new is the increasing concern for mutual animosities between those assistants: as rival housemasters, as representatives of different subjects, as people of different ages and temperaments. Some of these divisions have been considered in previous sections of this chapter. The clash is presented at its most savage in Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, but it is foreshadowed in earlier works.

The pressures on masters who have to live closely together and to provide a united front, existing in that "curious mixture of isolation and intimacy, of friendliness and animosity," are analysed by A. H. Gilkes in a novel of 1894.

... in many cases they were not even friends, but regarded each other with feelings often varying only between indignation and contempt. They were men of very different tempers, bound like England and Ireland into a geographical union; their opinions were powerless to keep them long isolated, because of the union which their profession forced upon them. 1

The Master of the Shell indicates how quickly a new master is thrust into alliances and animosities. The letter to Mark Railsford which begins the book hints that his friend Grover finds some masters hard to get on with, and when Mark arrives at the school and is introduced to his future colleagues by Grover, some "received him with a friendly greeting, others eyed him doubtfully, and one or two bristled up grimly".<sup>2</sup> When Railsford's eyes meet those of Bickers, even before he has spoken a word to the man, "it was a declaration of war to the knife on one side, hurled back defiantly on the other".<sup>3</sup> When the

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1 A. H. Gilkes, The Thing that Hath Been, 1894, p. 58.

2 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, 1894 / 1913, p. 36.

3 ibid., p. 37.

Headmaster, Dr. Ponsford, introduces Railsford to his future colleagues in the "masters' withdrawing-room", he undergoes a series of encounters, "some of which gave him pleasure, some disappointment, some misgivings, and one at least roused his anger".<sup>1</sup> The developing feud with Bickers is in part caused by the other master's officiousness, but in part by Railsford's own touchiness and by the way in which Moss and Grover have predisposed him to think. When Bickers has restored order in Mark's house during his absence, Railsford moodily refuses to shake his hand, and Reed discusses briefly how the state of the relationship undermines his judgment of the situation:

He was in the wrong, and he knew it. And yet the manner in which the rebuke had been administered was such as no man of spirit could cheerfully endure. The one idea in his mind was, not how to punish the house for its disorder, but how to settle scores with Bickers for restoring order; not how to admonish the incompetent prefects, but how to justify them against their accuser.

2

Matters reach their climax when Bickers is assaulted and suspects Railsford, if not of being involved then of holding back knowledge of who was guilty. His ungrounded suspicions are matched by Mark's deliberately provocative manner, and when he laughs at his colleague's rage:

Bickers was now fairly beside himself, or he would never have done what he did. He struck Railsford where he sat a blow on the mouth, which brought blood to his lips. This surely was the last card ...

3

At the end of the book, one of the two men has to leave, and after events enable Mark to withdraw his resignation Bickers drives away without further notice. Mutual antagonisms seem to have been made worse rather than better by the regular holding of the masters' session, a regular conference of the Grandcourt staff. In the absence of the headmaster, these meetings turn easily into a battleground for settling old scores.

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1    ibid., p. 40.  
2    ibid., p. 75.  
3    ibid., p. 168.



Reed comments after a number of such scenes:

... when two superior officers fly at one another's throats the spectacle may be interesting, and even amusing, to the onlooker; but I never heard of it doing anything towards the promotion of discipline or the encouragement of good tone among the rank and file. The quarrel of the two masters at Grandcourt certainly failed to do any good to the school ... 1

Staff conflicts are not usually as dramatic as the one between Railsford and Bickers, but they provide a frequent undertone in stories of school life. The rivalries between house-masters, for instance, are clear in Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895. It demands "more courage than might be supposed" for Mr. Selby to go to Mr. Brandiston in his efforts to clear Gerald of guilt. Mr. Brandiston, who is somewhat vain of his experience, prides himself on the way he runs his house, and he

... was known to be extremely impatient of all interference with his administration of it ... Any criticism of his house, any censure or dispraise of it, he resented. 2

Mr. Selby raises the matter very hesitantly, seeking a favourable occasion, and leading up the topic with care, and even then he has to accept reproof:

"I tell you what it is, Selby. When you have been a schoolmaster as long as I have, you will think twice before you begin trying to set other masters' houses in order." 3

In Stalky & Co., 1899, Kipling gives a vivid impression of what he calls "the infinitely petty confederacies of the Common-room".<sup>4</sup> The well-meaning Prout is "unlucky in that his conscience as a house-master impelled him to consult his associates"; "Left to himself, Prout would have made a sympathetic house-master; but he was never so left."<sup>5</sup> There is continual jealousy, rivalry and interference. King not only gives lofty advice ("Were I you, I should ...") and basks in assurance of the inferiority of other housemasters

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1 ibid., p. 279.

2 J. E. C. Welldon, Gerald Eversley's Friendship, 1895, p. 129.

3 ibid., p. 130. Compare similar references to House-masters' rivalries and suspicions of each other in G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, pp. 37-8, 95-7; and Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, pp. 68-9, where Berney is said to have hated Randall "as only one house-master can hate another".

4 R. Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 66.

5 ibid., pp. 14, 66.

("Now my house never dream of doing these things"), he also makes disparaging allusions to other houses and their masters in class.<sup>1</sup> In "An Unsavoury Interlude", there is a vigorous rendering of a common-room row, in which ironically it is King who protests, "Of all things I detest, I admit that anything verging on disloyalty among ourselves is the first."<sup>2</sup> After this, it takes the Chaplain a week to bring about enough understanding for the staff to talk together "without very much malice",<sup>3</sup> and even then they disagree on virtually every school topic they discuss.

Since the growth of antagonism from instinctive antipathy through trivial disagreements to serious conflict and finally to death is the major theme of Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, it would take too long to discuss that novel fully here. Briefly, Walpole catches the way in which minor matters cumulatively assume graver proportions. Perrin's monopolising of both baths in the morning is "inconsiderable", "a small matter", but for Traill, "Gradually as the days passed the irritation grew". Tense words are exchanged.<sup>4</sup> The incident of the morning papers, and who should read each one, is "equally trivial", until Traill questions the accepted tradition.

There was at last an argument. Traill refused to give way. The rest of the meal was eaten in absolute silence. Perrin came no more to Traill's room for an evening chat - a very small matter.

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Traill's late return from a dance, and his noisy forced entry to the school, which disturbs Perrin, seem of no significance to the young man. Indeed, Perrin's serious manner, "as though he were Robespierre condemning Louis XVI to execution", and his appearance in his nightshirt, seem to Traill "ridiculous" and "funny".<sup>6</sup> When he discovers that Perrin has reported the matter to the Headmaster he views the situation differently. The next discussion between

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 14-5, 67.

2 *ibid.*, p. 90.

3 *ibid.*, p. 99.

4 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 60-1.

5 *ibid.*, p. 61.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 97-8.

the two men ends in angry words. To Perrin, Traill is inexperienced, impertinent, thoughtless; to Traill, Perrin appears patronising, a sneak, conceited and insufferable.<sup>1</sup> The climax of this section of the book comes when Traill carelessly borrows and leaves elsewhere an umbrella which turns out to be Perrin's. Both men are already in a bad mood. Traill feels an intense dislike for the atmosphere in the staff-room, and wonders whether he can endure it until the holidays. Perrin is about to teach the lesson "he hated most of all", the pouring rain seems a personal attack on him, his colleagues seem unhelpful when he cannot find his umbrella, "Was not this the last straw ...?"<sup>2</sup> Again, the two men interpret the incident in such different terms that an explosion is inevitable. Perrin sees the fact that Traill took his umbrella without permission as impertinence: Traill is a "conceited - insufferable puppy" who must learn "to behave like a gentleman". In his rage, "He saw this man here before him as the originator of all his misfortunes, all his evils."<sup>3</sup> For his part, Traill still cannot take the matter seriously. He smiles; he says the fuss is "really too absurd"; and he lapses into school-boy language: "I didn't steal your beastly umbrella ... I haven't got your rotten umbrella ... You can jolly well go and look for it."<sup>4</sup> At this moment the two men come to blows, and fall fighting to the floor.

Although this conflict between the two men is the narrative thread of the book, the theme of staff antagonism is more widely introduced. The appalling headmaster of Moffatt's, Moy-Thompson, who exploits staff rivalries and tensions, is also the one man who hypocritically asserts the importance of the staff unity. He tells the new master, Traill:

"To work together, as one man, for the good of our race, that must be our object. Yes. No divisions, all in friendly brotherhood - um, yes."

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1    ibid., pp. 114-9.  
2    ibid., pp. 132-4.  
3    ibid., pp. 136-7.  
4    ibid., pp. 137-8.  
5    ibid., p. 110.



At Speech Day, it is heavily ironic that after the tensions of the term the Headmaster talks of the spirit of "candid friendliness" which had obtained: "Masters and boys, they had all worked together with a will".<sup>1</sup>

By contrast, the first thing which Traill notices at the initial staff discussion is that it seemed to be everybody's intention to be as unpleasant as possible under cover of an agreeable manner.<sup>2</sup> Birkland warns him that his increasing irritation with Perrin will intensify and extend to others. From telling him that "Everyone's wanted to cut Perrin's throat some time or other", he moves to the more general picture of an end of term in which all the staff are wanting "to cut each other's throats",<sup>3</sup> and so to his peroration:

"Here we are - fifteen men - all hating each other, loathing everything that the other man does - the way he eats, the way he moves, the way he teaches. We sleep next door to each other, we eat together, we meet all day until late at night - hating each other."<sup>4</sup>

Traill discovers to his bewilderment that increasing numbers of the staff seem to dislike him: first Perrin, then Comber and then the Headmaster who seems - in his phrase - to have "got his knife into him".<sup>5</sup>

He had never before been on such bad terms with any one, and now at every move there were discomforts, difficulties, stiffnesses. At this moment he loathed the term and the place and the people as he had never loathed any of them before ...<sup>6</sup>

When incidents like the Battle of the Umbrella take place, Walpole suggests that warring camps are formed on the basis of existing antagonisms and rivalries. The affair does not long remain between Perrin and Traill. Comber leads an attack on Traill, because he is jealous of the young man's skill at football, and fears the loss of his own influence. Birkland dislikes Comber and Perrin, so he dismisses Perrin's "childishness". West hates Birkland for laughing at him so he supports Comber. Although he also hates Birkland, White remembers

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1    ibid., p. 270.  
2    ibid., pp. 18-9.  
3    ibid., pp. 65, 67.  
4    ibid., p. 69.  
5    ibid., pp. 112, 128.  
6    ibid., p. 132.

a moment of kindness from Traill and joins in against Perrin. Pons supports Comber in the hope of gaining his favour. Comber and Birkland are soon angry, and "at this point the temperature of the room became very warm indeed".<sup>1</sup> The reaction of an outsider like Isabel Desart is presumably intended to carry weight. At first she is "amused by their divided camps - it all seemed so childish and absurd", but later she is affected by its pathos, and eventually she is frightened by its intensity.<sup>2</sup>

Later examples are in much the same vein. Although The Lanchester Tradition is more fully discussed in the section dealing with "Traditionalists and Progressives", the dislike which the new master, Mr. Tipham, arouses should be mentioned here. His chief recreation was said to be "shocking the masters", by his aesthetic poses and his deliberate rejection of the claims of precedent and seniority. Mr. Chowdler "took a violent dislike to him at their first meeting", and within a fortnight "everybody went about saying that that fellow Tipham was impossible". The dinner party given by Mr. Plummer to bring together "mutually antagonistic" people simply resulted in increasing irritation, which was only relieved when Tipham went elsewhere.<sup>3</sup>

Such tensions between the generations are described from both sides in successive pages of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage. Miriam reacts uneasily with Julia, a new teacher, because of the rôle that seems to be forced upon her by the newcomer.<sup>4</sup> That evening, she also turns from the older and more experienced Miss Haddie, who is trying to understand and to sympathise with her, reacting "fiercely", "savagely", "crossly", "impatiently". Her manner is "irritated"; she speaks "with a scornful half laugh", "with flaming face", "with a flash of hatred", "in a hard voice".<sup>5</sup> The combined intensity and

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 146-151.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 189-90.

3 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, pp. 54-8. Compare the treatment of the clash between generations of masters, the older "who openly deride their younger ... colleagues", in S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, pp. 112-3.

4 Dorothy Richardson, Backwater, (1916) 1967, p. 274.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 275-7.

triviality of warring relationships between the staff of a girls' school is emphasised throughout Regiment of Women, 1917. The book begins with Clare Hartill deliberately tormenting the older secretary, Miss Vigers, who in her turn is trying to make trouble for a new member of staff. Clare reflects:

Henrietta Vigers would enjoy baiting the new-comer - what was her name - Durand? Miss Durand would submit, she supposed. Henrietta was a petty tyrant to the younger mistresses, and Clare Hartill was very much aware of the fact. But the younger mistresses did not interest her; she was no more than idly contemptuous of their flabbiness. Why on earth had none of them appealed to the head mistress? 1

The second chapter contains the angry exchanges between Miss Vigers and Alwynne Durand ("it was her first experience of gratuitous ill-will").<sup>2</sup> The third has Alwynne reflecting on the legendary Clare Hartill, "who had split the staff into an enthusiastic majority and a minority that concealed its dislike".<sup>3</sup> In time, Clare manages the headmistress, Miss Marsham, so that she accepts Miss Vigers's angrily presented resignation ("Neither she nor Miss Marsham dreamed that it would be accepted") having laid on her the blame for Louise's death which was really her own responsibility.<sup>4</sup>

Lawrence does not simply give a vivid picture of staff antagonisms in The Rainbow, 1918; he suggests that this tension is a virtually inevitable product of the school system itself. When Ursula first arrives at school, it is the sharpness and coldness of Mr. Brunt, his refusal to establish a relationship with her, even to tell her his name, that alarm her.

Ursula was rather frightened by his mechanical ignoring of her, and his directness of statement. It was something new to her. She had never been treated like this before, as if she did not count, as if she were addressing a machine. 5

Miss Violet Harby is more superficially friendly, but dominating and knowledgeable in a way that makes Ursula feel insignificant. Miss Harby and Mr. Brunt simply go on with their own affairs, with no human contact between them.

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1 Clemence Dane, Regiment of Women, (1917) 1927, p. 3.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 12-3.

3 *ibid.*, p. 16.

4 *ibid.*, p. 208.

5 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1918) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 370.



Ursula's heart sank. Everybody seemed so cocksure and so bossy. How was she going to get on with such jolty, jerky, bossy people? And Miss Harby had not spoken a word to the man at the table. She simply ignored him. Ursula felt the callous crude rudeness between the two teachers.

1

Ursula's only friend is Maggie Schofield, and typically she is a girl who "held aloof from the other teachers".<sup>2</sup> The general feeling in the staff-room is one of bitterness, of people scoring off each other. "The air of hostility and disintegration, of wills working in antagonistic subordination, was hideous."<sup>3</sup>

S. P. B. Mais puts an unrelievedly bitter view of the relationships between members of staff into the pages of A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, which is supposed to have been kept by a young master at two public schools. In the introduction, Mais makes it clear that Traherne was a young idealist who found it hard to fit in with groups, particularly of a conventional kind: "I saw exactly how impossible it was for him to work in conjunction with any ordinary body of schoolmasters."<sup>4</sup> Nevertheless, it is not just the conflicts with Traherne which come out, but the bitterness of any group or individual against all others, which at one point Traherne attributes to the enclosed nature of the public school community: "It is a mistake to herd thirty or forty men together for meals and companionship for three months on end."<sup>5</sup> The repeated observations are of "signs of mutual jealousy everywhere", "storm of abuse", "deadly enemies, each suspicious of the other", "a battle royal", "the riots, alarums and excursions of these school rows", "squabbling", "dire conflicts", "colossal rows".<sup>6</sup> Any position is jealously guarded: "Every tutor criticizes every other master's method of teaching", housemasters "resent" contacts between "their" boys and other members of staff, every head of department or master in charge of an activity "fights for his own hand" at the expense of others.<sup>7</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, p. 371.

2 *ibid.*, p. 378.

3 *ibid.*, p. 380.

4 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 13.

5 *ibid.*, p. 114.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 29, 38, 39, 110, 114, 226, 258.

7 *ibid.*, pp. 29, 38-9.

At the staff meetings in which everybody struggles for his own interests,

... 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. 1

At his second school, the pattern is the same: "Members of Common Room fight one against the other like tigers when one man infringes on another man's rights"<sup>2</sup> and Traherne himself is finally driven out by "the pent-up fury of those who imagine themselves injured by me".<sup>3</sup>

If clashes of personality and interest between assistant masters are shown as common, then some strain between head and assistants is virtually inevitable.<sup>4</sup> Even the kindly and understanding Dr. Wortle, writes Trollope, "liked to be master; and always was". His ushers "fell in with his views" rather than "have to bear his hard words", and what marked off Mr. Peacocke as exceptional is that he, unlike the other teachers, is not even "occasionally scolded".<sup>5</sup> The standard reaction of assistant masters is a mixture of fear and resentment. Mr. Tinkler is impertinent about Dr. Grimstone behind his back, but in fact he goes much in awe of the Doctor, and his position is weakened further by the way in which he is treated in front of the boys. When he comes down late for breakfast, and the boys have mostly finished eating,

"Mr. Tinkler," said the Doctor in his most awful voice, "if it were my custom to rebuke my assistants before the school (which it is not), I should feel forced to remind you that tardiness in rising is a bad beginning of the day's work, and sets a bad example to those under your authority. 6

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1 *ibid.*, p. 39.

2 *ibid.*, p. 258.

3 *ibid.*, p. 284.

4 It is a major theme of books like G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, 1913.

5 Anthony Trollope, Dr. Wortle's School, (1881) 1928, pp. 8, 82.

6 F. Anstey, Vice Versa, (1882) 1969, p. 75.

Some headmasters do use a subtler form of bullying,<sup>1</sup> but the public repressing of staff seems more common. Mr. O'Gree complains of the "outrageous", "insulting" way that Dr. Tootle treats him: "He openly takes the side of the boys against me ... he encourages my pupils in insubordination." His threats of revenge, of assaulting the headmaster, are empty; Tootle's appearance is enough to silence him.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Traill soon discovers that his headmaster, Moy-Thompson, is a silky sadist, who delights not only in trivial persecution, but in humiliating one teacher in front of another. His speciality is to set one member of staff against another, by such devices as getting them to set and mark the examinations papers of each other's forms. On the one occasion when members of staff think of combining against "that devil", and appealing to the governors, the headmaster's summons to one individual frightens the rest into silence.<sup>3</sup> Roger Wray describes the technique of another headmaster who uses public humiliation as a means of control:

Mr. Howard was in the habit of holding a staff meeting every Friday afternoon in order to make his weekly report. The report was simply a list of faults he had observed in each teacher, and he announced them publicly with the idea of making them more painful, and therefore more effective. All week, like a recording angel, he jotted down their individual offences in a formidable book; and the week-end criticism was a bullying.<sup>4</sup>

Howard not only drags a young teacher round all the classes in the school to show him what he "ought" to be doing, but warns him that he must not profess socialism even in his private life, and tells him that he is "making an ass" of himself by proposing to marry at twenty-three.<sup>5</sup> Other assistants describe Howard as a "detestable bully", who was "always a poor teacher" and who gained his headship by "toadying to the authorities".<sup>6</sup>

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1 See, for example, the episode in F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 187-91.

2 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, pp. 58-9.

3 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 112, 230, 224-8.

4 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 160-1.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 233-4.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 164-5.



There is a frequent suggestion that heads are more afraid of authorities, parents, or even children, than of the teachers that they rule. At Loaf Street Boys' School, the "old duffer" who is headmaster always sides with the mothers against the teachers.<sup>1</sup> Mr. Foskett is much concerned for the power of his prefects and "would even back them against the masters, because he regarded them as more valuable allies in strengthening his own position".

After all, the masters were employees and far too deeply concerned with the problem of earning a living to do any harm to Foskett: they would be unwilling to resign, because, even if they found posts, it would mean loss of seniority at the new school. Distinctly he had the whip hand over them; but the prefects were harder to control and demanded more respect.

2

The tone at Brinsley Street School is set by the headmaster's relationships with the staff as a whole and as individuals. Ursula is quickly conscious of her own dual response to him, despising him as a person but fearing his rôle. Even his neglect or his geniality are "insulting".

All the other teachers hated him, and fanned their hatred among themselves. For he was master of them and the children ... His teacher[s] were his subjects as much as the scholars. Only, because they had some authority, his instinct was to detest them.

3

Her friend, Maggie, shares the sense of being attacked from both sides, both by Mr. Harby and by the children and their parents.<sup>4</sup> As Mr. Brunt warned her would happen, Harby begins to persecute Ursula, and she fears that he will destroy her. "Her dread and hatred of him grew and loomed larger and larger."<sup>5</sup> The heavy emphasis in so many books on such an insecure reaction of fear and hate, on mutual antagonisms and on an atmosphere of petty bickering can have done little to improve the popular impression of teachers or to make the profession more attractive.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 239.

2 Ivor Brown, *Years of Plenty*, [1915], p. 132.

3 D. H. Lawrence, *The Rainbow*, (1915) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 377. This text reads 'teacher' in line 3.

4 *ibid.*, p. 382.

5 *ibid.*, p. 385.

STATUS AND PUBLIC ESTEEM

One of the clearest indicators of a shift in public interest and attitudes is the increased attention, discussed at the beginning of the previous chapter, that books of this period gave to schools and teaching. The combination of more stories set in school, more teachers as protagonists and even as attractive heroes and heroines of books for adult readers, greater concern for teachers outside the classroom and increased attention to professional issues suggests that authors assumed an interest in teachers and teaching on the part of their readers, and this in turn could be taken to imply that a higher valuation was being placed on the profession. Such a general impression is reinforced by some of the particular references to the standing of teachers. Disparagement of the rôle as such is less frequent than in earlier periods, and diminishes considerably in the twentieth century. As the previous chapter has indicated, there is more emphasis on the varied social levels attached to different kinds of school, and indeed within the same school attributed to masters of different subjects or those who hold different offices, or who are clergymen or laymen.<sup>1</sup> There is a greater consciousness of changing conditions, a closer examination of what marks off one level from another, and some discussion of the appropriateness or otherwise of the divisions.<sup>2</sup>

Partly because more books are being written by teachers, or those who have previously been teachers, there are signs of greater understanding. Beneath the gaiety of Ian Hay's The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, for instance, runs the clear conviction that schoolmasters generally are hard-working, devoted

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1 One aspect of this is documented in T. W. Bamford, The Rise of the Public Schools, 1967, pp. 116-9, 126-7.

2 The same suggestions of "transition" in social conditions at the turn of the century and of "cleavages" between different groups of teachers are made in Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, pp. 147-57.

men whose labours are largely unrecognised and ill-rewarded by society. The tone is set by the dedication: "To the members of the most responsible the least advertised the worst paid and most richly rewarded profession in the world."<sup>1</sup> The importance of their professional function is more frequently referred to, directly and indirectly, during these years. Comments range from the brief and heavily-loaded ("For five-and-twenty years Miss Gorringer had been giving all her great powers to the turning silly little girls into brave, strong, helpful, thinking women ...")<sup>2</sup> to the more developed. For example, Ian Maclaren's study of the village dominie "Domsie", in Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, 1894, gives a loving picture of the regard the people of Drumtochty had for their schoolmaster.

He had taken a high place at the University, and won a good degree, and I've heard the Doctor say that he had a career before him. But something happened in his life, and Domsie buried himself among the woods with the bairns of Drumtochty. 3

Dominie Jamieson loved lads of "pairts"; he trained them for university careers and found people to support them financially.

Seven ministers, four schoolmasters, four doctors, one professor, and three civil service men had been sent out by the auld school in Domsie's time, besides many that "had given themselves to mercantile pursuits". 4

So it was that he was famous and loved in the village - ironically for giving boys the means of escaping from it.

Nevertheless, the general impression of a higher valuation is a comparative one; teachers may be better regarded than in earlier years, but their general standing is not assured. Teaching is referred to as a profession in a number of books, but nearly always with a certain note of reservation: "generally recognised as a profession" but on a lower level than the church, medicine or the law, "one of the less liberal of the liberal professions",

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1 Cf. the description of the profession as "arduous, responsible and despised" in Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, [1915], p. 48.  
2 Dorothea Moore, A Plucky School-Girl, 1908, p. 235.  
3 Ian Maclaren, Beside the Bonnie Brier Bush, (1894) 1902, p. 7.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 9.



a profession with a "slight social disability", not generally felt to be "a profession for a very capable or ambitious man".<sup>1</sup> When an English traveller sings the praises of public schoolmasters to a German, the latter enquires why more is not heard of this "wonderful class". With heavy irony, the author puts into his mouth the comment:

"My knowledge of English literature is fairly extensive, yet I do not recall any book of recent years in which schoolmasters are mentioned with specially fervent admiration." 2

The conflict between judgments of the rôle and of the individual who occupies it, and the increasing uncertainty of social position is vividly caught in Trollope's novel, The Eustace Diamonds, 1873. Nobody suggests that Lucy Morris is not a lady, and yet, as a governess, she is somehow marked off from other ladies. The dangerous ambiguity of her situation is clearly presented in almost the first words spoken about her in the book:

"Remember her position," said Mrs. Dean to her son.  
"Her position! Well; - and what is her position mother?"  
"You know what I mean, Frank. She is as sweet a girl as ever lived, and a perfect lady. But with a governess, unless you mean to marry her, you should be more careful than with another girl, because you may do her such a world of mischief." 3

Mrs. Greystock manages to combine a theoretical regard for the woman who teaches with a practical sense of her undesirability as a marriage partner.

Her position was simply that of a governess. Mrs. Greystock declared to her daughter that no one in the whole world had a higher respect for governesses than had she. But a governess is a governess ... 4

Her affected concern for "Poor, dear little Lucy Morris," like Lady Eustace's consciously "pretty" demonstration of friendship even to a governess and Lady Fawn's double-think about the relative merits of Lucy and Frank all turn on the unacknowledged consciousness of social distance.<sup>5</sup> The Eustace Diamonds is full

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1 James Milligan, Is Teaching a Profession?, Glasgow, 1889, pp. 2-3; A. C. Benson, Schoolmaster, (1902) 1908, pp. 1-2.  
2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 16.  
3 Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds, (1873) 1973, vol. I, p. 21.  
4 *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 271.  
5 *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 270, 27, vol. II, p. 58.

of characters who think or say in private what they would hesitate to acknowledge in public: that Frank Greystock, a Member of Parliament, will not, cannot or should not marry a girl who is a governess, however admirable and undeniably a lady Lucy may be. His mother thinks that such a match would be "impossible", and says that "for a man in Frank's position such a marriage would be simply suicide". Lady Fawn warns Lucy that Frank could not wed her even if he wished to do so: "Mr. Greystock, who is a Member of Parliament, could not marry a governess." Despite all her kindness, she is conscious that if she had a son like Frank, "she would not wish him to marry a girl without a penny, who was forced to earn her bread by being a governess". Her daughter, Clara Hittaway, believes more cynically that Frank has simply "amused himself in the most natural way" with Lucy, and that she should never have expected him to be in earnest. "He is the last man in the world to marry a governess."<sup>1</sup> Even Frank himself thinks of such a match as "an imprudent plunge into deep water", and when he has become engaged to Lucy, feels instinctively that he has "crippled himself".<sup>2</sup> Society will feel that he has thrown away a promising career,

... because he could not resist a feeling which a little chit of a girl had created in his bosom, - a girl without money, without position, without even beauty; a girl as to whom, were he to marry her, the world would say, 'Oh, heaven! - there has Frank Greystock gone and married a little governess out of old Lady Fawn's nursery!'

3

Despite her love for Frank, Lucy admits to herself that nothing can come of it: "Of all men he was the last who could afford to marry a governess."<sup>4</sup> In all this it is clear that the objection to Lucy is primarily financial; he literally cannot "afford" the marriage. She is undeniably a lady, her character is good, and the position of governess is not seen as an overwhelming objection per se, but as the indicator of financial dependence. The engagement is

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1 *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 22, 271, 67; vol. II, pp. 58, 184; vol. I, p. 297.

2 *ibid.*, vol. I, pp. 32, 165.

3 *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 120.

4 *ibid.*, vol. I, p. 26.

described in terms that have an economic as well as a personal sense: " ... Lucy's good fortune, so unexpected, and by her so frankly owned as the very best fortune in the world that could have befallen her ... " <sup>1</sup>

Individual teachers, then, may be popular, even loved, and regarded with esteem in their own community, <sup>2</sup> but as a class they receive little respect. <sup>3</sup> This double attitude seems to have been present in the minds of teachers themselves. It is not uncommon during this period to find fictional schoolmasters who combine an idealistic, sometimes an unthinking, view of the worth of the profession with a realistic condemnation of what it does to those who engage in it: the Mr. Traill view of Mr. Perrin. After one common-room dispute, the sympathetic Chaplain of Kipling's Stalky & Co., 1899, says to his colleagues, "Ours is a dwarfing life - a belittling life, my brethren. God help all schoolmasters! They need it." <sup>4</sup> A number of favourably drawn teachers console themselves with the reflection that they are different from their colleagues, somehow not typical. Masherley has enough "self-respect" to avoid "that over-anxious self-assertion which marks the man of inferior breeding". He takes care to dress well, because "the professional shabbiness of ushers disgusts him". <sup>5</sup> Mark Railsford takes up teaching almost at random, but with a blithe assurance that in his case "there was no chance of his relapsing immediately into the condition of a humdrum pedagogue". <sup>6</sup> The tension between different valuations of the teacher's rôle is considered in detail in the fictional diary kept by a young schoolmaster, Patrick Traherne, who thinks of himself naturally as a "professional" man, while noticing simultaneously how teachers in general can

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1 ibid., vol. I, p. 138.

2 For example the teachers at Whitelaw College, "highly popular ... with all the educated inhabitants" - George Gissing, Born in Exile, (1892) /1910/, p. 9.

3 When the Assistant Masters' Association was founded in 1891, its first object was defined as : "To obtain for teachers in Secondary Schools the status and authority of a learned profession". George Baron, "The Secondary Schoolmaster 1895-1914", Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1952, p. 131.

4 Rudyard Kipling, Stalky & Co., (1899) 1929, p. 91.

5 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, pp. 138-9.

6 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, (1894) /1913/, p. 23.



become "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 carefully guard. 1

Most of the emphasis of the book is on the limitations of the profession.

"The ideal schoolmaster has to put away ambition from the start"; "I suppose no class of men dresses more shabbily than the schoolmaster"; "I felt ashamed of my profession for the whole of that day."<sup>2</sup> Despite his final personal claim - "I have always regarded the schoolmaster's as the most responsible position in the kingdom"<sup>3</sup> - it is clear that Traherne is deeply conscious of the fact that in the eyes of others its status is low. He sees the condescending attitude of an old boy, now in the army, only two years after leaving the school:

... 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." 4

When Traherne proposes to Elspeth and is accepted, his sense of joy is combined with a feeling of unworthiness that is centred on his profession: "She seemed so far above me, so obviously a match for the best of men and not for a poor drudge of a schoolmaster."<sup>5</sup>

The standard pejorative assumptions about education in general and about those connected with it still occur, but less and less frequently as the period goes on. The heroine of one book can be said to become "a complete schoolma'am", without any apparent sense that the term, also used in the title, has unfavourable associations.<sup>6</sup> The use of words like "schoolmaster" or "governess" virtually as terms of abuse, and the assumption that teachers are neither

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 35.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 173, 66.

3 *ibid.*, p. 285.

4 *ibid.*, p. 188.

5 *ibid.*, p. 199.

6 Anna Bunston de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 51.

gentlemen nor members of a profession, are not uncommon in the mouths of characters, but only rarely with a note of authorial approval. It is the insufferable prosperous tradesman, Solomon Lightowler, who expresses the conventional low opinion in speaking to his nephew in The Giant's Robe, 1884.

"Well, Mr. Schoolmaster, ... and how are you gettin' on? If you'd worked harder at College and done me credit, you'd 'a' been a feller of your college, or a judge in an Indian court, by this time, instead of birching naughty little boys." 1

It is particularly the servants in Sinister Street who have a low opinion of the position held by the French governess. Nurse gives "many a backward glance of contempt" towards her, and sniffs at her presumption. Mrs. Frith finds her "a ordinary volgar thing"; Cook says that the governess is "a person as isn't a scrap better than you and me"; and even Annie exclaims that "It does seem a cheek" for her to call herself Madam.<sup>2</sup> The assumption that a teacher cannot be a gentleman is modified to one of surprise when he proves to be so. The railway porter's dubious tribute to the Doctor, following a half-sovereign tip, is "You're a gent right enough, too, though you do 'appen to be a schoolmaster".<sup>3</sup> A cottager says she was "never so taken aback" in her life as when she discovered that the new schoolmistress was a lady.<sup>4</sup> Even though Edmund Gosse's governess was in many ways unsuitable, the worst that is said of her standing is that she was "not quite ... what is called 'a lady'".<sup>5</sup> A dissatisfied or resigned view of the situation is put into the mouths of teacher characters. O'Gree comments of his post that, "The position isn't worthy of a gentleman".<sup>6</sup> The girls in A Flat Iron for a Farthing, 1873, exchange smiles when Miss Blomfield makes her habitual introduction of herself:

"I'm the governess, my dear," said Miss Blomfield, emphatically. (She always 'made a point' of announcing her dependent position to strangers. "It is best to avoid any awkwardness," she was wont to say ... )

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1 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, p. 43.  
2 Compton Mackenzie, Sinister Street, vol. I, 1913, pp. 48-50.  
3 Frederick Anstey, Vice Versa, (1882) 1969, p. 229.  
4 Anna Bunston de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 58.  
5 Edmund Gosse, Father and Son, (1907) 1928, pp. 96-8.  
6 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1894) 1930, p. 160.  
7 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, A Flat Iron for a Farthing, (1873) 1908, pp. 33-4.

Maggie Schofield speaks with bitterness to Ursula about the teacher's "ignominious position of an upper servant hated by the master above and the class beneath".<sup>1</sup> Although Miss Dyott, the Schoolmistress of Pinero's play of that name, is conscious of the dignity of her rôle and the possible shame of becoming a singer in comic opera, the plot hinges on the fact that her feeble and penniless secret husband, Vere Queckett, has somehow married "beneath" him by wedding the head of a girls' school. He laments at the end of the play, "Oh, why didn't I wait and marry a lady?".<sup>2</sup> Miss Dyott explains to Bernstein, earlier in the play:

"I am married secretly - secretly, because my husband could never face the world of fashion as the consort of the proprietress of a scholastic establishment. You will gather from this that my husband is a gentleman." 3

Although the play is a farcical comedy, it does depend on the audience's acceptance of the social convention that a "gentleman", however incompetent, would feel "degraded" by association with a school. Although Miss Chetwynd is described as a lady in the eyes of the parents of girls she teaches, it is only the marriage of her teacher-sister to a prominent Wesleyan minister that really establishes the family's status in the eyes of Mrs. Baines and others in the town.<sup>4</sup> H. G. Wells puts into the mouth of the narrator of Tono-Bungay, 1909, an analysis of the social structure at Bladesover. "It is curious to note," he writes, "that to-day that down-trodden, organ-playing creature, the Church of England village schoolmaster, holds much the same position as the seventeenth-century parson." This Wells earlier defined as something below the house-steward and more or less equal to the housekeeper at the great house.<sup>5</sup> Shaw tells with relish the story of a man who was fined two pounds by the magistrate for punching an elementary schoolmaster, and was told that it would

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1 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1918) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 381.

2 A. W. Pinero, The Schoolmistress, 1894, p. 158.

3 *ibid.*, p. 20.

4 Arnold Bennett, The Old Wives' Tale, (1908) 1935, pp. 54-7.

5 H. G. Wells, Tono-Bungay, (1909) Odhams, n.d., p. 18.



have cost him six pounds if he had hit a gentleman.<sup>1</sup>

The tone of comments like these may seem milder than the intense scorn or pity for teachers shown in previous periods, but incidents in novels frequently imply a continuing low estimate of members of a rising profession. It is possible to obtain a clearer view of attitudes towards teaching by looking at the way in which books of the period show young men and women choosing a career, people leaving teaching, and the social assumptions of pupils about those who teach them.

A common scene in novels in the earlier part of the twentieth century is one where a young man, or one seeking to advise him, considers the choice of his career. Those episodes which concern teaching are revealing. In some of them a man of good education finds himself "drifting" or being "forced" into teaching or "falling back on" it, because nothing else suitable offers itself.

A. C. Benson wrote that

... it must be confessed that the profession of a schoolmaster is one that is more apt to be entered by those who have no particular vocation for anything else, than any other profession.<sup>2</sup>

For example, Vincent Holroyd had never intended to teach, but after getting a "low third" at Cambridge he "found himself forced to accept" a post at his old school, and after his fraudulent career as an author has ended "he was forced to think of again becoming a schoolmaster".<sup>3</sup> Other young people see teaching "merely as a stopgap", a career into which they have "drifted, of necessity", being "obliged" to take it up when "happier prospects" failed.<sup>4</sup> The author of Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, describes how, like many others, he left University with "a respectable but not very brilliant degree" and with little idea of what to do for a living. He decided not to seek orders in the Church for the time being.

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1 G. B. Shaw, article in Sunday Pictorial, 16 June 1918, reprinted in The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931.

2 A. C. Benson, The Schoolmaster, (1902) 1908, p. 7.

3 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, pp. 4 and 415.

4 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, p. 9; Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 48; Anna Bunston de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 11.

Teaching boys was the only other work I seemed fit for - I say seemed, because I had never given the subject a moment's thought, but took it for granted one must be able to teach what one has spent years in learning. Thus, like many other men in the same hazy circumstances, I saw nothing for it but a post as assistant-master at some school ...

1

When Christopher Deane, in the novel of that name by E. H. L. Watson, 1902, thinks of his future career, teaching seems obvious if not very attractive.

"I'm not a good enough man for the Church," he says, and then later:

"I suppose it will end in my taking a mastership somewhere, if I can get a decent degree," was Deane's conclusion, as usual. We had got rather into the habit of talking about the professions lately, and he generally fell back upon this at the end.

2

In two of the episodes taken From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, references are made to men who took up teaching not for its own sake but because of the lack of any alternative. One undergraduate with literary pretensions but no private income chooses teaching because of the length of holidays in which he can establish himself as a writer, before he is able "finally to kick free of the scholastic profession".<sup>3</sup> Another schoolmaster confides to an American visitor that becoming a teacher was more or less an accident. Indeed, as the visitor writes in a letter home,

... it's more than an accident, it's a casualty. When he first became a teacher his relations went about mourning over him as a failure in life.

4

After public school and university his plans to go to India were destroyed by failing his examination for Government Service because of overwork.

"I had no choice," says he, "but to become a schoolmaster. My parents could not afford to keep me till I got a practice at the Bar, and I felt no vocation for the ministry. So I put in for a mastership at a private school."

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Similarly, when the time comes for Alan Clay to leave school, he drifts into teaching because he wants to continue with his academic subjects, because his

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 4.

2 E. H. L. Watson, Christopher Deane, 1902, pp. 80-1.

3 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 193.

4 *ibid.*, p. 201.

5 *ibid.*, p. 202.

father cannot afford the expense of legal or medical training, and because he does not wish to enter the Church.

Alan had as little inclination for the scholastic profession as any other. He failed to imagine himself standing before a class - teaching, questioning, punishing. The prospect did not appeal in the least. But since he had eliminated everything else from his choice, he was fain to look upon it as the most practicable suggestion ... A teacher he decided to be; and like the majority of men in that profession, he allowed himself to drift into it. 1

In novels, the advice not to teach is sometimes given, usually by people who themselves are teachers, like Mr. Hardy, who urges Alan Clay to "get out of this rotten profession while you can",<sup>2</sup> or the elderly schoolmaster who tells Vincent Holroyd that he can "do better for himself than a junior mastership for his final goal".<sup>3</sup> In Hugh Rendal, for instance, the Gurneys discuss what is to become of Hugh, discounting the army ("too expensive"), engineering, business ("no capital") and the civil service. Mrs. Gurney looks favourably on teaching as a career, but her husband, a tutor, exclaims, "Heaven forbid! No money, no scope, no prospects. The pettiest drudgery in the world."<sup>4</sup> When Pip's doctor father dies of a sudden heart-attack, Pip is left to earn his own living at twenty-five, after education at a public school and Cambridge, where he got a cricket blue. It is significant that he turns for advice to his own old school-master, Mr. Hanbury, in these terms:

"The subject for debate is 'The Choice of a Career for a Young Man without Education, Ability, or Prospects'. Fire away, Ham, and bear in mind that all the learned professions are banned to me."

"I'm not sure of that. How about school-mastering?"

"At a Preparatory?"

"Yes."

"Do you recommend the billet?"

"Frankly - no. Preparatory work is all right provided that you don't mind a berth in which your real work only begins at playtime, and which, unless you can afford ultimately to set

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1 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 63.

2 *ibid.*, p. 74.

3 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, p. 416.

4 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, pp. 140-1.



up for yourself, offers you an absolute maximum screw of about two hundred a year."

"I know the sort of thing," said Pip. "You start on about eighty, with board - "

"Which means a poky dust-hole to sleep in, meat-tea, and -"

"The post is one we can unreservedly recommend' - I know." 1

For girls of limited means the idea of choosing a career is hardly ever presented: teaching is still seen as virtually inevitable. There may be literary reasons for this, of course. From the Brontes onwards, it was clear that making the heroine a governess enabled a novelist to place her in a variety of households, with unlimited chances for pathos, drama and romance. No other credible rôle for a single girl could be so convenient. Nevertheless, the unanimity with which writers present the forced vocation as the "only" thing, the "sole" choice, which left "nothing else to be done" and had to be reluctantly embraced, is striking.

When the Garth family are in difficulties, Mary assumes that the only choice open to her is whether she should teach in a school or a private family, though neither alternative is attractive: she is "not fond of a school-room".

"I shall go to the school at York," said Mary. "I am less unfit to teach in a school than in a family. I like to teach classes best. And, you see, I must teach: there is nothing else to be done." 2

Her brothers and her father sympathise: it is a "nasty duty", and she is a "poor child", but nobody suggests that there is anything to be done about it, until the sudden good news of a management post for Mr. Garth leads him immediately to tell Mary that she can cancel the arrangement to teach in York.<sup>3</sup>

Lucy Morris, "poor little Lucy Morris" in The Eustace Diamonds, was another of the many fictional girls who had been left a penniless orphan and "therefore, at the age of eighteen, she had gone out to be a child's governess".<sup>4</sup>

Laetitia Dale tells a friend that because her ex-doctor father has only a

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1 Ian Hay, "Pip", 1907, pp. 238-9.

2 George Eliot, Middlemarch, (1871-2) Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 435.

3 *ibid.*, p. 437.

4 Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds, (1873) 1973, vol. I, pp. 19-20.

limited income she may have to consider taking in pupils and, "I could be grateful to anyone who could save me from that".<sup>1</sup> When Maud Enderby grows up, and is faced with the problem of making a living, "Naturally, only one thing could suggest itself to the girl's mind, and that was to become a teacher."<sup>2</sup> Peggy Hesslerigge is another for whom there is no choice; her position as an articled pupil in a school is immediately clear to speaker and listener: "She's a orphan, studying for to be a governess."<sup>3</sup> Hilda Lessways reflects bitterly, "The sole vocation conceivable for her was that of teaching, and she knew, without having tried it, that she abhorred teaching."<sup>4</sup> Edmund Gosse records that on the ruin of his grandfather's fortune, his mother "in spite of an extreme dislike of teaching, which was native to her, immediately accepted the situation of a governess," and remained "in this distasteful environment, doing the work she hated most" until she had helped her two brothers through university.<sup>5</sup> The Governess, 1912, begins immediately with the characteristic situation: father is ruined; the big house and twelve servants will have to go; Barbara Wynne, aged twenty-one, will have to become a governess. Mrs. Orridge tells her mother, "You see she has had such excellent and distinguished masters that she could command a very high salary as a governess ... " Barbara herself "hated the thought of being a governess", and her mother reflects bitterly, "Had it come to that?".<sup>6</sup> Even at the age of fifteen, Dimsie Garnett seems clear that her only possible future is to be a "daily governess", and her chief ambition is to go to Cambridge for a little enjoyment first. Her later comment indicates something of the way in which she sees the profession and its drabness. She exclaims:

"Oh, Aunt Maria, when I look at the governesses at school, and think that I'm going to be like that all my days, it does seem hard that I shouldn't have just two or three years first of the life I want!"

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- 1 George Meredith, The Egoist, (1879) 1972, p. 129.  
 2 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 142.  
 3 A. W. Pinero, The Schoolmistress, 1894, p. 2.  
 4 Arnold Bennett, Hilda Lessways, (1911) 1928, p. 7.  
 5 Edmund Gosse, Father and Son, (1907) 1928, p. 17.  
 6 Mrs. A. Hunt and Violet Hunt, The Governess, 1912, p. 5.  
 7 Mrs. G. de H. Vaizey, A College Girl, 1913, p. 205.

One of the most effective discussions of the situation from experience comes in Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage sequence. At the very beginning of Pointed Roofs, 1915, Miriam is in an elegiac mood, regretting the lost pleasures involved in leaving school and the decline of family fortunes. "There was nothing to look forward to now but governessing and old age." On the crossing to the continent, she remembers accepting the post in a German school: "She thought of her lonely pilgrimage to the West End agency, of her humiliating interview, of her heart-sinking acceptance of the post ... " Almost as soon as she enters the school routine, she reflects, "Probably most teachers found teaching tiresome."<sup>1</sup> Writing about her own early experiences, Dorothy Richardson said of her situation in the early 1890s:

It dawned upon me that I must make my own living. Since in those days teaching was the only profession open to penniless gentlewomen, I accepted, because I liked the idea of going abroad, the first post offered by the London agency I secretly visited: that of English teacher in a school in Germany. 2

Arnold Bennett makes entertaining use of this conventional reaction in The Old Wives' Tale, 1908. Mrs. Baines is so sure that teaching is stocked by unfortunates who are forced into it that she is horrified when her daughter Sophia talks of becoming a teacher voluntarily, instead of taking up dressmaking or millinery.

Orphans, widows, and spinsters of a certain age suddenly thrown on the world - these were the women who, naturally, became teachers, because they had to become something. But that the daughter of comfortable parents, surrounded by love and the pleasures of an excellent home, should wish to teach in a school was beyond the horizon of Mrs. Baines's common sense. 3

In fact, however, Sophia never did teach.

There is significance in the alacrity with which a number of fictional teachers abandon their work for almost any other opening. When a couple who run a village school acquire a little money, they promptly buy land and become

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1 Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, vol. I, 1967, pp. 16, 27, 77.  
2 Dorothy M. Richardson, "Data for Spanish Publisher", The London Magazine, June 1959, vol. 6, no. 6, p. 17.  
3 Arnold Bennett, The Old Wives' Tale, (1908) 1935, pp. 34-5.



farmers.<sup>1</sup> In an early work of George Gissing's, the three teachers at a private school in south London abandon the profession to become a rent-collector in the slums, a small shop-keeper and a waiter in a restaurant. All of them think the exchange a good one, indeed Waymark says that by comparison with teaching, "I myself should prefer a scavenger's existence, on the whole."<sup>2</sup> When he meets Mr. Egger, who has become a waiter:

Waymark scarcely recognised his old friend, so much had the latter changed; instead of the old woe-begone look, Egger's face wore a joyous smile, and his outer man was so vastly improved that he had evidently fallen on a more lucrative profession.

3

Similarly, Waymark himself appears to others to be changed for the better after he quits the Academy. Maud Enderby reflects that

... in external appearance, he had improved since she last saw him. He had no longer that hungry, discontented look to which she had grown accustomed in the upper schoolroom at Dr. Tootle's; his eye seemed at once quieter and keener; his complexion was brighter; the habitual frown had somewhat smoothed away. Then, he was more careful in the matter of dress. On the whole, it seemed probable that his circumstances had changed for the better.

4

The envisaged happy endings for characters in Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, 1911, all involve getting out of teaching into something better. Isobel Desart is happy that Traill resigns at the end of his first term,

"And I don't want him to schoolmaster again if he can help it. I think with father's help he'll be able to get a Government office of some sort."

5

Birkland, after twenty years of teaching, also resigns.

"One more struggle before I die - nothing can be worse than this - I gave notice last week ... I shall have a shot at anything. Nothing can be as bad as this - nothing! Well, perhaps it's to breaking stones on a road that I'm going ... at any rate, it won't be this."

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1 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, We and the World, 1881.

2 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 247.

3 *ibid.*, p. 272.

4 *ibid.*, p. 146.

5 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, p. 258.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 262-4.

Mrs. Comber is "outrageously happy" at her own unexpected "escape", because her husband has been found another position through the "urgency of an old friend". Although the salary is not great, the post at the Kensington Museum "would suit him exactly". The result is that "they were all just as happy as they could be", and Comber himself "seemed to change, to brighten, to broaden, under the influence of his approaching escape".<sup>1</sup>

The commonest escape-route from the classroom at this period still seems to have been the church; indeed, many men are represented as entering teaching solely as a stepping-stone towards a living. Mr. Clerke, a tutor, has hopes - which are eventually fulfilled - that some patron will reward him by granting his ambition to be a clergyman rather than a teacher.

He had looked forward to being a clergyman as to a profession towards which his education and college career had tended, and which, he hoped, would at last secure him a comfortable livelihood ...

2

Ernest Pontifex goes to Cambridge, with the intention "that he should take a sufficiently good degree to be able to get a tutorship or mastership in some school preparatory to taking orders".<sup>3</sup> Once he has his living, he might "add to his income by taking pupils, or even keeping a school".

The two brothers, Joshua and Cornelius, in Hardy's short story "A Tragedy of Two Ambitions" written in 1888, complain that their father's profligacy has cost them the chance of going to University. As a result, says Joshua,

"... the utmost we can hope for is a term of years as national schoolmasters, and possible admission to a Theological college, and ordination as despised licentiates".

4

This, indeed, is the pattern. Joshua is fortunate in being rescued early by a Bishop's interest from the mastership of his first school. It is "encouraging" that he succeeds to theological college, and eventually to a curacy. When he visits Cornelius at his National School, he urges him to great efforts if he

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1 *ibid.*, p. 303.

2 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, *A Flat Iron for a Farthing*, (1873) 1908, p. 147.

3 Samuel Butler, *The Way of All Flesh*, (1903) 1965, p. 173.

4 Thomas Hardy, *Life's Little Ironies*, (1894) 1928, p. 83.

means "to get out of this next Christmas". For Joshua, the very sight of the school "jarred unpleasantly, as being that of something he had left behind". Teaching, for the brothers, is nothing but a temporary, unfortunately necessary, step towards a real career in the church. The elder brother says to the younger, "I shall be glad when you are out of this ... and in your pulpit ..."<sup>1</sup> School is repeatedly seen as a place to get out of; the life of a teacher confers no sense of status, whereas Joshua has believed from his youth that "the Church conferred social prestige up to a certain point at a cheaper price than any other profession or pursuit ...".<sup>2</sup> Higher up the scale, the same principle applies. Dr. Skinner, headmaster of Roughborough, and Dr. Gussy, headmaster of Chiltern, both leave their schools for vacant Deaneries.<sup>3</sup>

One of the less attractive features of late nineteenth century novels for a modern reader is the recurrent sense of social superiority which pupils show towards their teachers. In some cases this is shown by the author in a neutral way, but in others the tone suggests that the writer instinctively shares the child's disdain. Gillian Avery has discussed how Mrs. Molesworth, in several novels, "implies a faint feeling of contempt towards governesses and teachers".<sup>4</sup> Boys in Meredith's novels seem aware of this class gulf. Heriot, the head boy at Mr. Rippenger's school, expresses his disdain for Mr. Boddy, one of the ushers, insisting on his own superior birth, and assuming that the teacher cannot understand the feelings of "sons of gentlemen". Matters are made worse because boy and teacher are rivals for the hand of Julia, the headmaster's daughter. Heriot sends the usher a challenge to fight a duel with pistols, and although Mr. Rippenger sees this as moral perversity, the boys feel that Heriot is behaving like a gentleman.<sup>5</sup> When the Headmaster is

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 84-7.

2 *ibid.*, p. 99.

3 Samuel Butler, The Way of All Flesh, (1903) 1965, p. 353;  
G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 15.

4 Gillian Avery, Nineteenth Century Children, 1965, pp. 167-9.

5 George Meredith, The Adventures of Harry Richmond, (1871) 1914, pp. 49-62.



irked that Harry's father has not paid his account, Heriot's comments again insist on the class distinction.

"Oh, the sordid old brute!" said he of Mr. Rippenger.  
"How can he know the habits and feelings of gentlemen? It's just the way with schoolmasters and tradesmen: they don't care whether a man is doing his duty to his country; they must attend to them, settle accounts with them - hang them!" 1

Lord Ormont and His Aminta, by the same author, begins with the boys' sarcastic and supercilious response to the way that their Sunday processional walk always encounters the girls': "the usher and the governess - at the old game, it seemed ... ". The implication is that this was a conventional pattern:

... a tradition of an usher and governess leering sick eyes until they slunk away round a corner and married, and set up a school for themselves - an emasculate ending. 2

The passage has some ironic depth, since the Matey who had this feeling and "despised" girls is the Matthew who sets up a school with Aminta at the close of the novel.

"That Cad Sawyer", one of the interpolated stories in Mrs. Molesworth's "Grandmother Dear", 1878<sup>3</sup> is particularly interesting. Sawyer is a poor master of humble origins who gets a post at a good school. He is nervous and sensitive; the boys are arrogant and contemptuous. Tormented and despised, Sawyer is eventually driven first to resign, then to a succession of different jobs, and eventually to death in the Crimea as a newspaper correspondent. Sawyer's unpopularity in the school reaches its climax when he declines to make a handsome contribution to the boys' fund for a lavish firework display. Jack sees this as a last chance for the master to redeem himself, and when - because his money all goes to his needy family - Sawyer has to refuse, the boy scornfully denounces him to his face. Although at the end of the story the truth does come out, and he gives his life for others, Sawyer is seen as

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1 *ibid.*, p. 63.

2 George Meredith, Lord Ormont and his Aminta, (1894) 1899, pp. 1, 3.

3 Mrs. M. L. Molesworth, "Grandmother Dear", (1878) 1887, Chapters 10 and 11.

a "poor devil", not as a hero. Jack Berkeley, "bright, honest, blue-eyed, fair-haired", "hasty, impulsive, generous-spirited", later an officer of the 300th, is clearly of a different class. It is his natural assumption of superiority, his readiness to condemn his master without explanations, and the master's "almost painful eagerness" to ingratiate himself with the pupils, that seem to indicate the author's instinctive feelings.

The pupils of Boys and Masters, 1887, frequently seem scornful of the social standing of those that teach them. Bolton argues for a number of reasons that the master Scott is no gentleman, "anybody" can see that.

"I should think he is very poor," said Bolton severely. "I don't think he is a gentleman; his coat shines, and it's quite green all down the sleeves, and some awfully shabby people come to see him ... and I believe his father was a tradesman, so he can't be; and he doesn't know anybody about here. I don't call him a gentleman; I don't believe my people would know him ... "

1

Mr. Smollett, known to the boys as Smolecat, is another whose shabbiness is equated with low origins. One boy exclaims scornfully, "Look at his coat; he ought to be master of a charity-school. I believe his father sells old clothes."<sup>2</sup> At a later point, another of the pupils remarks that it is a "disgrace" to have men like Smollett and Scott to teach them, and that "Half the masters are cads".<sup>3</sup>

A pupil in one of a volume of stories written by a teacher refuses to apologise to a master to whom he has been rude. In explanation, he simply says, "My father wouldn't wish me to lower myself before an usher!"<sup>4</sup> Indeed, the story turns on the general lack of respect of the boys for the sixty-year-old English master. Because he is not a university man, and teaches an "inferior" subject, even other members of staff chuckle over tales about him from the height of their superiority, and their attitude is imitated more brutally by the pupils.

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1 A. H. Gilkes, Boys and Masters, 1887, pp. 15-6.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 39-40.

3 *ibid.*, p. 59.

4 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 191.

The boys in Eden Phillpotts' sketches of school life, The Human Boy, 1899, all seem aware of the fact that some of their teachers are socially inferior. The new mathematics master is dubbed an "unholy bounder" on his third day at the school, largely because he misplaces his aspirates. Despite his intelligence and generosity, some of the boys produce a manifesto proclaiming, "that the fame of Dunston's is tarnished by Mr. Thompson", although events force them to think differently. Similarly Mr. Browne is socially condemned because of his clothes: "He wore salmon-coloured ties and elastic-sided boots", neckties that "would have made a rainbow curl up and faint" and "awfully squeaking boots with sham pearl buttons at the side".<sup>1</sup> Even later, when Cadby, a successful schoolboy cricketer at Harrow, is ordered to repeat some bad work, he is highly indignant. He assures his friends that he will tell the offending master, Mr. Hinkston, what he thinks of him.

"I didn't come here to listen to you teaching me subjects which are no earthly use. I came here to get my flannels. And it's about time you learned to treat with proper respect those who are doing a damned sight more for the School than a third-rate little usher."<sup>2</sup>

It will be apparent that teaching itself, even teaching in a public school, does not automatically confer status. Shaw might argue at the end of the period that to demand professional qualifications and to offer professional payment would mean that the teacher's "status will then take care of itself", and that "genuine" teachers are at no disadvantage, "pecuniarily or socially in ordinary professional society".<sup>3</sup> He also has to concede that in 1918 ability in teaching does not itself enable the schoolmaster to claim professional status.

He still has to depend for any credit he enjoys on such incidentals as holy orders or a University degree. The common schoolmaster is still in the most embarrassing of all social positions. The gentry inexorably refuse to accept him as a gentleman; and the common people refuse to accept him as a fellow-creature.<sup>4</sup>

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1 Eden Phillpotts, The Human Boy, (1899) 1910, pp. 27-8, 31, 11, 94, 125.

2 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, p. 181.

3 The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, p. 306.

4 ibid., p. 307.



This was very much the conclusion reached by George Baron in his later study of secondary schoolmasters during this period.

The position of Assistant Masters was often humiliating and precarious, and their underpayment was a constant grievance, but those in the more prosperous and respectable schools were "gentlemen" by reason of their university and clerical associations ...

1

One novel which took this division as its theme was written by the Master of Dulwich College.<sup>2</sup> It tells the story of a young, ugly, unpredictable Board School teacher who is introduced to the staff of a great public school to improve the standard of mathematics teaching there. He is presented as a non-graduate of humble origins, but also as a skilled teacher and a man of character. The other members of staff are graduates, classicists, mostly from comfortable backgrounds, and frequently in orders. The tensions, snubs and misunderstandings are narrated without great subtlety, and the author loads the dice heavily in favour of John Martin, who eventually loses his post because he is thought on legalistic grounds to be not a Christian. The fact that such an appointment was seen as extraordinary, as well as the author's deliberate assaults on social and educational snobbery, suggests that the gulf between different groups within the profession must have seemed almost unbridgeable at the end of the nineteenth century.

These social boundaries within teaching are neatly summed-up in the brief scene when young Mr. Lewisham encounters a "nicely dressed assistant master" in an educational agency. His professional rival has elegant clothes and a fine voice; Lewisham is conscious of his own waterproof collar and awkwardness. When he admits that he did not go to public school, the assistant says that such things matter a good deal "in our kind of school ... It's a question of tone, you know." After Lewisham has left, the other two discuss him with some distaste.

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1 George Baron, "The Secondary Schoolmaster, 1895-1914", London University Ph.D. thesis, 1952, p. 4.

2 A. H. Gilkes, The Thing that Hath Been, 1894.

The young master says,

"A boulder of that kind can't have a particularly nice time ... anyhow. If he does get into a decent school, he must get tremendously cut by all the decent men."

"Too thick-skinned to mind that sort of thing, I fancy," said the scholastic agent. "He's a new type." 1

Because they make manifest in such ways the complex inter-connection between class, background, language style, dress, wealth, qualifications, rôle and status, novels are frequently revealing, even in minor details. For example, Hardy remarks in an aside about Phillotson's long-standing friendship with Gillingham: "Though well-trained and even proficient masters, they occasionally used a dialect-word of their boyhood to each other in private."<sup>2</sup> Among the many implications here are the ideas that education for a teacher involves replacing one set of language and habits with another, approved standard set, and that only with the closest friends in privacy can the professional pose be allowed to slip at all. The most revealing indicators are those concerned like this with the relationships between individuals or groups, and particularly those dealing with marriage choice, as can be illustrated from novels published in the last thirty years of the nineteenth century.

The connection between education and social position underlies much of the narrative in Under the Greenwood Tree, 1872. Fancy's ability to disturb men and village customs depends not simply on her beauty but on the fact that her upbringing and her position as schoolmistress give her a higher social and educational position in the village than anyone else except the parson. Her father points out to the unhappy Dick that Fancy's accomplishments are not to be acquired in places like Mellstock:

"... d'ye think Fancy picked up her good manners, the smooth turn of her tongue, her musical notes, and her knowledge of books, in a homely hole like this?" 3

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1 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 174.  
2 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, p. 238.  
3 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, (1872) 1964, p. 159.

His presentation of his daughter stresses how far she is the product of her upbringing: daughter of "a teacher in a landed family", living "with her aunt, who kept a boarding-school", going to training school, coming "first among the Queen's scholars of her year", and the top of the first class in her certificate. She only continues to work as a schoolmistress so that

" ... if any gentleman, who sees her to be his equal in polish, should want to marry her, and she want to marry him, he shan't be superior to her in pocket." 1

No wonder Dick has to agree that perhaps he is not good enough for Fancy, or that she is tempted by the proposal from the one local man socially superior to her, and conscious of it. Maybold's praise of her is deliciously comic in its awareness of that social distance. Even in his proposal he consciously stoops to her, and is aware that he can raise her - as, indeed, she is:

"It is my nature - perhaps all women's - to love refinement of mind and manners; but even more than this, to be ever fascinated with the idea of surroundings more elegant and pleasing than those which have been customary." 2

Fancy has inherited something of her father's social ambition, though it does not take her long to turn again to Dick.

As well as bringing out the differences between the two men and Farmer Shiner, Fancy is also the catalyst that brings about change in the whole community. She herself does not destroy the Mellstock Choir, but this is a side effect of her education. That and her position make her inevitably on the side of social change, impatient of what seem to her outworn ideas and practices, and the triumph of her church organ symbolises a more general change which education is bringing to the country community. Mr. Penny talks of her "high standing in the parish"<sup>3</sup> but this may be partly due to her father's respectable financial position, which also enables her to make a more striking appearance than would be usual.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 159-60.

2 *ibid.*, p. 184.

3 *ibid.*, p. 187.



Indeed, Hardy writes:

With an audacity unparalleled in the whole history of village-schoolmistresses at this date ... she had actually donned a hat and feather and lowered her hitherto plainly looped-up hair, which now fell about her shoulders in a profusion of curls.

1

In the choice of hair-style and in the selection of an ornamental hat rather than a plain bonnet, Fancy is asserting her right to be considered a lady.

Trollope begins Dr. Wortle's School, 1881, by assuring the reader that the Doctor "combined two professions, in both of which he had been successful", as rector of Bowick and as headmaster of Bowick School. The school may have begun as a side line ("to occupy his leisure, and if possible to make his fortune"), but it clearly had not remained so. The Doctor reacted strongly when the bishop implied that "the cure of souls of the parishioners of Bowick was being subordinated to the Latin and Greek of the sons of the nobility".<sup>2</sup> Later, he admits to his wife that the threat of having to close the school "is like coming to the end of one's life". Their exchange is revealing:

"Why should any man give up a profession while he has health and strength to carry it on?"

"You have another."

"Yes; but it is not the one to which my energies have been chiefly applied."

3

Mr. Peacocke, whom Dr. Wortle appoints as assistant, is another who combines the two professions: a fellow of Trinity who took holy orders, married, and subsequently became vice-president of a classical college at St. Louis, Missouri. In his case, somewhat to the Doctor's dissatisfaction, there is complete concentration on the teaching rôle:

When he first came to Bowick he had declared that he would undertake no clerical duty. Education was his profession, and to that he meant to devote himself exclusively.

4

The romantic sub-plot of the novel might over-easily be construed as an

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1 *ibid.*, p. 170.

2 Anthony Trollope, Dr. Wortle's School, (1881) 1928, pp. 1-3.

3 *ibid.*, p. 215.

4 *ibid.*, p. 14.

indication that the social position of the schoolmaster was rising. That Earl Bracy should accept Mary Wortle as a suitable fiancée for his eldest son, Lord Carstairs, is certainly significant. Mary's assessment of her father's position, though, is based wholly on the clerical side of his twin vocation: the schoolmaster side implies responsibilities which make the match less suitable.

There was no reason why the son of a peer should not marry the daughter of a clergyman. The peer and the clergyman might be equally gentlemen. But young Carstairs had been there in trust. Lord Bracy had sent him there to be taught Latin and Greek, and had a right to expect that he should not be encouraged to fall in love with his tutor's daughter. 1

The all-important concept is the one of gentleman, a word which recurs through the book. In accepting the state of affairs, the Earl comforts himself with the reflection that "at any rate, the Doctor is a gentleman".<sup>2</sup> The emphasis is largely negative: being a schoolmaster does not confer the status of gentleman, but equally it is not impossible to be a schoolmaster and a gentleman.<sup>3</sup>

A number of passages in Gissing's A Life's Morning, 1888, define the way in which he believed the status of a governess was seen in society. Chapter three begins sardonically:

Miss Hood did not, of course, dine with the family. Though, as Mrs. Russell said, it was a distinct advantage to have in the house a governess whom one could in many respects treat as an equal, yet there was naturally a limit, in this as in all other matters. We have not yet, either in fact or in sentiment, quite outgrown the social stage in which personal hiring sets on the hired a stigma of servitude.

The bland tone - 'of course', 'naturally' - and the first person plural are only gently ironic, but the continuation of the passage is more edged.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 176.

2 *ibid.*, p. 251.

3 Earlier in the book Trollope had made the mild generalisation that, "An assistant schoolmaster is not often in orders, and sometimes is not a gentleman". *ibid.*, p. 12.

Mrs Russell was not unaware that, in all that concerned intellectual refinement, her governess was considerably superior to herself, and in personal refinement not less a lady; but the fact of quarterly payments, spite of all this, inevitably indicated a place below the salt.

1

Emily Hood was at ease in teaching and in her own room, but found her situation in Mrs. Russell's drawing room an artificial one. "It was not that she resented her subordination, for she was almost devoid of social ambitions and knew nothing of vulgar envy ..."<sup>2</sup> Gissing suggests that although Emily had the manners of a lady, in her position "this was rather to be observed in what she refrained from doing than in what she did".<sup>3</sup> The pressure comes when Wilfrid, on vacation from Oxford, falls in love with Emily and confesses it to her. They discuss whether this should be revealed to his father and his aunt, Mrs. Russell. He says:

"Your position is not that of a servant; you are from the first our friend; you honour us by the aid you give, efficient as few could make it. Yes, there shall be no concealment; far better so."

4

Events show that his confidence is naive. She cannot return to the house where she was employed; he leaves university; he can no longer confide in his father. Eventually he marries Emily abruptly, and only later tells his family, although Beatrice informs his father that Emily "is in every respect worthy to become a member of your family".<sup>5</sup>

The uncertain social position of a trained teacher in a small community is one of the major themes of Charlotte M. Yonge's Our New Mistress, 1888. One of the young pupil-teachers says, "We should have been pretty well laughed at at home for pretending to talk like ladies" and there is some resentment at the arrival of Miss Martin, "who seemed stiffish and stuck up".<sup>6</sup> Lady Mary Brooke writes to the vicar to complain that "The mistress seems to have made

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1 George Gissing, A Life's Morning, (1888) 1928, p. 34.

2 *ibid.*, p. 40.

3 *ibid.*, p. 11.

4 *ibid.*, p. 51.

5 *ibid.*, p. 341.

6 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, [1888], pp. 2, 11.



no friends in the village, and to have given herself airs, rejecting all Betsy Bolton's kind offers of assistance ...". He replies that Miss Martin and her sister "are of a slightly superior class to the ordinary run of our village society, and good Betsy Bolton is far too homely to be a companion to Miss Martin with her training-college culture and considerable mental power".<sup>1</sup> In her log-book, Miss Martin comments on her meeting with Mr. Dyke, the schoolmaster. Again, social position is the first topic of importance.

Poor man! he evidently thinks himself wasted down here, out of the reach of all society except when he can walk into Overbury; and, as he says, he is looked down upon by all the uneducated, dull old farmers and village tradesmen. 2

In the early part of Meredith's Lord Ormont and his Aminta, 1894, only Matthew Weyburn himself can think or speak of teaching as a profession; to the others it appears socially degrading. Eventually Aminta picks up the phrase "the schoolmaster's profession" from his mother, and before the end of the book can talk naturally of "his choice of the schoolmaster's profession".<sup>3</sup> , Matthew is young and handsome; his father was an army officer; that he should choose the rôle of tutor with ambitions to be a schoolmaster dismays the ladies. Lady Charlotte has a "general idea" that tutors "should smell of dust and wear a snuffy appearance". When Weyburn tells her that want of a private income prevented him from following his father into the service, she responds:

"Bad look-out. Army or Navy for gentlemen, if they stick to the school of honour. The sedentary professions corrupt men: bad for the blood." 4

It is not only her reaction that such a man is "to some extent despicable for accepting tutorships".<sup>5</sup> The young Aminta draws in her breath sharply when she hears that Weyburn and his friend Emile "hope to be schoolmasters"; she cannot think it a career; she sees it as "renouncing ambition"; "clearly she

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 97-8, 100-1.

2 *ibid.*, p. 76.

3 George Meredith, Lord Ormont and his Aminta, (1894) 1899, pp. 80, 85, 204,

4 *ibid.*, p. 50. 328.

5 *ibid.*, p. 57.

could not understand enthusiasm for the schoolmaster's career".<sup>1</sup> Her reaction is repeatedly shown in such terms as "disillusionment", "distaste", "disappointment", "contempt" for "the profession she despised".<sup>2</sup> She can only imagine any status within teaching if he becomes a clergyman: "That profession - must you not take ... enter into orders if you would ... if you aim at any distinction?"<sup>3</sup> Selina is amazed that her friend "could really be interested in the fortunes of a mere schoolmaster".<sup>4</sup>

On the other hand, the novel does concern itself with Aminta's change of heart, though her feelings for the man rather than for the profession are dominant. Her talk with Weyburn's dying mother is central. Aminta says that they talked much of the schoolmaster's profession - "The subject seemed to give her strength" - and goes on:

"Her mind was very clear up to the last hour upon all subjects interesting her son. She at one time regretted his not being a soldier, for the sake of his father's memory. Then she learned to think he could do more for the world as the schoolmaster ..."

5

In passages like these, written before 1900, there is a repeated note of challenge to accepted ideas of status and to the conventional hierarchy of occupations. Sometimes it is deliberately expressed by a character, but more frequently it is brought about by the situation. Increasingly in the twentieth century the bleak sense of low esteem is accompanied by a more optimistic or idealistic view of the future, in the tradition of Matthew Weyburn's claim:

"We have no ambition for any title higher than School and Schoolmaster ..."

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1    ibid., pp. 78-80.  
2    ibid., pp. 80-86.  
3    ibid., p. 81.  
4    ibid., p. 328.  
5    ibid., p. 204.  
6    ibid., p. 82.

## QUALIFICATIONS

The most important single change in attitude manifested in this period was the increasing rejection of what S. P. B. Mais called "that sort of cant which we too frequently hear, that 'any sort of ass can be a successful schoolmaster'".<sup>1</sup> Years earlier, writing as Frederick Feeder B.A., another author had pointed out that the "scarcity of really good teachers" too clearly demonstrated the fallacy of the popular notion that "no previous training is required" for an occupation which most men fondly imagine they can take up successfully.<sup>2</sup> The image, so popular in earlier periods, of failures or refugees from other occupations who turn to teaching as an infallible resort seems to fade away before the end of the nineteenth century. When such an idea occurs, it is usually in a memoir of a much earlier time.<sup>3</sup> One schoolmaster author claimed that the situation had improved since the days when "certain social stigma" marked ushers because they were "for long largely recruited from the leavings of other occupations".<sup>4</sup> In the same way, there are fewer suggestions that many teachers are wholly incapable and unqualified, that the system "perpetuates the employment of incompetent teachers".<sup>5</sup> The keepers of private schools come under fire from writers like Gissing and Wells, but essentially for their sham and pretension. Waymark describes his headmaster as a "charlatan";<sup>6</sup> the principal of the seedy Cavendish Academy has letters after his name "indicating that he had paid certain guineas for a bogus diploma";<sup>7</sup> private schools are defined in Tono-Bungay as those which "any unqualified pretender was free to establish".<sup>8</sup> Words like "charlatan", "bogus",

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- 1 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 115.
  - 2 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, p. 18. Cf. A. C. Benson, The Schoolmaster, (1902) 1908, pp. 7-8.
  - 3 For example, Thomas Cooper, Life, (1872) Leicester, 1971, p. 72, or William Macready, Reminiscences, 1875, vol. 1, p. 3.
  - 4 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 4.
  - 5 Matthew Arnold, Irish Essays and Others, 1882, pp. 92-3.
  - 6 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 44.
  - 7 H. G. Wells, Kipps, (1905) Harmondsworth, 1941, p. 13.
  - 8 H. G. Wells, Tono-Bungay, (1909) Odhams, n.d., p. 26.



"pretender", indicate that the emphasis is more on the fraudulent taking of money in profit-making establishments than on simple lack of ability in the profession generally.

A new image begins to appear: that of the sanguine would-be teacher who overestimates the ease of entering the profession, perhaps led astray by reading the books of an earlier age. In a romantic novel of 1918, the sixteen-year-old Maurice Hale, who has had to leave Eton, forms hazy notions that he might "teach little fellows in a prep. school", but his frequently expressed aspirations to leave the business firm for teaching come to nothing.<sup>1</sup> Among the youthful illusions which are punctured in Mr. Lewisham's early life are his optimistic views of his own qualifications as a teacher, further confused by his dreams of what he will one day achieve. When he is dismissed from his first teaching post, "he had imagined headmasters clutching at the chance of him", but nobody seemed to need a young man of nineteen,

... even though he adds prizes for good conduct, general improvement, and arithmetic, and advanced certificates signed by a distinguished engineer and headed with the Royal Arms, guaranteeing his knowledge of geometrical drawing, nautical astronomy, animal physiology, physiography, inorganic chemistry, and building construction, to his youth and strength and energy.<sup>2</sup>

Similar dreams and disillusionment follow when Lewisham seeks a post from his training as a science teacher at South Kensington. In a heavily comic scene, the assistant in an educational agency derides his lack of qualifications ("one-and-twenty, no degree, no games, two years' experience as a junior - wants a headmastership of an endowed school!"),<sup>3</sup> laments the problem presented by his marriage, and convinces him that he will have to offer religion, drawing, shorthand, French, book-keeping, commercial geography and land-measuring, if he is to obtain a post.

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1 Horace Buckley, The Choices of an Etonian, 1918, pp. 39-61.

2 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900), Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 49.

3 *ibid.*, p. 168.

"But I can't teach any of these things!"

"Look here," said Blendershin, and paused. "Has your wife or you a private income?"

"No," said Lewisham.

"Well?"

A pause of further moral descent, and a whack against an obstacle.

"But they will find me out," said Lewisham.

Blendershin smiled. "It's not so much ability as willingness to teach, you know. And they won't find you out. The sort of schoolmaster we deal with can't find anything out. He can't teach any of these things himself ..." 1

Another, superior, agency disqualifies Lewisham on the basis of his background, his clothes, his accent and his specialism. The elegant young man says that an English mastership may come vacant.

"Science doesn't count for much in our sort of schools, you know. Classics and good games - that's our sort of thing."

"I see," said Lewisham.

"Good games, good form, you know, and all that sort of thing." 2

Lewisham, like Gottfried Plattner, the schoolmaster protagonist of an earlier story, is shown as being forced into an impossible position by the unreal expectations of schools that qualification means an ability to teach almost anything. At the age of twenty-seven, Plattner, a teacher of languages,

... also taught chemistry, commercial geography, book-keeping, shorthand, drawing, and any other additional subject to which the changing fancies of the boy's parents might direct attention. He knew little or nothing of these various subjects, but in secondary as distinguished from Board or elementary schools, knowledge in the teacher is, very properly, by no means so necessary as high moral character and gentlemanly tone. 3

The degree of importance attached to different qualifications varied, as Wells indicated, according to the kind of school. For a public school, the order in which Talbot Baines Reed presents his hero's qualifications in The Master of the Shell is almost as important as what they are. He is a "gentleman at large", who later says he is "not under the necessity of working ... that is, not for my livelihood". He stroked his college boat, and rowed for

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1 *ibid.*, p. 171.

2 *ibid.*, p. 173.

3 H. G. Wells, "The Plattner Story" (1897), The Short Stories of H. G. Wells, 1927, p. 371.

Cambridge against Oxford. He is handsome and speaks German well. Although he has had no training or experience, and has not previously considered the idea of teaching, he says at interview that he thinks he can succeed in taking charge of a house of forty to fifty boys and a class of seventy, and the chairman of the governors tells him that of the six applicants, "your qualifications are higher than those of the other candidates".<sup>1</sup>

Increasingly, the significant division at this time is presented as between those who are trained as teachers and those who are not. Shaw distinguished between the "genuine" qualified man and the "unskilled" pretender, insisting on the need to demand "genuine professional qualifications" from teachers, and then to pay the market price for them.<sup>2</sup> The "certification and registration" of teachers was a matter of public debate in the last quarter of the nineteenth century and many authors would have been aware of the N.U.E.T.'s concern, the unsuccessful 1879 Bill and the Cross Commission of 1886-8.<sup>3</sup> Day training colleges had been set up in 1890; local education authorities were encouraged to set up their own colleges after 1904; from 1911 grants were available for graduates to train for teaching. In general, untrained is shown in novels as equivalent to incompetent. Mr. Polly's dreadful National School was "run on severely economical lines to keep down the rates, by a largely untrained staff", and the master of his dingy private school was equally untrained.<sup>4</sup> The schoolmaster Finney complains that although parents "chatter away about training" they allow boys at public schools to be taught "by men who are quite untrained for this profession".<sup>5</sup> Such a public-school mistrust for training is taken to its limits in A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, where a headmaster claims never to engage a man who has a diploma in education.<sup>6</sup> The unpleasant Mr. Mainwearing, proprietor of a private school, is a Cambridge graduate with a liking for games,

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1 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, (1894) /1913/, pp. 9-20.

2 The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, pp. 335, 306.

3 Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, pp. 116-7.

4 H. G. Wells, The History of Mr. Polly, (1910) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 13.

5 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, pp. 126-7.

6 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 27.



but, Wells adds, "Of course Mr. Mainwearing had no special training as a teacher. He had no ideas about education at all."<sup>1</sup> His assistant, Noakley, "had failed to qualify years ago as an elementary assistant schoolmaster".<sup>2</sup>

By contrast, some of the more favourably presented fictional teachers are shown as having been trained, and often as having done well in that training. Fancy Day, schoolmistress at Mellstock, was the daughter of a teacher, and had lived in an aunt's boarding school, before going to training-school as a Queen's scholar and passing out "highest of the first class" in her certificate examinations.<sup>3</sup> The new village schoolmistress in Our New Mistress, 1888, "had come out very high up in the list at Fishponds Training College", where she trained. In addition, she had two years' experience "and had an excellent parchment and report from the place she had left".<sup>4</sup>

Older teachers, who had not trained or had failed to do so successfully, may be shown with an indulgent or amused pity, in the way that Wells describes Miss Murgatroyd,<sup>5</sup> but the clear emphasis is usually that they belong to a disappearing and less satisfactory age. To the surprise of some of the villagers, Betsy Bolton, whose mother had kept the school before her, is passed over as schoolmistress in favour of a younger, trained teacher. Governess Batsy, as she was known, "had not got her Queen's scholarship" and never gained her certificate, and during an examination of her work, "the inspector found ever so much fault".<sup>6</sup> When Clare Hartill persuades the headmistress to dispense with the services of Miss Vigers, it is largely by dwelling on her limitations at a time of educational development:

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1 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter (1918), Odhams, n.d., p. 138.

2 ibid., p. 139.

3 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, (1872) 1964, p. 159.

4 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, /1888/, pp. 9, 32, 14.

5 Joan and Peter (1918), pp. 92 ff.

6 Our New Mistress, /1888/, pp. 5-6.

... poor Miss Vigers was certainly no longer young ... hardly the woman for a modern house-mistress-ship ... Old fashioned ... in those days of degrees and college-training so much more was expected ... and after that affair in the summer no doubt she had lost confidence in herself ...

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The need to acquire an educational qualification is frequently glanced at in the later years of this period. Earlier references tended to be vague, suggesting for example that Emily Hood no sooner became a teacher than she "worked on for certain examinations which it would benefit her to have passed".<sup>2</sup> By contrast, much of the later Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, is concerned with particular varieties of qualification and specific guidance, even extending to giving the names of certain actual training colleges which the author recommends.<sup>3</sup> The most frequent specific comments occur in the novels of H. G. Wells. George Ponderovo's schoolmaster was one of those who saw the direction in which things were moving, and "had had the energy to get himself a College of Preceptors diploma".<sup>4</sup> The narrator of The New Machiavelli says that his father had been an unqualified master in a small private school, until it became clear that there was a bleak future for such institutions.

Thereupon my father had roused himself and had qualified as a science teacher under the Science and Art Department, which in those days had charge of the scientific and artistic education of the mass of the English population ...

5

Miss Mills, the assistant teacher at the School of St. George and the Venerable Bed, "had no educational qualifications, but year by year she was slowly taking the diploma of Associate of the London College of Preceptors".<sup>6</sup> When Miriam begins teaching at a private school, in Dorothy Richardson's Backwater, 1916, she reads in a newspaper about the Royal Commission on Education, and the need for all teachers to be qualified.

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- 1 Clemence Dane, Regiment of Women, (1917) 1927, p. 208.
  - 2 George Gissing, A Life's Morning, (1888) 1928, p. 67.
  - 3 A. B. de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 155.
  - 4 H. G. Wells, Tono-Bungay, (1909) Odhams, n.d., p. 26.
  - 5 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, p. 26.
  - 6 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., p. 97.

For a long time she sat blankly contemplating the new world that was coming. Everyone would be trained and efficient but herself. She was not strong enough to earn a living and qualify as a teacher at the same time. The day's work tired her to death. She must hide somewhere ... She would not be wanted ...

1

Thereafter, until she resigns, thoughts of the need to be certificated keep returning to her: "She was not qualifying herself for examinations in her spare time", "If you don't get certificates there's no prospect", "I ought ... to stay on and make myself into a certificated teacher".<sup>2</sup>

One indication of this shift of emphasis, as well as of a more general concern for the developmental stages of personality in the novel, is the tendency to look more closely at the period of training. A book like A Sweet Girl Graduate, with a mixture of sense and sentimentality, centres on the heroine's three years at "St. Benet's far-famed College for Women" in the old university town of Kingsdene. Mr. Hayes, an elderly clergyman who has taught Priscilla Peel the classics, tells her when she needs to support the family that she must not abandon her books, for "independently of the pleasure they afford, they will also give you bread-and-butter".

He thought Priscilla could do brilliantly as a teacher, and he resolved that for this purpose she should have the advantages which a collegiate life alone could offer to her. He himself prepared her for the entrance examination ...

3

Although Prissie loves the classics, she determines to give them up and study subjects more immediately relevant to teaching. She says that Mr. Hayes agrees with her,

"... that I know enough of Greek and Latin now for rudimentary teaching, and that I should be better qualified to take a good paying situation if I devote the whole of my time while at St. Benet's to learning and perfecting myself in modern languages." 4

Formal academic qualifications seem to be seen largely as a kind of sieve for deciding the level at which a teacher can be permitted to work. If the

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1 Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, vol. I, (1916) 1967, p. 244.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 274, 276, 322.

3 L. T. Meade, A Sweet Girl Graduate, 1894, p. 51.

4 *ibid.*, p. 209.



novels give a true picture, then a surprising number of headmasters got firsts or double firsts and a good number possessed doctorates. Merton School is recommended for one boy largely on the grounds that it has "one of the first scholars in Europe for headmaster".<sup>1</sup> The assumptions go largely unspoken in writing about men, but in books which deal with women teachers there is considerably more discussion of the links between academic achievements and vocational opportunity - presumably because of the increasing development of secular and higher education for girls. For example, there is a lengthy discussion about the choice of work for women in chapter thirteen of Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901. Tom (or Thomasina) boldly asserts, "Education is my sphere, and I intend to devote my life to the advancement of my sex".<sup>2</sup> Kathleen longs to win a scholarship to help her parents, so that she can "have a chance of getting on and being able to teach some day".<sup>3</sup> Both of these come from relatively poor homes, but the rich Rhoda proclaims:

"I don't approve of Latin for girls. It's silly. Of course, if you intend to teach, or be a doctor, or anything like that, it may be useful, but for ordinary stop-at-home girls it's nonsense."<sup>4</sup>

The link between education and opportunities for independence is also a major theme in A College Girl, 1913, written by the same author under her married name. When Lady Hayes arranges to make it possible for Darsie Garnett to go to Cambridge, she says, "Of course if you contemplate teaching, you ought to be thoroughly equipped".<sup>5</sup> The ending of the book seems to imply that high qualifications are required, although at one point a Newnham girl says, "Most of us are training to teach".<sup>6</sup> Hannah Vernon gets a first, and "with so good a record she would have little difficulty in obtaining her ambition as mathematical mistress at a girls' school".<sup>7</sup> Darsie, however, gets a second,

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1 Edward Bulwer Lytton, Kenelm Chillingly, (1873) 1875, p. 22.  
 2 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, p. 141.  
 3 *ibid.*, p. 73.  
 4 *ibid.*, p. 25.  
 5 Mrs. George de Horne Vaizey, A College Girl, 1913, p. 205.  
 6 *ibid.*, p. 261.  
 7 *ibid.*, p. 414.

and seems to imagine that this will mean having to stay at home: "Oh, Dan, after all my dreams! I'm so bitterly disappointed. Poor little second-class me!"<sup>1</sup> However, the final pages suggest that one day she may be marrying Dan, who gets a first and a post at a public school.

Even in The Rainbow, 1915, notions of freedom and independence are insistently related to continuing education. The headmistress of the High School advises Ursula that matriculation qualifies her to become an uncertificated teacher; that after a year or two's experience she can go to training college; that if she gain a degree, "That will give you a qualification and a position in the world ..."<sup>2</sup> The impression is of a kind of educational staircase with a degree at the top, which according to the headmistress means "scope to choose your own way ... economical independence ... freedom to choose". Conditioned by her own experiences under the headmistress and teachers like the charismatic Miss Inger, with her B.A. from Newnham, Ursula goes to college to take the university course with the idea that she is one of the "elect" not an "ordinary schoolteacher".<sup>3</sup>

Although formal academic qualifications are still often mentioned, it is also frequently stressed that there is no necessary correlation between a good degree and the ability to teach. Mrs. Ewing deliberately separates the two in her approving comments on the Rector, who was "a good scholar, and (quite another matter) a good teacher".<sup>4</sup> Mr. Finney is speaking from experience when he tells Martin, "The supposition that a man can teach because he has taken a first in Classics at the varsity is childish".<sup>5</sup> One trusting headmaster appointed without interview a Cambridge Wrangler "who had taken a high place in the classical as well as in the mathematical tripos". When this admirably qualified man appeared at the school, he turned out to be:

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1 *ibid.*, p. 414.

2 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1915) Harmondsworth, 1949, p. 358.

3 *ibid.*, p. 429.

4 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, A Flat Iron for a Farthing, (1873) 1908, p. 130.

5 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 128.

... a dwarf, suffering from chronic ill-health, and with a shrill, squeaky voice that set the boys on the grin as soon as they heard it ... he was almost bald ... Then he was a misanthrope, who shunned the company of other men, but actually hated boys, and had no idea of teaching beyond flying into a passion with his class when the comprehension of Virgil and Euclid did not come as natural to them as to himself. Withal, he was pleased rather to look down on me because my university career had not been quite so distinguished as his own ... As he was utterly incapable of preserving discipline, too short-sighted even to perceive when the boys were playing the fool right before his nose, you may guess what a help he was to me as second master.

1

Mr. Tinkler has a Cambridge degree, but is an incompetent teacher, who is unable to solve mathematical problems himself and who takes little part in out-of-school activities.<sup>2</sup> Mr. Thompson, a Cambridge M.A., is a "bounder", who knows nothing of boys and according to one of them, "insulted chaps in the most frightful way".<sup>3</sup> Miss Mott is described by another teacher as "first student of her year", who carried everything before her in a series of academic triumphs, but who has become in the girls' eyes, "a commonplace, hard-working teacher, with an air of chronic exhaustion ... a tired, worn woman".<sup>4</sup> Mr. Wardron, a wrangler who "knew all that could be known about his subject" nevertheless "failed entirely to cope" with senior boys on the classical side.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Finney left Oxford with two firsts, but proved quite unable to control boys, the sixth form as well as juniors.<sup>6</sup> Another highly qualified failure is Mr. Trumble, the French master, who went to Oxford and got a Double First. "He also was quite incapable of teaching anything. His form made no pretence of keeping order."<sup>7</sup> Mr. Villiers is yet another with a good mind, a first in Mods., and sound principles, but one who is not an "inspired" teacher or capable of keeping order.<sup>8</sup>

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- 1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 335.
  - 2 F. Anstey, Vice Versa, (1882) 1969, pp. 75, 93, 120, 213.
  - 3 Eden Phillpotts, The Human Boy, (1899) 1910, pp. 28-31.
  - 4 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, p. 168.
  - 5 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 110.
  - 6 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, pp. 122-3.
  - 7 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) /1930/, p. 114.
  - 8 Stephen McKenna, Sonia, 1917, pp. 45-6.



As some of these examples indicate, more weight seems to be given than previously to the notion of competence as a teacher: the combined abilities to get a subject across, to maintain discipline and to understand pupils. However, this is nearly always presented negatively: there are many pictures of unsuccessful masters who cannot teach, but few of the successful ones who can. The reader is more often assured of a man's skill than he is presented with any picture of him in action. One of these few is the central figure in a late nineteenth century novel, The Thing that Hath Been, written by the Master of Dulwich College. John Martin, a trained Board-School teacher employed to improve the mathematics in Stratton public school, is a shabby, ugly figure, but he explains his subject "in a manner not to be surpassed".

With all his disadvantages, he had two or three great advantages: in the first place, he was thoroughly master of his subject; secondly, his voice was excellent, pleasant to the ear, and producing faithfully and easily every thought that he had. His bearing also was confident; because he was conscious of no other feeling than a desire for the improvement of each boy in the class; and he had two other characteristics, which were likely generally to help him: in the first place, he had an intuition into most of the thoughts which passed through the minds of his pupils; and, secondly, he had an unfathomable fund of humour. 1

There are brief descriptions of Mr. Martin's classroom practice in the novel, but this is exceptional. In Hugh Rendal, 1905, for instance, only the failures are ever shown in action. Mr. Waddington, alleged to be the one wholly successful teacher at Larne, is never realised in a teaching situation, and the commendation is much less specific than in the picture of Mr. Martin. How he drives, inspires and imparts is not made clear.

Mr. Waddington was that rare character, a born teacher: a man who could not only drive the unwilling - in a way that bewildered sluggards fresh from the Nirvana of Lower Fifth - but could also inspire the willing with a real love of their books. A keen scholar and a man of high character and culture, he had, above all, the gift of imparting his knowledge and drawing people on to seek more. 2

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1 A. H. Gilkes, The Thing that Hath Been, 1894, pp. 83-4.

2 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, pp. 99-100.

In a similar way, Mr. Lee is described in generalities rather than revealed as a successful house master in The Harrovians, 1913.<sup>1</sup>

It is unnecessary to rehearse a lengthy catalogue of those who are shown as incompetent; virtually every book that deals with school at this period contains examples. There is the young teacher whose desk is "well known to be crammed with cribs of every kind", and who cannot answer questions without consulting them.<sup>2</sup> There is the scholarly and well-connected public school-master whose appointment to a House is a disaster, because he "disliked boys, misunderstood them, insulted them, ignored those who lacked influential connections, toadied and pampered the 'swells'".<sup>3</sup> Edwin Clayhanger sees in those who teach him "the ingenuities, the fakes, the insincerities, the incapacities, the varieties, and the dishonesties".<sup>4</sup> Reflecting that men with reasonable qualifications take up something better than teaching, the boys in The Loom of Youth see their staff as a "fatuous set of fools":

Rogers is just the sort of fool who would be a school-master. He has got no brain, no intellect, he loves jawing, and nothing could be more suitable for him than the Third Form, the pulpit, and a commission in the O.T.C. 5

Another new development is the stress which authors suggest seems to be laid on prowess at games as a desirable, almost essential, qualification for a teacher, especially at a "good" school. The hero of The Master of the Shell, 1894, who stroked his college boat and rowed for Cambridge against Oxford, is preferred to "an Oxford man, first-class in classics, and a good running-man in his day".<sup>6</sup> Mr. Wardron's knowledge of mathematics was no more important than his "Blue, with a century at Lord's to his credit".<sup>7</sup> One effective young teacher was "a first-rate cricketer, and had steered his university boat,

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- 1 Arnold Lunn, The Harrovians, 1913, pp. 28, 260-1.
  - 2 Eden Phillpotts, The Human Boy, (1899) 1910, pp. 11, 95.
  - 3 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 35.
  - 4 Arnold Bennett, Clayhanger, (1910) 1920, p. 15.
  - 5 Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) /1930/, p. 159.
  - 6 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, (1894) /1913/, pp. 11-18.
  - 7 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, 1905, p. 100.

besides taking high classical honours".<sup>1</sup> The importance of a sporting reputation in a master's relationship with pupils is often made explicit. It is said to be the fact that he rowed in his College boat at Oxford which made boys regard Edgar Staveley "with intense respect and admiration".<sup>2</sup> The master of the Lower Shell in "Pip" is described as "specially favoured by the gods" in establishing himself so early in the school. "He was twenty-nine; he had been a famous Cricket Blue, and he enjoyed the respectful admiration of countless boys."<sup>3</sup> Mr. Traill's Rugby Blue quite outweighs his low degree class, and would have gained him a place in a better school than Moffatt's.<sup>4</sup> Although he has other qualities, the headmaster of David Blaize's preparatory school is viewed with awe because he rowed for Oxford against Cambridge.<sup>5</sup> Patrick Traherne is left in no doubt by the headmaster who appoints him that he was "selected rather on athletic than intellectual grounds", because of his Blue rather than his Oxford second in English.<sup>6</sup> In some cases there seems to be an implied connection between less able teachers and less popular sports. One of the "silliest" of teachers was a Cambridge hockey Blue, the ineffectual Mr. Dutton played lacrosse at Cambridge, and the French master, Trundle, who was "quite incapable of teaching anything" was awarded his Oxford Blue for golf.<sup>7</sup> In the middle of the war, S. P. B. Mais wrote sardonically of the undue importance previously attached to games as a qualification:

A 'Blue' was always safe to be offered a post at most public schools, regardless of his qualities as a master. The theory was that boys would naturally reverence a man who had the magic gift of a straight eye or an abnormal wind.

As a matter of fact, boys were not so easily hoodwinked. Some of the worst masters we have ever known have been 'Blues' -

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1 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 155.

2 Alice and Claude Askew, The Etonian, 4th ed., 1906, pp. 74-5.

3 Ian Hay, "Pip", 1907, p. 57.

4 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 14-5.

5 E. F. Benson, David Blaize, /1916/ /1929/, p. 9.

6 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 22.

7 St. John Lucas, The First Round, 1909, p. 58; E. F. Benson, David Blaize, /1916/ /1929/, p. 3; and Alec Waugh, The Loom of Youth, (1917) /1930/, p. 114.



men without brains, without a sense of humour or proportion, with no sense of dignity or discipline, useless in every walk of life except on the running track or on the river. 1

In one volume of stories an Englishman assures a German whom he meets on a train journey that the days when sporting ability was an essential qualification for teaching in a good school are over. The end of the episode casts an ironic shadow of doubt over that judgment, but other episodes in the same book suggest that an extreme position is being modified. The English traveller talks of the time when:

"... no man who entered the scholastic career stood a chance of obtaining a post at one of the greater Public Schools unless he had won his 'Blue' at cricket, football or rowing. The thing was carried to ridiculous extremes ... It is no longer a sufficient qualification for a schoolmaster nowadays that he be a Blue. He must possess at least a respectable degree, and must be a man of broad interests - political, social, artistic, scientific." 2

Of the many teachers presented in this volume of sketches, some do possess less conventional qualifications; individuals are connoisseurs of art, have strong literary interests, understand boys, or - and, significantly, it is rarely mentioned - can be described as "a first-rate teacher".<sup>3</sup> It is more common, however, for a man to be approved of as combining academic and sporting achievements. A successful Headmaster is described as a person who had earlier "won high distinction as an athlete" and whose intellectual achievements had been "by no means contemptible" (he holds a Doctorate).<sup>4</sup> A housemaster is recalled as "a scholar and a gentleman"; "He had taken First Classes at Oxford in Classical Schools and he had rowed in the 'Varsity Eight'".<sup>5</sup>

The overall impression is that there is less consensus than previously; qualifications are ranked differently by different individuals and at different times. The sense of change is made clear in Ian Hay's analysis of the characteristics of a successful headmaster, comparing the situation in 1914

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 104.

2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 39-40.

3 *ibid.*, p. 211.

4 *ibid.*, p. 53.

5 *ibid.*, p. 15.

with the one obtaining at the end of the previous century.

Twenty years ago no man could ever hope to reach the summit of the scholastic universe who was not in Orders and possessor of a First Class Classical degree. Now the layman, the modern-side man, above all the man of affairs are raising their head. 1

His new order of priorities puts first the fact that the headmaster must "undoubtedly" be a gentleman, rejects scholarship as "a hindrance rather than a help", and goes on to list as the desirable qualifications the possession of savoir-faire, majestic dignity, a sense of humour, the ability to rule, a sixth-sense for everything that is going on, business acumen, athletic prowess if possible, the art of man-management, skill in public speaking, sympathy and insight, and "If he possesses private means of his own, so much the better ..."<sup>2</sup> The selection of qualities, the ordering of them, and the stress placed upon them, frequently reveal as much about the author as about the teachers described. It is possible to consider the implications which underlie the terms in which fictional characters recommend others as teachers or discuss their qualifications. When two clergymen discuss Christopher's preparation for public school scholarships, Venables suggests the local grammar school.

"The only thing I can recommend is a day school. Why not try Market Atherstone? It's cheap, and the headmaster's a gentleman and a good fellow."

"And a good scholar?" added Deane, with a smile.

"Good enough for the purpose. I should have put that earlier. It is the most important qualification."

Deane considered a while. "I wish I could afford something a trifle better. Young Horsley, my butcher's son, goes there." 3

Possibly even more striking are the comments supposed to have been written by a radical, a dangerous progressive, in 1910 about a man who seems to him to represent "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. 4

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1 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, pp. 28-9.

2 ibid., pp. 4-31.

3 E. H. L. Watson, Christopher Deane, 1902, p. 21.

4 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 102.

There is no mention of actual ability to teach, or qualities related to it except the sense of humour. On the other hand the accepted background, the good family, the private income all seem to be assumed as desirable or even necessary.

The different valuations placed on teaching as an occupation, and different ideas of the appropriate qualifications for it, tend to rest on different views of the purposes of education: for social advancement, for personal development, for the acquisition of skills. Thomas Hardy explores this idea in The Return of the Native, 1878, in which Clym Yeobright abruptly abandons his successful business as a jeweller in Paris to return to Egdon and teach. Himself the product of a socially and educationally mixed marriage between the daughter of a curate and a farmer, Clym seems to think that a "worthy" aim - to become "a schoolmaster to the poor and ignorant, to teach them what nobody else will"<sup>1</sup> - is sufficient justification for his plan. At first sight this reversal from a "flashy" trade might seem admirable, but Clym's ambition is theoretical rather than practical, and based on an ill-founded hypothesis:

He had a conviction that the want of most men was knowledge of a sort which brings wisdom rather than affluence. He wished to raise the class at the expense of individuals rather than individuals at the expense of the class. 2

His plan, which he later describes to his mother as one "for instilling high knowledge into empty minds"<sup>3</sup> is self-defeating because it is based on an unreal view of human nature: his own and Eustacia's as well as his hypothetical pupils'. When he announces the scheme to the people of Egdon, their immediate reaction is sceptical:

"He'll never carry it out in the world," said Fairway.  
"In a few weeks he'll learn to see things otherwise."  
"'Tis good-hearted of the young man," said another. "But,  
for my part, I think he had better mind his business." 4

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1 Thomas Hardy, The Return of the Native, (1878) 1958, p. 182.  
2 *ibid.*, p. 179.  
3 *ibid.*, p. 210.  
4 *ibid.*, p. 178.



His mother says coolly, "Your fancies will be your ruin, Clym" and Eustacia is certain, "You will never adhere to your education plan".<sup>1</sup> Hardy himself comments ironically that a well-proportioned mind "never would have allowed Yeobright to do such a ridiculous thing as throw up his business to benefit his fellow-creatures". What he wanted for them and what they wanted for themselves were quite distinct:

To argue upon the possibility of culture before luxury to the bucolic world may be to argue truly, but it is an attempt to disturb a sequence to which humanity has been long accustomed. 2

The unreality of Clym's position is emphasised by his readiness to shift and distort it. He insists on thinking of Eustacia as a teacher despite her own assurance and that of others around her that she is unfitted for the rôle. Indeed, he even suggests that his marriage will be justified by the help it will give to his teaching scheme. Before long he announces that he has abandoned his original ideas for giving "rudimentary education to the lowest class". Social ambition begins to replace idealism:

"I can do better. I can establish a good private school for farmers' sons ... I shall ultimately, I hope, be at the head of one of the best schools in the county." 3

The more he talks about his own programme of study, the clearer it is that it will never be complete. He begins with "I must study a little at first, to get properly qualified"; then "I can manage to pass examinations"; then the suggestion that after six months in a cottage on the heath "I shall have finished my reading"; later the realisation of an urgent need "that he should speedily make some show of progress in his scholastic plans"; and finally the eye-trouble and the surgeon's verdict that "all thought of pursuing his work ... would have to be given up for a long time to come".<sup>4</sup> He ends, apparently happily, as a wandering preacher expounding his own private gospel to whoever will listen.

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 182, 206.

2 *ibid.*, p. 180.

3 *ibid.*, p. 200.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 178, 200, 215, 254-5.

Specifically moral criteria are considered by Trollope in Doctor Wortle's School, 1881: how far is a teacher's suitability determined by his moral standing or the situations of his private life? The Rev. Mr. Peacocke is presented as an almost ideal assistant master: an Oxford scholar, Fellow of Trinity, vice-president of a classical college in America, more learned than his employer, an excellent teacher, a reviser of the curriculum, popular with boys and colleagues, a skilful cricketer and the heroic rescuer of a drowning boy. His wife is "undoubtedly a lady" and willing to accept the duties of matron. There is just one flaw. The somewhat contrived plot has it that the Peacockes married in the sincere belief that the lady's first scoundrelly husband had died in Mexico. The man's equally rascally brother, a drinker and a scrounger, attempts blackmail with the news that her first husband is still alive, and that the Peacocke's marriage is invalid. By the end of the novel, this story is proved to be a fabrication, and all ends well. The interest, however, centres on the reactions of Peacocke, Dr. Wortle and the community at large to the possibility that the Peacockes are not married, and the effects of this on the school.

Doctor Wortle himself seems to be the only person who balances his responsibility to the suffering Peacockes, the man's total character and his "excellence as a schoolmaster"<sup>1</sup> against his duty to pupils and parents, his parish and his family. Nobody else sees a moral problem. Mr. Puddicombe, a fellow clergyman, says that the Peacockes are simply sinners who have deceived the Doctor and must be sent away. His own wife urges the same course, with the additional argument that no school could continue with such people on the staff. Her opinion, and that of the diocese, is that "all the boys would be taken away".<sup>2</sup> Mrs. Stantiloup, always active against the Doctor and his school, proclaims that "It is not only the most expensive establishment of the kind in all England, but also the worst conducted" on the grounds that the Doctor is "keeping that abominable woman under the same roof with the boys!".<sup>3</sup>

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1 Anthony Trollope, Doctor Wortle's School, (1881) 1928, p. 92.

2 *ibid.*, pp. 96-7, 112.

3 *ibid.*, p. 124.

The moral argument is more than a little artificial, and what the Doctor would have done if the first husband had in fact been alive is not explored. He acknowledges that "According to the strict law of right and wrong"<sup>1</sup> Mr. Puddicombe and his wife are correct. The total emphasis of the book, however, is to throw some doubt on the strictly legalistic judgment. For one thing, the reader's sympathies are clearly invited for the Doctor and the Peacockes and against Mrs. Stantiloup. For another, the repetition of the same stock phrases in one mouth after another tends to make them sound insincere, and there is the suggestion that men are less censorious than the women.

Finally, the emphasis of the story seems to be that men are to be judged as a whole, and the last paragraph of the novel records that, "As to the school, it certainly suffered nothing by the Doctor's generosity ...".<sup>2</sup> An early discussion between headmaster and assistant contains a clear hint that it is unreal to expect moral perfection from teachers. The Doctor proclaims:

"I take things as I find them. If the cook sends me up a good dish I don't care to know how she made it. If I read a good book, I am not the less gratified because there may have been something amiss with the author."

"You would doubt his teaching," said Mr. Peacocke, "who had gone astray himself."

"Then I must doubt all human teaching, for all men have gone astray."

3

The judgments have little to do with Peacocke's real character. Indeed, comparing this period with previous ones, it is striking that the earlier dominant concern for moral and religious qualifications almost disappears in direct form. It seems that by the end of the nineteenth century the assumption that a teacher must be, by definition, of upright character is so strong that it can be left unspoken.

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1    ibid., p. 101.

2    ibid., p. 273.

3    ibid., p. 39.



## SALARIES AND CONDITIONS

The fact that the actual salaries paid to fictional teachers are so frequently mentioned by writers of this period may suggest an interest in or a concern for the topic. The salaries of doctor and lawyer characters, say, do not seem to be described in the same detail. From a mass of incidental information it is possible to make two generalisations that seem to reflect the actual state of affairs as far as they can be assessed.<sup>1</sup> First, the range of salaries was enormously wide, varying considerably according to qualifications, post held, and the kind of school. An untrained girl can describe twenty pounds per annum at a private school as "a big salary",<sup>2</sup> but a Harrow housemaster can be reported as refusing a headship "worth about four thousand a year".<sup>3</sup> The enormous discrepancy suggested in novels between the payments made to heads and to assistants is documented by Baron. Second, the general picture is of salaries rising during the period. Qualified assistants in established secondary schools seem generally to be paid in the range £150 to £200 per annum in novels of the ten years up to 1918.

As in earlier periods the figures are less important than the tone of the comments. It is still virtually universally suggested that teachers are seriously underpaid, and this is frequently supported by comments that the salaries keep able men out of teaching, that it is impossible for a man to marry on a teacher's salary, or that a teaching career normally leads to an impoverished or destitute old age. There is the frequent suggestion that teachers leave the profession as soon as something more profitable offers itself.<sup>4</sup> Thomas Cooper began writing as a part-time occupation, but when his journalistic earnings rose to sixty pounds per annum and then to one hundred

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1 See George Baron, "The Secondary Schoolmaster, 1895-1914", Ph.D. thesis, London University, 1952, pp. 67-77, 282-5, 312-5.

2 Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, vol. I, (1915) 1967, pp. 191-3.

3 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 140.

4 George Baron has written of the "very high degree of mobility within the profession" during the years 1902-14, op. cit., p. 270.

pounds per annum "Of course I ceased to be a schoolmaster ... ".<sup>1</sup>

Mr. Clerke joyfully quits teaching, work in which he was "inconveniently poor" on a "small income", for a living in the church, which would "at last secure him a comfortable livelihood".<sup>2</sup> A popular and efficient teacher leaves a public school abruptly, and nobody seems surprised, "an unexpected piece of good luck having fallen to his share".<sup>3</sup> An older schoolmaster advises Mark Ashburn to give up teaching - "Choose some line in which hard work and endurance for years will bring you in a more substantial reward" - and Mark leaps at the chance of becoming a professional writer.<sup>4</sup> Even becoming a waiter can be to enter "a more lucrative profession" than teaching in a private school.<sup>5</sup> It is a "fortunate thing" for a French master that someone dies and leaves him a little money, so that he can give up the "hopeless drudgery" of teaching and return home.<sup>6</sup> Shaw described how better schoolmasters tended to look on their employment as "provisional", because "they looked forward to escaping from it into the pulpit".<sup>7</sup> Significantly, though not so seriously as in the foregoing examples, the happy ending of The Schoolmistress, 1894, involves Miss Dyott's abandonment of the rôle of headmistress for that of a star of musical comedy at fifty pounds a week.<sup>8</sup>

Many tiny details help to build up the impression of what the salary structure meant in terms of actual living. Even the boys pity the unpopular Sawyer when he leaves the school. He cannot employ a servant to take his belongings, "he himself was carrying the small black bag which held his possessions"; he walked to the station instead of going by fly; he travelled not by express but third class in a cheaper slow train.<sup>9</sup> On the first page

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1 Thomas Cooper, Life, (1873) Leicester, 1971, p. 112.

2 Mrs. J. H. Ewing, A Flat Iron for a Farthing, (1873) 1908, pp. 147-9.

3 Mrs. M. L. Molesworth, "Grandmother Dear", (1878) 1887, p. 169.

4 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, p. 94.

5 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 272.

6 Ian Maclaren, Young Barbarians, 1901, p. 180.

7 G. B. Shaw, Preface to Misalliance (1910), in The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 13, 1930, p. 22.

8 A. W. Pinero, The Schoolmistress, 1894, pp. 163-5.

9 Mrs. M. L. Molesworth, "Grandmother Dear", (1878) 1887, p. 193.

of Jude the Obscure, 1895, Hardy suggests that a small cart is enough to transport all the departing teacher's belongings, indeed that his only sizeable possessions are a packing-case of books and a piano bought at an auction.<sup>1</sup> Mademoiselle has to borrow from her pupils before her pay arrives at the end of the month.<sup>2</sup> A young master wears cheap ready-made clothes, with frayed trousers, and has to ink the elbows of his coat to disguise the fact that they are wearing through.<sup>3</sup> When Vincent Perrin goes out to dinner he has only three shirts in his drawer, two of them badly frayed at the cuffs, and his one suit (which "had done duty for a great many years") is shining and torn. After twenty years at Moffatt's, his total savings, which he leaves to his mother, amount to one hundred pounds.<sup>4</sup> A science teacher just manages to "eke out" his salary with his wife's private income and his inheritance of a terrace of houses.<sup>5</sup> A young man with a first at Cambridge and a post at one of the "finest" public schools says that marriage will be out of the question for years and another has been engaged for eight years but despairs of ever earning enough to support a wife.<sup>6</sup> The beginning of term sees a master "as usual" going through his unpaid bills in despair, "trying to determine whether he should commit suicide".<sup>7</sup> A girl who is given as a reward some small pieces of jewellery says that she will not "ever have a chance of wearing them", because she is becoming a teacher. Her life is transformed by a legacy of fifty pounds per annum which means that "when she grew too old to teach, she could retire to a tiny cottage in the country and live the simple life".<sup>8</sup> When Henrietta Vigers is driven out of the school to which she has given her life, she finds herself unemployable at forty-seven, and with total savings of

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- 1 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, p. 13.  
 2 L. T. Meade, Betty, A School Girl, 1895, p. 227.  
 3 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 33.  
 4 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 41-2, 247.  
 5 H. G. Wells, The New Machiavelli, (1911) 1926, p. 24.  
 6 Mrs. G. de H. Vaizey, A College Girl, 1913, p. 415 and F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 202.  
 7 From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, p. 51.  
 8 Mrs. G. de Vaizey, A College Girl, 1913, pp. 203, 232.



five hundred pounds, on which she has to keep herself for the rest of her life. The author says, "Heaven knows what became of her".<sup>1</sup>

The poverty, of course, may be exacerbated by other calls on the teacher's resources. In this period, as earlier, there is the recurrent image of men and women who enter the profession largely or wholly to provide for a family in need rather than from choice. Mary Garth is prepared to take up work she dislikes in a time of family crisis.<sup>2</sup> All that "that cad Sawyer" received went to support his mother and to protect his younger brother from "life-long disgrace, perhaps imprisonment".<sup>3</sup> Because Monsieur Lablache has a dependent family, he "clung to his unlovely calling of teaching unfeeling English boys at the rate of £30 a term".<sup>4</sup> Out of her four pounds a month, Mademoiselle tells Betty, "I help those dear to me" as well as clothing herself and trying to save. Lotty is always worried about her widowed mother, because she has known "slavery" to get four children educated, and "even now she lives in such a shabby way, and she teaches ...".<sup>5</sup>

The direct comments which novelists put into the mouths of teachers or of those who know them are almost universally critical, complaining or - at best - cynical and resigned.

- " ... the pay is so devilish small."
- "I'm growing sick of this hand-to-mouth existence."
- "I've been half-starved for years in this cursed business of teaching ..."
- "No money, no scope, no prospects."
- " ... fearfully ill-paid ... bare subsistence wages ... "
- " ... one earned hardly a bare living ... "

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1 Clemence Dane, Regiment of Women, (1917) 1927, p. 209.  
2 George Eliot, Middlemarch, (1871-2) Harmondsworth, 1965, p. 435.  
3 Mrs. M. L. Molesworth, "Grandmother Dear", (1878) 1887, p. 211.  
4 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, (1894) /1913/, p. 17.  
5 L. T. Meade, Betty, A School Girl, 1895, pp. 227, 101.  
6 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, pp. 161, 53, 93.  
7 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 140.  
8 H. G. Wells, Ann Veronica, 1909, p. 132.  
9 H. G. Wells, Tono-Bungay, (1909) Odhams, n.d., p. 99.

- "I shall probably always be poor." 1
- " ... I entered no protest against the lowness of the wages ...  
alas!" 2
- "The salaries are contemptible." 3
- "We pay them hardly better than shop assistants - less than  
bank clerks." 4

When the authors write in their own person, either about particular characters or generalising about teachers, the conclusions and the tone are much the same.

- Poverty was his familiar companion, and had been so for  
years ... Hunger, indeed, was his normal state. 5
- She earned a mere trifle ... 6
- ... the humble schoolhouse to which he had been reduced ...  
dependent entirely upon the very small stipend ... 7
- ... the front of his mind was busy warning her not to fall  
into the hopeless miseries of underpaid teaching ... 8
- ... poor schoolmasters, with their small salaries and large  
classes ... 9
- ... the scandalous underpayment of the masters ... 10
- ... we hear of salaries being docked in the elementary schools  
just at a time when it is becoming increasingly hard for a  
teacher to afford even the bare necessities of life ... 11
- ... shameful poverty ... wretched pay. 12

The cumulative impression is overwhelming. Words like underpaid, ill-paid, poor, and poverty recur; the adjective 'bare' is repeatedly applied to living

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- 1 Mrs. G. de H. Vaizey, A College Girl, 1913, p. 415.
- 2 A. B. de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 27.
- 3 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 127.
- 4 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., p. 221.
- 5 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 61.
- 6 George Gissing, A Life's Morning, (1888) 1928, p. 67.
- 7 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, p. 370.
- 8 H. G. Wells, Ann Veronica, 1909, p. 81.
- 9 G. B. Shaw, Preface to Misalliance (1910) in The Works of Bernard Shaw,  
vol. 13, 1930, p. 22.
- 10 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 27.
- 11 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 111.
- 12 G. B. Shaw, Education Year Book of 1918, reprinted in The Works of  
Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, pp. 303-6.

or subsisting, with notions of hunger and starvation; the terms applied to teachers' pay and conditions are contemptible, scandalous, shameful, hopeless, wretched.

There is some suggestion that in their new-found independence, recent entrants to the profession like Ursula Brangwen find the situation acceptable, but it also seems that disillusion sets in fast, when they discover how little their salaries are improved by experience or better qualifications. Mr. Lewisham gets forty pounds per annum as an eighteen-year-old assistant master at Whortley Proprietary School in Sussex, and although his lodgings during term time cost him fifteen shillings a week, this seems acceptable to him.<sup>1</sup> Later, however, when with some previous teaching experience, he is nearing the end of his training as a science teacher, an assistant in a scholastic agency tells him that he might get a resident post at fifty pounds per annum, or sixty if he is lucky. "You can get a Cambridge graduate for eighty resident - and grateful."<sup>2</sup> At the end of Lewisham's round of the agencies,

He was still far from a firm grasp of the fact that his market price was under rather than over one hundred pounds a year, but that persuasion was gaining ground in his mind. 3

Similarly, between pupil-teaching and college, Alan Clay takes a temporary post as an uncertificated master, where he earns sixty pounds per annum. Although his digs cost him, like Lewisham, fifteen shillings a week, "he felt quite wealthy".<sup>4</sup> After training, however, and beginning work as a qualified teacher, he finds when he contemplates marriage that salaries are less satisfactory. Miriam's feelings in the early books of Dorothy Richardson's Pilgrimage cycle also alternate between a sense that she is not worth what she is paid as a teacher and resentment at the comparatively low salary. At the beginning of Backwater she is offered twenty pounds per annum for work in a private school, and exclaims to her mother, "I never dreamed of getting such

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1 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 1.  
2 ibid., p. 169.  
3 ibid., p. 177.  
4 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 121.



a big salary".<sup>1</sup> By the end of the novel her attitude has shifted:

North London meant twenty pounds a year and the need for resignation and determination every day. Eve had thirty-five pounds and a huge garden and new books and music ... And Eve had not been to Germany and could not talk French. 'You are an idiot to go on doing it ... '

2

Most vividly of all, Patrick Traherne, the fictitious journal-keeper of A Schoolmaster's Diary, has a good deal to say about salaries and conditions in schools between 1909 and 1917. Educated at Rugby and New College, Oxford, he immediately became a public school master. At first the pay seems ample: "£150 a year and my 'keep' is quite an adequate salary for a man of twenty-four without encumbrances."

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 ...

3

At this stage, he proclaims, "I don't feel that I want to become rich". By the next year, however, he is complaining, "I certainly do not want to stay here for ever with no prospect of ever earning more than £300 a year". Schoolmasters now seem "abominably underpaid".<sup>4</sup> Two years later, the discontent is strident:

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.

5

When he marries and changes school, his salary rises but so do his expenses. Significantly he remarks that at Marlton, "All the other masters have private means and live like princes".

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

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1 Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, vol. 1 (1916) 1967, pp. 191, 193.

2 *ibid.*, p. 322.

3 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 22, 35-6.

4 *ibid.*, p. 66.

5 *ibid.*, p. 179.

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 ...

1

The interesting contrast is in the scale of comparison between the young schoolmaster on two hundred pounds per annum and the servant on eighteen pounds.

There were, of course, ways to improve the situation for those who were able to take advantage of them. Husband and wife could take a double school, as had earlier been hinted in Our Mutual Friend, and live in relative comfort on their joint salaries. This is the course which Sue suggests she and Phillotson intended, "as married school-teachers often do, and make a good income between us".<sup>2</sup> Teachers in a boarding school can look forward to the chance of being promoted to a house, with its possibilities of free enterprise income. Finney says that poor salaries are

"... kept low by the bribe of a house: which in reality means that we have to pinch and scrape now because, if we are lucky, we may be able to make a thousand a year at forty if we don't overfeed our boys."

3

A number of teachers refer to the commission system, by which masters are given cash bonuses for pupils they introduce to the school, and one spends most of his holidays touting for boys as the only way to increase his inadequate salary.<sup>4</sup> The best course seems to gain a position in an expensive public school, where the salaries offered might be higher. Chiltern, in The Lanchester Tradition, is presented as a rich and exclusive school, charging high fees.

The junior masters are of opinion that these large fees should be made still larger, and the salaries of the junior masters raised in proportion; but the senior masters scant this proposal as mercenary. The senior masters at Chiltern are popularly supposed to be better paid than the senior masters at any other school. Whether this is so or not, it is impossible to say for certain; for the senior masters at Chiltern only talk of their salaries to the surveyor of taxes, and, even then, they do so reluctantly.

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1 *ibid.*, p. 238.

2 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, p. 140.

3 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 127.

4 F. R. G. Duckworth, A Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 129-30.

5 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, p. 11.

For the well-qualified there were always chances of promotion, which frequently took the successful teacher out of teaching. The sardonic theme of A Schoolmaster's Diary is that "the ideal schoolmaster has to put away ambition from the start,"<sup>1</sup> but despite his protestations this is just what Patrick Traherne cannot do, as he casts around increasingly wildly for a position that will improve his salary, applying for posts "in Egypt, India, Bangkok, all over the world".<sup>2</sup> In some books written later in the period, and chiefly concerned with public schools, there is tension between idealistic views of vocation and concern over salaries. The pages From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, for instance, combine an almost obsessive interest in the details of pay with assertions that teachers "do not work for gain" and that a house-master's services "are not bought for money".<sup>3</sup>

A young man at Oxford writes home about his decision to take up teaching with a mixture of pride and resignation:

Of course I daresay I could make more money if I were to go into business ... How everything stinks of money nowadays - everything except teaching! A schoolmaster's salary is fixed, and it's no use his worrying about money: he cannot add a farthing to it by taking however much thought. 4

The ambivalent attitude towards teachers' salaries is clear in the writings of one man who became a headmaster after only four years as an assistant. No argument, he writes, can justify "the grim reality that the average salary of an Assistant Master is £168 per annum".<sup>5</sup> It is an offence that "cries to Heaven" that devoted men,

... should be doomed by the inadequacy of their stipends to a threefold vow of poverty, celibacy, and obedience, or at best to a long-deferred and probably childless marriage. 6

At the same time, it is clear that Dr. Crees sees something demeaning in the campaigns which unions waged to improve salaries. He is ironical about the

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1 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 173.

2 *ibid.*, p. 202.

3 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 17.

4 *ibid.*, p. 26.

5 J. H. E. Crees, Didascalus Patiens, 1915, p. 147.

6 *ibid.*, p. 148.



articles written by the Secretary of the Headmasters' Association, calling them one "vast begging letter".<sup>1</sup> He writes that it would be "calamitous" to raise salaries to three hundred pounds per annum, because "not all present Schoolmasters are by any computation worth £300 per annum".<sup>2</sup> He argues that the teacher must give an example of an abstemious life: "He must be moderate in his pleasures; his wife must not be an expensive luxury."<sup>3</sup> Nevertheless, it became increasingly common towards the end of this period to suggest that the one way to improve the education system was to increase salaries to attract more able men. S. P. B. Mais, describing his idealistic view of what schools and common-rooms might be after the war, summed up:

A glorious vision, but oh! how sadly far away and impossible!  
Until schoolmasters are paid a minimum wage of £1000 a year  
such things can hardly be. So again do we see the power of  
wealth.

4

Shaw insisted that, as long as there were incompetent teachers, the situation could not improve: "30s. a week, and the status of a trainer of performing dogs is as much as the schoolmaster can reasonably expect ... "

The remedy is not to give professional pay and status to  
unskilled men who cannot even pronounce the alphabet  
presentably, but to exact genuine professional qualifications  
from the schoolmaster and pay him their market value.

5

One schoolmaster, deputed by his branch of a Teachers' Association to interview the local M.P., discovers him wholly ignorant of the realities of the situation. The politician imagines that his interviewer, Charles Dampier, with fifteen years' experience, earns over five hundred pounds per annum, whereas his actual salary is under three hundred. Dampier says to him:

"Whereas, if I had been, for instance, in the Civil Service,  
and had done, comparatively speaking, as well as I have in  
the teaching profession, I should certainly be in receipt of  
an income of five hundred."

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1 *ibid.*, p. 270.

2 *ibid.*, p. 143.

3 *ibid.*, p. 145.

4 S. P. B. Mais, A Public School in War Time, 1916, p. 148.

5 G. B. Shaw, from The Education Year Book, 1918, reprinted in The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, pp. 303-6.

He rests his case on the difficulty of attracting the best men into the profession.

"It is an indubitable fact that you will not draw from the best material for your teachers so long as you have other professions offering such superior advantages in the way of payment and pension." 1

In the opening decades of this century, books more frequently present this restlessness, the desperate search for promotion as a way of increasing salary, the discontent and the insidious sense that those in power use the situation as an instrument of control. Such an emphasis was quite new. To the traditional lamentations about teacher poverty were added the questioning of a system that seemed to perpetuate it and increasingly resentful demands that teachers should be offered appropriate professional payment.

What were the conditions that were offered for these salaries? At the end of this period, S. P. B. Mais was one of very few authors to put into a teacher's mouth the idea that the work need not be too demanding. The conscientious Patrick Traherne writes, before disillusionment sets in, that a schoolmaster is "certainly not bound to exert himself very severely by the letter of his contract". His holidays are longer than those enjoyed by other professional men, indeed,

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. 2

More usually these suggestions that masters have a comfortable life are put into the mouths of pupils, frequently contrasting one teacher with the rest,<sup>3</sup> or are presented as the words of ignorant or prejudiced adults. It is, for example, just when Alan Clay is having a particularly hard time at his boys' school that his father-in-law insists on telling him that "a teacher has a very soft job, if you ask me".

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1 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, pp. 111-2.  
2 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 120 and 35-6.  
3 For example, Stephen McKenna, Sonia, 1917, p. 11.

"Finished at four, and only five days a week. Long holidays, nothing to do, fine wages ... Why, a teacher's life is a gentleman's compared with most."

1

The teacher's holidays and hours of work are frequently mentioned in the volume From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912. From the outside they seem very attractive. An undergraduate thinking of teaching reflects that, "I should have my long holidays to myself."<sup>2</sup> Two boys discuss the easy life of their teachers, and imagine becoming ushers, because, "You get more holidays than you know what to do with."<sup>3</sup> A young Cabinet Minister assures a group of teachers that they are "the envy of other professional men" because of their freedom: long holidays, and afternoons "free for the most part".<sup>4</sup>

In the same book, the situation is presented differently from the inside. A group of teachers, comparing notes about how they have spent the holidays, make reference to their labours on Mycenaean civilisation, improving their modern languages or on military service connected with the Corps. Men claim to be at work most of the day from half past seven in the morning until midnight.<sup>5</sup> An Education Committee decides that teachers in their day schools shall work evenings from six till eight where necessary, and reaches that decision without any consultation with the teachers themselves.<sup>6</sup> Such suggestions of an arduous life are general in the books under review. This is the serious message beneath the levity of The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914. Hay outlines the routine of the young schoolmaster before he gains a position of responsibility and the further duties that go with it.

By day he teaches his own particular subject; by night he looks over proses or corrects algebra papers. In his spare time he imparts private instruction to backward boys or scholarship candidates. Probably he bears a certain part in the supervision of the School games. He is possibly treasurer of one or two of the boys' own organisations - the Fives Club

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1 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 248.

2 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 26.

3 *ibid.*, p. 183.

4 *ibid.*, pp. 184-5.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 180-3.

6 *ibid.*, pp. 126-7.



or the Debating Society - and as a rule he is permitted to fill up odd moments by sub-editing the School magazine or organising sing-songs.

1

A housemaster has even further opportunities "to work himself to death".

Elsewhere Hay describes how teachers insist voluntarily on continuing to work in conditions that no other occupational group would tolerate.

The average schoolmaster has a perfect passion for sticking to his work when utterly unfit for it ... if a master sprains his ankle, he hobbles about his form-room on a crutch. If he contracts influenza, he swallows a jorum of ammoniated quinine, puts on three waistcoats, and totters into school, where he proceeds to disseminate germs among his not ungrateful charges. Even if he is rendered speechless by tonsillitis, he takes his form as usual, merely substituting written invective (chalked up on the black-board), for the torrent of verbal abuse which he usually employs as a medium of instruction.

2

In the first of his sketches from a schoolmaster's life, A. R. H. Moncrieff said that it was time the public gained some impression of "the seamy side" of the teacher's occupation, and understood his "wrongs and sufferings".<sup>3</sup> He later commented that: "Dante was needlessly harsh, placing his old schoolmaster in a place of future torment; we have our purgatory in this world."<sup>4</sup> When seeking a word to describe the business of teaching, the one that seems to spring most readily to an author's pen is "drudgery".

... thousands besides myself have felt it to be - unwelcome drudgery.

5

To face the hideous drudgery of the day's teaching often cost him more than it had cost many men to face the scaffold.

6

"... distasteful ... drudgery of school work."

7

"Teaching?"

"... The pettiest drudgery in the world."

8

... his many years of drudgery ...

9

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- 1 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 48.
  - 2 ibid., p. 41.
  - 3 A. R. H. Moncrieff, Cap and Gown Comedy, 1893, p. 1.
  - 4 ibid., p. 277.
  - 5 Thomas Cooper, Life, 1872 Leicester, 1971, p. 76.
  - 6 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 61.
  - 7 Frederick Anstey, The Giant's Robe, 1884, p. 52.
  - 8 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, 1905, p. 140.
  - 9 A. B. de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 31.

The elements which go to create this sense of drudgery vary with individuals and particular schools, but they frequently include a sense of being swamped by sheer numbers, the lengthy hours and proliferation of duties, poor living conditions, insecurity of tenure, social and moral restrictions, and a general sense of being isolated from real human contact in a deadening mechanical process. These can each be briefly illustrated from works of the period.

Although the sense of being faced by an impersonal mass of pupils rather than by individuals is a common one, there are few indications of actual class size. Thomas Cooper records of a period earlier in the century that it was only when average attendance at his school reached eighty that he "had to think of engaging an assistant".<sup>1</sup> Many years later, though, Alan Clay is told by his headmaster that he is to teach Standard Four: "It is the smallest class in the school. There are seventy-five."<sup>2</sup> In actual fact, it later turns out that some of the other classes are only about fifty strong.

Although it was his own small school, and although the events described happened earlier in the nineteenth century, it is striking that Thomas Cooper claimed, "I was in the school-room often at five in the morning until nine at night, taking my meals in a hasty, imperfect way".<sup>3</sup> This was exceptional, but the day could be a long one. Even the hours from nine to five seemed interminable "as their awful length was measured by the crawling hands of the school-clock".<sup>4</sup> Mr. Peacocke was "of course" expected to attend morning school for an hour before breakfast.<sup>5</sup> The greater part of A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, is given over to a chronological description of a typical day in the life of a young master at a preparatory school, forever busy from rising at half past six until retiring at eleven o'clock.<sup>6</sup> Worst of all is the experience of being

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1 Thomas Cooper, Life, 1872 Leicester, 1971, p. 73.

2 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 156.

3 Life, p. 73.

4 George Gissing, The Unclassed, (1884) 1930, p. 61.

5 Anthony Trollope, Doctor Wortle's School, (1881) 1928, p. 64.

6 Frederick Feeder, A Little Book about Ushers, 1885, pp. 46-154.

"on duty", which the author characterises elsewhere as having to carry out simultaneously "the duties of policeman, detective, gymnastic instructor, and nursemaid".<sup>1</sup> Mr. Lewisham had to do "prep duty" in the evenings after school, and accompany the boarders twice to Church on Sundays.<sup>2</sup> Miss Everett has to conduct two hours of games daily as well as teaching, and long after the girls have gone to bed, she says, "I am slaving away correcting exercises. Oh such piles of books! it makes me tired even to see them."<sup>3</sup> The popular housemaster Warne is said to be "in his room every night after prayers to mug up his form work".<sup>4</sup> Gurney says that a sense of purpose is "precious poor reward for getting up at half-past six every day".<sup>5</sup> A well-qualified teacher finds that in a village school her life is "cruelly pruned and lopped", since not only is she expected to be at school before and after lessons but "almost every lesson we gave ... had to be written out in full" and shown to the headmaster.<sup>6</sup> Almost the first thing Alan Clay is told by his headmaster is that at his school, "All teachers are in their places and at work half an hour before the official time. They also stay half an hour after school."<sup>7</sup> He discovers that he never has a moment to himself between eight in the morning and six at night, and that, "In addition to this there were compulsory classes to attend several evenings a week."<sup>8</sup> At Mr. Mainwearing's preparatory school, duties for the staff are meant to extend from an early morning run and prep. before breakfast, through a day of teaching, games and societies, on beyond the boys' bedtime in dormitory supervision.<sup>9</sup> It is in the nature of a schoolmaster's duties that they can never be completely carried out to everyone's satisfaction, and the conscientious man is continually aware of the pressure. William Grover

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1 *ibid.*, p. 39.

2 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 17.

3 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, p. 65.

4 H. A. Vachell, The Hill, (1905) 1945, p. 140.

5 Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, p. 141.

6 A. B. de Bary, Letters of a Schoolma'am, 1913, p. 30.

7 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, p. 155.

8 *ibid.*, p. 156.

9 H. G. Wells, Joan and Peter, (1918) Odhams, n.d., pp. 140-2.



found at Grandcourt School that, "If my days were twenty-six hours I should scarcely then do all I ought to do here," and Mark Railsford is left in no doubt by the Headmaster of the same school that his duties extend well beyond the rising bell and lights out.<sup>1</sup>

When the accommodation provided for teachers is described in novels of the period, it seems to vary from the spartan to the squalid. Fancy Day arrives in Mellstock as schoolmistress, to find that the phrase "nearly furnished", which the school-manager used of her house, meant "a table, three chairs, a fender, and a piece of carpet". She has to borrow crockery and fire-irons from a friend.<sup>2</sup> When the new schoolmistress arrives at Brookfield Earl, in Charlotte M. Yonge's Our New Mistress, the villagers feel that she is being favoured, with a cottage instead of rooms, and furniture "much better and more stylish, Governess Betsy said, than ever had been got for her mother". The first page of Jessie Martin's private log-book gives a very different impression: "This is a mere cottage, smaller and rougher than I had quite expected, ... and the furniture very plain and scanty."<sup>3</sup> The headmaster shows Mark Railsford to his boarding school rooms, describing them as "comfortable and central". What he actually discovers is that his own two rooms inter-connect with the "house parlour", that there are no fires or carpets because the rooms have just been scrubbed, and that they are "reeking of soft soap and absolutely destitute of furniture".<sup>4</sup> Another new teacher is accommodated in a dingy, noisy room, with its ceiling "sooty over the gas-jet" and the carpet "patched and threadbare".<sup>5</sup> Ian Hay was later to write of such accommodation that the schoolmaster

... lives the best years of his life in two rooms, looking forward to the time, in the dim and hypothetical future, when he will possess what the ordinary artisan usually acquires on passing out of his teens - a home of his own.

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- 1 Talbot Baines Reed, The Master of the Shell, /1894/ /1913/, pp. 10, 28-9.
  - 2 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, (1872) 1964, p. 108.
  - 3 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, /1888/, pp. 9 and 58.
  - 4 The Master of the Shell, p. 28.
  - 5 F. R. G. Duckworth, From a Pedagogue's Sketch-Book, 1912, p. 49.
  - 6 Ian Hay, The Lighter Side of School Life, 1914, p. 48.

Mr. Lewisham has to live in a dingy attic up an uncarpeted staircase in lodgings, and at school he is perpetually conscious of the greyness of his surroundings. The staff of Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill retire to their uncomfortable rooms - Traill notices early that "the rest of the staff never went out at all" - because the common room is worse: small, stuffy and smelly. It is situated between the kitchens and the dining room, where the ugly, noisy meals are taken.<sup>2</sup>

The number of references to insecurity of tenure, and to the way in which teachers can be victimised by the malice or whim of their employers, suggests that this was a matter of concern.<sup>3</sup> Of course, there must also have been cases of masters clinging too long to posts, but these are less frequently described. A rare example is the case of Mr. Cox, a senior master at Chiltern, who had threatened resignation twelve times, because he was "in the habit of resigning whenever his proposals were voted down or his advice neglected". Unfortunately for him, a new headmaster, "unfamiliar with Mr. Cox's idiosyncrasies and much impressed by his age, which was seventy-five, accepted the resignation in a courteous and gracious spirit".<sup>4</sup> The tone here is light and ironical; quite different from the way in which dismissals are generally presented. There is a lengthy discussion, for example, about the bad treatment of the new mistress at Brookfield Earl. Because of gossip - not about her, but about her sister's marital state - and because of a feeling that the school-mistress had ideas above her station, Lady Mary Brooke can propose, without any real cause, that Miss Martin should be dismissed, despite her acknowledged ability as a teacher. The postscript of her letter to the vicar says naively, "Can't she go to a colony? She would be very valuable there, and make her fortune."<sup>5</sup> The vicar is the only one of the four managers to vote against

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1 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, pp. 1-7.

2 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 5, 90, 112.

3 In the earlier part of this period, "Instances of capricious dismissals were constantly coming before the N.U.E.T. Executive" - Asher Tropp, The School Teachers, 1957, p. 131.

4 G. F. Bradby, The Lanchester Tradition, (1913) 1954, pp. 19-20.

5 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, /1888/, p. 105.

dismissal. It is only because of her presence of mind during the theatre fire, when she saves the lives of the children, that Miss Martin is eventually, and almost fortuitously, reprieved.

Even less palatable is the treatment afforded to a young boarding school mistress, Miss Everett, in a book written at the turn of the century. It is suggested that she is injured and lamed when one of the girls crashes into her on a toboggan. Far from offering her compensation, the school dismisses her because of her inability to carry out her full duties, and the unfortunate teacher seems to accept this situation. She writes to one of the pupils:

You know, of course, Tom, that I am not going back to Hurst. Miss Bruce has been most kind, but she must consider the good of the greater number, and this accident has shown more plainly than ever the necessity of having a House-Mistress who can join in the games with the girls. I shall never be any good for a large school again, for, even apart from the games, the long stairs and corridors would be too trying. So you see my career is cut off suddenly. 1

Even when there is an agreement to give reasonable notice, teachers are represented as being discharged capriciously and in a way that will ruin their prospects. Mrs. Dulverton fears that her attractive and capable governess may ensnare one of her older boys, is too mean to get rid of her on the spot, but maliciously plans to destroy her at a suitable moment.

"... I can't send her away without either giving her three months' notice or three months' salary. I won't give her salary for nothing! If she has the money, I'll have the teaching! The notice can be given so as to suit the time when Jack will have to go; and I will let every single soul who wants to hire her, or asks a question about her, know what a giddy, flirting, foolish, untrustworthy creature she is!" 2

The problem most frequently referred to is that of the older man. Young Mr. Lewisham can be sacked because he goes out with a girl and misses his prep-duty,<sup>3</sup> but this is only a momentary set-back for him. Very different is the situation in Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, where Birkland tells Traill that at the age of thirty-three a master is too old (and too expensive) to get another

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1 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, p. 268.

2 Mrs. Alfred Hunt and Violet Hunt, The Governess, 1912, pp. 123-4.

3 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946, p. 45.



post, and is perpetually in fear of being given a week's notice.<sup>1</sup> The staff are dependent on the headmaster, who takes a malicious pleasure in tormenting them. Traill is forced to take part in a scene where an older master, White, is humiliated in front of him as Moy-Thompson threatens his dismissal, "playing with them as a cat does with a mouse".<sup>2</sup> Barmy Walters hangs on desperately to his post, despite being tormented and maltreated. He had once been a brilliant mathematician, but after nearly forty years of teaching, he has no option:

... he had missed promotion, seen his chance of a house go by, and eventually lost grip. To retire was financially impossible (Elfrey was too poor a school to have a pension fund), and he stuck to his work grimly ...

3

In April 1913, Patrick Traherne records in his fictional diary that, "Poor old 'Parsnips' Askew has been sacked after thirty years' service, for incompetence" - an action which he describes as "blackguardly", after the man had "devoted the best years of his life to Radchester".<sup>4</sup> In a way this foreshadows the conclusion of the book, four years later:

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 quaint finish for the overkeen enthusiast ...

It is no light thing at my age suddenly to throw up the profession one has adopted and to begin again.

5

The image of "respectability" for which Bradley Headstone yearned all too soon became an instrument of oppression. Notions of "appropriate" behaviour could be used to keep teachers in their place or to exclude them from their profession. Many of the ideas were "internalised"; they needed no external sanctions to maintain them because they had become part of the frame of the teachers' own thinking. The constraints on the behaviour of a village schoolmaster or mistress, for example, are indicated in a number of late nineteenth

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1 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, p. 68.

2 ibid., p. 93.

3 Ivor Brown, Years of Plenty, /1915/, p. 52.

4 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 204.

5 ibid., pp. 283-5.

century novels. Fancy Day is too independent to be overawed, but she is also quite clear about the expectations without anybody ever expressing them. She says to Dick - not without other motives - that she has "a difficult position to maintain", and that "The vicar would not like me, as his schoolmistress, to indulge in a tête-à-tête anywhere with anybody."<sup>1</sup> It is typical of her that having complained to Susan Dewy that her position demands keeping her hair up - "And through keeping this miserable school I mustn't wear my hair in curls!"<sup>2</sup> - she goes off to play the organ with curls down to her shoulders and a stylish hat - "an audacity unparalleled in the whole history of village-schoolmistresses at this date ...".<sup>3</sup>

The new schoolmistress at Brookfield Earl is presented as continually under fire from the managers. Although she is attracted by Mr. Pierce, the young exciseman, she feels that her position makes it impossible for her to encourage him.

I do not think a schoolmistress ought even to think of marriage under five-and-twenty, so as to waste all her training and education; and I do not believe I shall wish to marry even then ...

4

The fear of moral censure and the idea that education is "wasted" on a wife is a recurrent one. Even at the end, when romance is part of the happy ending, Philip Pierce is leaving for a new post twenty miles off as they become engaged. "He does not ask for more for five or seven years, or whenever we may have put by enough for it to be prudent."<sup>5</sup>

The social and moral pressures exerted on a schoolmaster are clearly indicated in the fate that Hardy chooses for Phillotson. The managers of the school at Shaston ask him to resign as schoolmaster because of his "scandalous conduct" in giving his wife her liberty (or, as they put it, "condoning her adultery"). Although his friend Gillingham warns him that to fight the case

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1 Thomas Hardy, Under the Greenwood Tree, (1812) 1964, pp. 129-30.

2 *ibid.*, p. 134.

3 *ibid.*, p. 170.

4 Charlotte M. Yonge, Our New Mistress, 1888, p. 89.

5 *ibid.*, p. 197.

will only mean adverse publicity that will prevent him from gaining another appointment, Phillotson disputes his dismissal. The managers overrule his contention that the issue is a domestic one, on the grounds that "the private eccentricities of a teacher came quite within their sphere of control, as it touched the morals of those he taught". A public meeting ends in an absurd but disturbing fracas.<sup>1</sup> Hardy reiterates the cost of Phillotson's refusal to tell a discreet lie about his affairs. Arabella says to him, "You lost your school and good income through her ...". His friend Gillingham remarks, "You might have been a school inspector by this time, or a reverend, if you hadn't been so weak about her." Phillotson himself remarks that even the return to Marygreen, "a returning to zero, with all its humiliations", was only "on sufferance" after his "eccentric conduct towards my wife had ruined my reputation as a schoolmaster".<sup>2</sup>

No man had ever suffered more inconvenience from his own charity ... than Phillotson had done in letting Sue go. He had been knocked about from pillar to post at the hands of the virtuous almost beyond endurance; he had been nearly starved.

3

The inevitability of these pressures on a governess is manifested in The Eustace Diamonds. Lady Fawn loves Lucy, and claims that she has "altogether ceased to look upon her as a governess". She describes her to a neighbour as, "Just one of ourselves ... and almost as dear as one of my own girls!".<sup>4</sup> She believes herself to be sincere, but in countless ways Lucy's position is not that of the family. Lady Fawn believes that a governess, "should not be desirous of marrying, at any rate till a somewhat advanced period of life".<sup>5</sup> She prevents Frank's visits. Lucy's absence from family prayers is "contrary to rule".<sup>6</sup> It is thought to be improper for her to

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1 Thomas Hardy, Jude the Obscure, (1895) 1957, pp. 256-9.

2 *ibid.*, p. 328.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 378-9.

4 Anthony Trollope, The Eustace Diamonds, (1873) 1973, vol. 1, p. 133.

5 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 22.

6 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 67.



differ in argument with Lord Fawn, and when such differences occur:

She might be scolded, and scowled at, and put into a kind of drawing-room Coventry for a time, - so that all kindly intercourse with her should be confined to school-room work and bed-room conferences. She could be generally 'sat upon', as Nina would call it.

1

Lucy is well aware of the tensions inherent in her position. She says to Lady Fawn, "I know you let me do things which other governesses mayn't do; - and say things; but still I am a governess ..."<sup>2</sup> The problems of that "precarious position" are vividly summed-up in her train of thought when her hopes of marriage seem to have been destroyed.

Young Mr. Lewisham is thrown into a state of guilty fear, and eventually into lies, when his headmaster sees him talking to a girl. Although in his own mind he protests that, "I am my own master out of school," and asks "why should Bonover or anyone interfere with his talking to a girl if he chose?"<sup>3</sup> it is clear that he is chilled by the headmaster's disapproval. When he meets the young lady, he still seems to have to wear his mortar-board, and when a walk with her means missing prep supervision, this seems quite enough cause for Bonover to give him notice.

Even in a novel published as late as the end of the Great War, Patrick Traherne is shown as finding conditions in a public school irksomely restrictive. Life at Radchester is "monastic ... women are obviously not encouraged" and he reflects that, "I shall never be able to marry".<sup>4</sup> He dislikes the conventions that chapel is compulsory, and that alcohol is forbidden in the common-room.<sup>5</sup> When eventually he does marry, he discovers yet another source of tension, in that Elspeth "was not born to be a schoolmaster's wife".<sup>6</sup>

Possibly the most important, though ill-defined, element in the way a teacher's conditions are described in novels of this period, is the sense of

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1 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 267.

2 *ibid.*, vol. 1, p. 67.

(pp. 30, 26.

3 H. G. Wells, Love and Mr. Lewisham, (1899-1900) Harmondsworth, 1946,

4 S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, pp. 22, 36.

5 *ibid.*, pp. 25-6.

6 *ibid.*, p. 236.

being caught up in a mechanical process, being forced into an inhuman situation, isolated from contact with anyone other than colleagues and pupils. Poor Miss Everett exclaims:

"Oh Rhoda, you don't know how lonely it feels to be a teacher sometimes, or how grateful we are to anyone who treats us as human beings, and not as machines."

1

In Pilgrimage, Miriam feels that one of the deadening effects of teaching is to eliminate not only the chances of marriage but even normal opportunities of human contact: "I shall hardly ever meet anybody now."<sup>2</sup> This is the theme that runs right through Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, and is summed up in Birkland's advice to the young Traill to get out of teaching. He describes the deadening effect on the personality, the cumulative pressures of the work and the tensions of a small community.<sup>3</sup> The persecutions of the headmaster and the pressures of end-of-term overwork are only two of the dehumanising processes examined in the novel.

The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, describes Alan Clay's reactions as he begins teaching at Gunningham. Roger Wray repeatedly uses mechanical images for the regimented programme that goes on in the school. Teachers sign in; the same routines are practised every day; bells and whistles signal changes of activity; headmasters and inspectors keep the process going.

So the work of education went on with mechanical promptitude all day. That bell became a symbol of the tyranny of the system.

Work proceeded throughout the day at full pressure, like a factory doing overtime.

The teacher's initiative was discounted altogether; he was a cog in the machine ...

4

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- 1 Jessie Mansergh, Tom and Some Other Girls, 1901, p. 123. For the notion that teachers degenerate as a group see Lionel Portman, Hugh Rendal, /1905/, pp. 140-1 and S. P. B. Mais, A Schoolmaster's Diary, 1918, p. 66, as well as other works cited here.
  - 2 Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, vol. 1, (1916) 1967, p. 277.
  - 3 Hugh Walpole, Mr. Perrin and Mr. Traill, (1911) 1925, pp. 66-71.
  - 4 Roger Wray, The Soul of a Teacher, 1915, pp. 156-8.

The machine, or the factory, and the prison are the two most potent images. Shaw's essay on "Schools and Schoolmasters" from the Education Year Book of 1918 repeatedly presented schooling as servitude and imprisonment, but he saw the staff as "warders and turnkeys".<sup>1</sup> It was other authors who realised that teachers as well as pupils were locked up for a lengthy sentence. When Miriam first accepts a position in a private school, in Backwater, 1916, her initial excitement is tempered by the anticipation of imprisonment:

She was going to be shut up away from the grown-up things, the sunlit world, and the people who were enjoying it. She would be shut up and surrounded in Wordsworth House, a properly schooly school ...

2

On holidays she is said to live dreamily, luxuriously, ecstatically; she is relaxed, "a new person". The return to school is seen in terms of "trembling fingers", "gnawing of the despair", "sick with pain", "heavy feet", "long aching days", "dreadful voices". Part of her knows that she should become a certificated teacher, but a deeper instinct tells her, "certificates would finish you off - kill - kill - kill - kill".<sup>3</sup> Lawrence's description of Ursula's first impressions of Brinsley Street School has often been discussed, and it is unnecessary to consider in detail here how he builds up the impression of threatening ugliness. The notion of school as a prison runs through the images as well as the direct statements: "The place was silent, deserted, like an empty prison", "The prison was round her now!", "This prison of a school was reality", "It was always a prison to her". At the end of term, "The irons were struck off, the sentence was expired, the prison was a momentary shadow halting about them".<sup>4</sup> Lawrence catches vividly the problems of adjusting to a new system which an inexperienced teacher faces, the desperate attempt to establish relations and to understand what is not explained. To Ursula, the place seems "unreal", "official and chilling", "rigid, inflexible". The new

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1 The Works of Bernard Shaw, vol. 22, 1931, pp. 302, 310, 318, and see pp. 333, 335, 354.

2 Dorothy Richardson, Pilgrimage, vol. 1, (1916) 1967, p. 198.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 294, 264, 322.

4 D. H. Lawrence, The Rainbow, (1915) Harmondsworth, 1949, pp. 369, 372, 373, 407, 422.



life of which she had dreamed now seems not a promise but a threat.<sup>1</sup>

Never had she felt such a stranger to life before. It seemed to her that she had just disembarked from some strange horrible state where everything was as in hell, a condition of hard, malevolent system. And she was not really free.

2

The initial mysteries, in which trivial uncertainties about the appropriate wear, the day's routine and duties and signing in and out, bulk large, give way to a sense of deadening routine.

The trouble went on and on, day after day. She had always piles of books to mark, myriads of errors to correct, a heart-wearying task that she loathed.

But the teaching hours were too long, the tasks too heavy, and the disciplinary condition of the school too unnatural for her. She was worn very thin and quivering.

3

Even after her two years in school and her time at College, the prison image is still dominant in her mind: "She hated most of all entering the bondage of teaching once more. Very heartily she detested it."<sup>4</sup>

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1 *ibid.*, pp. 369, 372.

2 *ibid.*, p. 377.

3 *ibid.*, pp. 389, 407-8.

4 *ibid.*, p. 474.

## CONCLUSION

Are educators justified, then, when they complain that writers have contributed to the unfavourable light in which the British public views teachers, or indeed that they are largely responsible for it? If a simple response has to be given to such a question, this study would bear out the generalisations of one editor that the great majority of books in his list "display marked hostility towards teachers and schooling".<sup>1</sup> Not only are most of the teachers in this sample of over three hundred books viewed unfavourably, the types that have been distinguished as essentially unattractive (floggers, figures of fun, crammers, and so on) heavily outweigh the few favourable ones. In addition, the bad teachers, like Squeers and Creakle, tend to be more vivid and memorable than the good ones, like Dr. Strong. What is more, unlike doctors, lawyers or clergymen, teachers themselves frequently represent their own profession badly. They are quick to lament the low status and poor conditions, and the good or inspired master or mistress at the centre of a novel written by a teacher is generally surrounded by many bad, incompetent ones.

The introduction briefly suggested some of the reasons why authors' relationships with teachers differ from their awareness of other occupational groups. One classic statement of this was the warning given in a paragraph added late to the manuscript of The Way of All Flesh:

Oh schoolmasters - if any of you read this book - bear in mind when any particularly timid drivelling urchin is brought by his papa into your study, and you treat him with the contempt which he deserves, and afterwards make his life a burden to him for years - bear in mind that it is exactly in the disguise of such a boy as this that your future chronicler will appear. Never see a wretched little heavy-eyed mite sitting on the edge of a chair against your study wall without saying to yourselves, "Perhaps this boy is he who, if I am not careful, will one day tell the world what manner of man I was." If even two or three schoolmasters learn this lesson and remember it, the preceding chapters will not have been written in vain.

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1 A. K. D. Campbell, Novels and Plays with a Background of School, Keele, 1979, p. 7.

2 Samuel Butler, Ernest Pontifex or The Way of All Flesh, (1903) 1965, p. 106.

The motivation to settle old scores with the villains of childhood must be a powerful one for some writers, and Butler does not suggest either that a small boy's perception may not very accurately assess "what manner of man" his teacher is, or that the author's memory may be selective and distorting. It is hardly surprising, then, to find that teachers do come out badly in literature. Authors are likely, perhaps, both to have been of an individualistic temperament, resentful of convention and regimentation, and to have retained a vivid, imaginative memory of schoolday sufferings and indignities.

Nevertheless, such a sweeping judgment of hostility to teachers has to be qualified by reference to the time scale. This survey has indicated that the treatment of teachers is not constant, but changing. The most obvious indication of shifting attitudes is simply quantitative: as time goes by more space seems to be given to teacher characters; they are analysed at more length; they are given more important rôles to play. In qualitative terms, the proportion of teachers who are essentially sympathetically presented and the degree of understanding shown of their work and their problems both increase as time goes by. The outrageously incompetent, brutal and unqualified teachers - those who have perhaps taken deepest root in public consciousness - mostly appear in literature before or during the 1850s. It was suggested that from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards there was a marked change in the way in which schools and teachers were represented in literature. In part, of course, this was because the style of the novel itself was changing at this time. Not only in the newly emerging genre of the school story but in books for the general reader teachers were increasingly shown as important, sometimes as central, characters. It was no longer unthinkable for a teacher to be a hero or heroine. Schools were more frequently settings for the narrative, more interest was shown by authors in what teaching actually involved, educational issues were more frequently discussed by other characters. Books written in the first person by supposed teachers compelled the reader to identify with the teacher's situation, to see things through a teacher's eyes. Concern for the "truth"



of fictional representation of teachers began to be expressed. In different ways, these were all broad indicators of a shift in valuation. Most significant, though, were the changes in the kinds of teacher figure that were common at successive periods, and the attitudes of authors towards them.

It is possible to offer a broad summary of the ways in which teachers are generally represented in literature during the period of nearly two centuries which has been examined. As more types emerge progressively, and as the depiction of these generally becomes more varied, it is increasingly difficult to pigeon-hole many individuals. There was no great problem in considering the eighteenth century figures. They were fixed and two-dimensional; they did not change significantly in the course of the narrative. They were differentiated in the simplest terms by the emotional reaction they aroused (which, it was assumed, would be the same response from author, reader and other characters in the book). Only a tiny minority awaken any sympathy. Most are calculated to arouse either derision or anger: they are comical or they are alarming. The teacher getting his deserts is a popular fictional pattern. Although these figures occur in different kinds of educational establishment, there is hardly any attempt to show them actually teaching. The only figures viewed with real sympathy or admiration are the essentially unreal, idealised models of the educational theorists, who open up a potentially dangerous gulf between precept and practice.

In the case of the nineteenth century, not only were teachers seen in a greater variety of rôles, simple caricatures were also giving way to more complex representations, and the range of possible emotional reactions was wider. Sometimes deliberately conflicting views of a teacher were put into the mouths of other characters. A teacher mocked by his pupils could be presented as a figure of pathos, or even as a good teacher misunderstood; as well as being the conventional figure of fun. Teachers were shown in a wider variety of activities; there was more consideration of their educational principles; and there were increasing attempts to analyse the relationships between

different staff policies and the behaviour of pupils. The reader's sympathies are occasionally engaged on the teacher's behalf, and respect or even affection for him - rare in the previous century - became a not uncommon attitude in the middle and late nineteenth century.

As time goes by, more and more teacher characters are realised in some depth as human beings with an existence that is not simply limited to teaching. In school, they are increasingly differentiated by their specific rôles: by the subject they teach, by their office as housemaster or headmaster, and by their level of work - with juniors, middle school or sixth form. The emphasis shifts during the period from teachers who are shown almost exclusively as exerting pressure on pupils to teachers who themselves are being pressurised by pupils, colleagues, the headmaster, the school or the whole educational system. There is the accompanying tendency to see events from the point of view of teachers, or directly through their eyes. We learn more about the way in which teachers think, how their ideas develop, and how they came to be the sort of people they are. The final chapters have indicated a developing concern with professional matters: the kinds of way in which teachers enter the profession and learn their trade, the differences between particular masters' teaching styles and educational objectives, the arguments between teachers about educational issues, and their perception of the situations in which they work. By the end of the period reviewed, it can be inferred that masters and mistresses can succeed or fail in very different ways according to their personalities; that they work differently with increasing experience and in different schools; that their relationships with other adults will be as complex as those of any other men and women.

Such a simplified picture of increasing precision and understanding can be summed up in generalisations of admittedly limited validity. Comparing books from the beginning and the end of the period under review, there is a perceptible tendency to shift away from "types" seen in terms of personality (the bully, the inadequate drudge, the well-meaning incompetent) towards "types"



defined by function (the sage mentor, the inspiring teacher, the original disciplinarian) as well as by rôle (housemaster, subject teacher, sports master). Instead of being characterised in terms of simple alternatives, or at the extremes of scales (dominant/impotent, proficient/incompetent, admirable/ludicrous) teachers were more likely to be presented moderately and as combining a variety of qualities. There was a parallel movement away from simple emotional loading (inviting the reader's derision, contempt, fear, admiration) to a more complex portrayal in which the individual awakes a variety of responses in the reader. Such generalisations, however, must not obscure the fact that stock caricatures and sweeping assumptions exist in the twentieth century as in the eighteenth, although they may be less dominant. In part this is because of a general pattern in writing about teachers, of which the particular "types" examined are examples.

At any time, a fresh perception of some aspect of teachers or teaching may appear in the work of an author - or of several authors almost simultaneously - and because it catches particular needs, wishes or fears of the time, it becomes dominant, it exerts a magnetic pull over subsequent writers. When this happens, it can be said that a new stereotype, or a variant of an existing type, is established: the inhuman crammer, the awe-inspiring headmaster, the ludicrous French teacher. Such a figure is usually introduced in broadly drawn, simple terms; there may be an element of caricature, to establish the point plainly. Subsequently, as authors present more refined versions of the type, introduce new variants or deliberately portray characters who go against the type, the outlines of the stock figure become increasingly blurred. Characters of greater individuality conform less and less to a model that gradually ceases to be of significance to a generation in which new types emerge as the focus of new concerns. In this century, a simple stock figure that fades from literature is often perpetuated in popular culture. Stereotypes that would appear over-simple for a serious author writing for adults have lived on in school stories written for children, and have then percolated into comics,



and into film and television. In fact, the very unchangingness of Mr. Quelch and the other Greyfriars masters may have accounted for the lengthy popularity of the Frank Richards stories among children.

The rise and fall in popularity of particular figures must presumably be related to more general shifts in public opinion, but it would be dangerous to suggest a causal relationship in one direction only. The stereotype of the majestic headmaster in late Victorian fiction may have been the result of authors' knowledge of such men in the public schools, but it is also possible that the literary stereotype itself may have conditioned governors and appointing bodies to prefer men of a certain physique and temperament when making appointments. Equally the later reaction against such withdrawn and imposing figures in the pages of novels may have helped to bring about as well as reflected a modification in educated opinion.

In view of the major changes in the presentation of teachers as individuals which have appeared in this survey, it is striking that views of the profession itself seem to have modified much less. It is true that in the twentieth century there has not been so much brutal disparagement of the qualifications and the place in society of those that teach as there was in the eighteenth. Nevertheless, the prevailing emphasis is still that teachers, however industrious and worthy, are unrecognised by society, misunderstood and underpaid. The career is one that is only very rarely shown as having been deliberately chosen, it is frequently abandoned with relief or delight, and it is almost never seen by other characters as being on the same level as medicine, the church or the law. The salaries, although improving, are still seen as very low at the end of the period, and the conditions of work are presented as poor. Those writers who were engaged in teaching are perhaps even more critical than those who were not. The cumulative impression built up by the chapters on Views of the Profession seems overwhelming. In other words, even in the years up to the 1914-18 War, although teachers as characters might be more favourably presented than before, the occupation as such was still generally seen as on a lower level than other professions, not a sensible choice for the able or the ambitious.

It was suggested in the introduction that the major purpose of this study was to locate material with which to "rehearse" the performance of teachers in literature to provide the basis for more informed judgments about attitudes to the profession at different periods, and possibly about the influence of literary presentation on public opinion generally, and on teachers' own images of themselves. Such judgments must ultimately depend on a more detailed critical examination of some of these texts than has been possible in this introductory survey. These chapters have also shown, however, some of the difficulties in establishing such judgments. A few of the outstanding questions which have been thrown up can be briefly mentioned.

There are inevitable difficulties in the fact that the values of a work are affected not only by the time in which it was written but by the time in which it is being read. Almost all the headmasters of late Victorian fiction are presented favourably: they are dominant, majestic figures. A century later they can easily seem pompous, patronising, imperceptive. The masters that seemed best to F. W. Farrar were hard to take seriously only half a century afterwards. How far is the later view a mis-reading of the text, and how far is it simply a different, but legitimate, interpretation of what the author imagined could only be taken in one way? Which depictions of teachers have stood the test of time to be acceptable today, and why?

In considering the presentation of teachers as individuals, are there dangers in assuming too readily that an unpleasant impression of one in a book implies hostility to teachers as a class? In some cases it could be argued that the antagonism apparent towards a bullying master, say, was intended to bring about change, to support milder or more enlightened teachers, even if these did not appear or were only fleetingly described in the book. Has the powerful impression of vividly drawn bad teachers been over-generalised? Indeed, have wider assumptions been controlled by dominant literary models?

In the years to the Great War, the majority of fictional classroom teachers were shown in secondary schools, and the majority of those were boarding schools.



To what extent were ideas of teachers and norms of teacher behaviour conditioned by this? Were teachers in elementary schools, and later in junior and secondary modern schools, openly or tacitly related to and assessed by models operating in a quite different system?

Partly because of this concentration on boys' boarding schools, the majority of classroom teachers appearing in literature have been men, whereas teaching itself as a career has always employed more women than men. Has the tendency to see successful teachers, in particular, as men in boarding schools, contributed to the desire of some women to emulate that pattern, and to the accompanying sense that women are somehow inferior? Rosemary Deem has argued that,

... since the nineteenth century women teachers have traditionally been engaged in teaching at a lower level and with younger pupils than have men teachers, and ... they have been differentially rewarded financially and in terms of status, as compared to their male colleagues.

1

Particularly in the last of the three periods considered, the masters of certain subjects tended to become identified with particular personalities and qualities. Teachers of modern languages, especially when foreigners, were expected to be comical, excitable, incapable of keeping order. Science masters were idealistic, strangely impractical, absurd in a well-meaning way. Teachers of classics were conventionally crammers: either routine and boring or enthusiastic and capable. In that period began the tendency, increased since then, for the English teacher to be the hero, the model of good practice, the sympathetic and understanding figure. Since many of the books in question have been written by men who are, or were, English teachers, this is perhaps not surprising. Is there any relationship between the emergence of this image and the fact that a number of surveys indicate that English teachers and English among the normal classroom subjects are particularly popular with pupils?

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1 Rosemary Deem, Women and Schooling, 1978, p. 109.



Do teachers of a subject draw directly or indirectly an image of appropriate behaviour from the steadily accumulating impression formed by literature?

Later in the nineteenth century, and particularly in the twentieth, books about school concentrate much more on the notion of a staff as a group of individuals. In Tom Brown's Schooldays, the only teachers realised at all are the Doctor and an unnamed young master. Later books usually give sketches, however brief, of a much greater number of teachers: the impression is given of a staff of very varied individuals, often in conflict. Has one effect of this been to undermine notions that teachers are "all of a kind" or "copies of the same type"? How far is the notion given of a team in which different talents are required, and how far is the impression of a random gathering of individualists, some successful and some not?

Particularly from the middle of the nineteenth century onwards, two anti-thetical views of schools and teaching appear regularly in literature. There is the frequent suggestion of change, of the differences between "then" and "now", with the accompanying assumptions of educational advance. There is also the frequent suggestion, however, that nothing really changes, that young teachers perpetuate the methods that they experienced as pupils, that the school remains reassuringly "the same". Does this tension between the principles of progress and of continuity help to explain the fact that increasingly in the later years of the period similar figures - the young sportsman, the sage housemaster - appear in different books with quite different emotional loadings, varying from strong approval to equally strong disapproval? Does this range of reactions also help to show how subjective writers' judgments of teachers can be, and thus to undermine the validity of stock figures producing stock responses?

It appears that whereas the conventional figures of teachers themselves have been changing steadily in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, views of the profession have changed much less. A reader in this century can find attractive and even heroic images of fictional teachers with whom to identify, but will discover few authors or characters who suggest that teachers as a whole are valued by society, or reasonably paid, or offered decent working conditions,

or are seen as a real profession. Has it been this continuing impression that has conditioned responses, rather than the nature of teacher characters themselves?

Such questions as these are illustrative only. Two issues in particular, however, may be mentioned as practical rather than speculative. First, since teachers have been quick to complain that writers have "conspired" in making members of the profession "contemptible" or "pitiabile", it is surely strange that they have paid so little critical attention to this source of allegedly major influence. If the impression given by novelists and others is implausible, prejudiced or invalid, then a close consideration of the texts should be able to suggest that. The reading involved in this study, however, has revealed remarkably little writing concerned either to demonstrate the falsity of certain authors' views of teachers or to make a case for the superior validity of others. There is surely a case for educationalists to examine some of these works in more depth than previously.

Second, it is surely strange that in the search for professional insight, drawing on a range of disciplines, teachers have made relatively little use of literature, despite William Walsh's pioneering work on "Educational Thought and the Literary Mind". How do young teachers form a coherent view of what they are doing? How does a student apprehend what teaching might be like? Many of us have come nearer to a live awareness of the classroom situation from a few pages of The Rainbow, say, than from whole volumes of theory. There are, of course, limitations in using such source material and dangers in using literature as a quarry for nuggets of guidance.

Work in general, a major activity in life, plays a comparatively small part in literature. It is of particular interest, though, that the process of teaching has come to occupy much more attention in novels of this century, and that there has been a shift away from seeing teachers as fixed types and towards presenting them as developing characters. Books have been more concerned to show teachers thinking about the process of teaching, changing

their own practice, learning from experience. Less successful teachers, like Mr. Prout or Mr. Perrin, have been revealed trying to adopt roles which they see as admirable. The pressures on new teachers, like Ursula Brangwen or Alan Clay, are analysed, and the different ways in which young men and women come to terms with the situation are described. In the professional education of teachers, is there not a case for making greater use of the potential enlightenment to be gained from a study of teachers and teaching in literature? Rather than complaining about misrepresentation, teachers should perhaps be quicker to seize this resource for learning.



APPENDIX

CHRONOLOGICAL CHECK LIST OF WORKS EXAMINED

Short titles, arranged by date of publication

1742	Henry Fielding	<u>Joseph Andrews</u>
1742	William Shenstone	<u>The Schoolmistress</u>
1743	Henry Fielding	<u>Jonathan Wild</u>
1744	Sarah Fielding	<u>David Simple</u>
1742-5	Edward Young	<u>Night Thoughts</u>
1745	John Dalton	<u>Two Epistles</u>
1745	David Fordyce	<u>Dialogues Concerning Education, vol. 1</u>
1745	Jonathan Swift	<u>Directions to Servants</u>
1748	James Forrester	<u>Dialogues</u>
1749	John Cleland	<u>Memoirs of a Woman of Pleasure</u>
1749	Henry Fielding	<u>Tom Jones</u>
1749	Sarah Fielding	<u>The Governess</u>
1750	Robert Paltock	<u>Peter Wilkins</u>
1751	Francis Coventry	<u>Pompey the Little</u>
1751	Tobias Smollett	<u>Peregrine Pickle</u>
1751	Gilbert West	<u>Education</u>
1750-2	Samuel Johnson	<u>The Rambler</u>
1752	Henry Fielding	<u>The Covent-Garden Journal</u>
1754	Henry Layng	<u>The Rod</u>
1759	Oliver Goldsmith	<u>"On Education" (The Bee, No. VI)</u>
1761	William Forbes	<u>The Dominie Depos'd</u>
1763	James Elphinston	<u>Education</u>
1764	Charles Churchill	<u>Gotham</u>
1765	Gibbons Bagnall	<u>Education</u>
1766	Oliver Goldsmith	<u>The Vicar of Wakefield</u>
1767	Richard Jago	<u>Edge Hill</u>
1766-70	Henry Brooke	<u>The Fool of Quality</u>
1770	Oliver Goldsmith	<u>The Deserted Village</u>
1771	James Cawthorn	<u>Poems</u>
1766-72	Sarah Maese	<u>The School</u>
1773	Richard Graves	<u>The Spiritual Quixote</u>
1774	Robert Lloyd	<u>Poetical Works</u>
1775	Henry Man	<u>Mr. Bentley, the Rural Philosopher</u>

1775	Thomas Maurice	<u>The School-Boy</u>
1778	Gregory Lewis Way	<u>Learning at a Loss</u>
1779	Thomas Maurice	<u>Poems and Miscellaneous Pieces</u>
c1782	Lady Eleanor Fenn	<u>School Occurrences</u>
1783	Clara Reeve	<u>The Two Mentors</u>
1785	William Coke	<u>A Poetical Essay on the Early Part of Education</u>
1785	William Cowper	<u>Tirocinium</u>
c1785	Dorothy Kilner	<u>The Village School</u>
c1786	Dorothy Kilner	<u>Anecdotes of a Boarding School</u>
1788	Mary Wollstonecraft	<u>Original Stories from Real Life</u>
1783-9	Thomas Day	<u>Sandford and Merton</u>
1791	James Boswell	<u>Life of Johnson</u>
1791	Clara Reeve	<u>The School for Widows</u>
1792	Eliza Parsons	<u>The Errors of Education</u>
1792	Robert Southey et al	<u>The Flagellant</u>
1792	Jane West	<u>The Advantages of Education</u>
1796	Maria Edgeworth	<u>The Parent's Assistant</u>
1796	John Moore	<u>Edward</u>
1794-7	Thomas Holcroft	<u>The Adventures of Hugh Trevor</u>
1797	Mary Robinson	<u>Walsingham</u>
1797	Thomas Skinner Surr	<u>Christ's Hospital</u>
c1800	Elizabeth Sandham	<u>The Boys' School</u>
1801	Maria Edgeworth	<u>Moral Tales</u>
1802	John Bidlake	<u>Youth</u>
1803	Henry Kirke White	<u>Clifton Grove</u>
1805	William Godwin	<u>Fleetwood</u>
1807	Lord Byron	<u>Hours of Idleness</u>
1807	Henry Kirke White	<u>Remains</u>
1809	William Combe	<u>The Schoolmaster's Tour</u>
1809	Charles and Mary Lamb	<u>Mrs. Leicester's School</u>
c1810	Hannah More	<u>The Shepherd of Salisbury Plain</u>
1810	George Crabbe	<u>The Borough</u>
1811	Rachel Hunter	<u>The Schoolmistress</u>
1813	Jane Austen	<u>Pride and Prejudice</u>
1814	Jane Austen	<u>Mansfield Park</u>
c1814	Barbara Hofland	<u>Ellen, the Teacher</u>
1814	Walter Scott	<u>Waverley</u>
1815	Sarah Trimmer	<u>Instructive Tales</u>

1816	Jane Austen	<u>Emma</u>
1816	Barbara Hofland	<u>The Barbadoes Girl</u>
1816	Walter Scott	<u>Old Mortality</u>
1816	William Francis Sullivan	<u>Mr. Rightway and his Pupils</u>
1817	Samuel Taylor Coleridge	<u>Biographia Literaria</u>
1817	William Stephen Gilbey	<u>Academic Errors</u>
1817	John Marshall	<u>The Village Pædagogus</u>
1817	Ann and Jane Taylor	<u>Correspondence Between a Mother and her Daughter</u>
1818	Elizabeth Sandham	<u>The School-Fellows</u>
1818	Walter Scott	<u>The Heart of Midlothian</u>
1819	Lord Byron	<u>Don Juan, cantos I and II</u>
1819	George Crabbe	<u>Tales of the Hall</u>
1819	Mary Russell Mitford	<u>Our Village</u>
1819	Mary Robson	<u>The Orphan Girl</u>
1821	John Clare	<u>The Village Minstrel</u>
1821	Thomas De Quincey	<u>Confessions of an English Opium-Eater</u>
1821	John Galt	<u>Annals of the Parish</u>
1821	Mary Robson	<u>The Rebellious School-Girl</u>
1821	Walter Scott	<u>Kenilworth</u>
1823	Charles Lamb	<u>Elia</u>
1824	Thomas Maude	<u>The Village Grammar-School</u>
1826	Thomas Hood	<u>Whims and Oddities</u>
1826-7	Benjamin Disraeli	<u>Vivian Grey</u>
1827	John Clare	<u>The Shepherd's Calendar</u>
1829	William Pitt Scargill	<u>Recollections of a Blue-Coat Boy</u>
c1830	Anon	<u>The Dominie</u>
1830	Anna Maria Hall	<u>Chronicles of a School Room</u>
1831	Thomas Hood	<u>The Dream of Eugene Aram</u>
1831	Edward John Trelawny	<u>Adventures of a Younger Son</u>
1833-4	Thomas Carlyle	<u>Sartor Resartus</u>
1835	Mary Russell Mitford	<u>Belford Regis</u>
1835	Agnes Strickland	<u>Tales of the Schoolroom</u>
1835-6	Charles Dickens	<u>Sketches by Boz</u>
1836	Edward Howard	<u>Rattlin the Reefer</u>
1836	Frederick Marryat	<u>Mr. Midshipman Easy</u>
1836	Thomas Maude	<u>The School Boy</u>



1836-7	Charles Dickens	<u>The Pickwick Papers</u>
1838-9	Charles Dickens	<u>Nicholas Nickleby</u>
1839	Marguerite Gardiner	<u>The Governess</u>
1839	Thomas Hood	<u>Hood's Own</u>
1839	Catherine Sinclair	<u>Holiday House</u>
1840	William Gresley	<u>Church-Clavering</u>
1840-1	Charles Dickens	<u>The Old Curiosity Shop</u>
1841	Joseph T. J. Hewlett	<u>Peter Priggins</u>
1841	Harriet Martineau	<u>The Crofton Boys</u>
1841	Harriet Mozley	<u>The Fairy Bower</u>
1842	Frederick Marryat	<u>Percival Keene</u>
1842	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>Miss Tickletoby's Lectures</u>
1843	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>The Irish Sketch Book</u>
1843-4	Charles Dickens	<u>Martin Chuzzlewit</u>
1844	Elizabeth M. Sewell	<u>Amy Herbert</u>
1845	Douglas Jerrold	<u>Punch's Complete Letter Writer</u>
1846-7	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>The Book of Snobs</u>
1847	Anne Bronte	<u>Agnes Grey</u>
1847	Charlotte Bronte	<u>Jane Eyre</u>
1847	James Anthony Froude	<u>Shadows of the Clouds</u>
1846-8	Charles Dickens	<u>Dombey and Son</u>
1847-8	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>Vanity Fair</u>
1848	Julia Corner	<u>The Village School</u>
1849	Charlotte Bronte	<u>Shirley</u>
1849	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>Doctor Birch and His Young Friends</u>
1848-50	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>Pendennis</u>
1849-50	Charles Dickens	<u>David Copperfield</u>
1850	Mrs. E. C. Gaskell	<u>Lizzie Leigh</u>
1850	H. Leigh Hunt	<u>Autobiography</u>
1850	Charles Kingsley	<u>Alton Locke</u>
1850	Charles Savile	<u>Leonard Normandale</u>
1850	Frank Smedley	<u>Frank Fairleigh</u>
1850	Charlotte Mary Yonge	<u>Langley School</u>
1851	William Adams	<u>The Cherry-stones</u>
1851	George Borrow	<u>Lavengro</u>
1851	Frederick R. Chichester	<u>Masters and Workmen</u>
1851	Charles Dickens	<u>"Our School" (Household Words, No. 81)</u>
1851	Edward FitzGerald	<u>Euphranor</u>
1852	Hugh Miller	<u>My Schools and Schoolmasters</u>

1852	Charles Rowcroft	<u>Confessions of an Etonian</u>
1851-3	Mrs. E. C. Gaskell	<u>Cranford</u>
1853	Anna Atkins	<u>The Colonel</u>
1853	Charlotte Bronte	<u>Villette</u>
1853	Mrs. E. C. Gaskell	<u>My French Master</u>
1853	Elizabeth M. Sewell	<u>The Experience of Life</u>
1853	E. Ward	<u>Boys and Their Rulers</u>
1854	Charles Dickens	<u>Hard Times</u>
1854	George Griffith	<u>George Wilson, A Foundation Scholar</u>
1854	George Melly	<u>School Experiences of a Fag</u>
1853-5	William Makepeace Thackeray	<u>The Newcomes</u>
1855	Charles Kingsley	<u>Westward Ho!</u>
1855	Holme Lee	<u>Gilbert Messenger</u>
1855	Leitch Ritchie	<u>Wearyfoot Common</u>
1856	William John Conybeare	<u>Perversion</u>
1856	Dinah Maria Craik	<u>John Halifax, Gentleman</u>
1856	A Teacher	<u>Fifteen Years Among National Schools</u>
1856	Charlotte Mary Yonge	<u>The Daisy Chain</u>
1855-7	Charles Dickens	<u>Little Dorrit</u>
1857	Berkely Aikin	<u>Anne Sherwood</u>
1857	Charlotte Bronte	<u>The Professor</u>
1857	Thomas Hughes	<u>Tom Brown's Schooldays</u>
1857	Charles Kingsley	<u>Two Years Ago</u>
1857	George Alfred Lawrence	<u>Guy Livingstone</u>
1858	W. Harrison Ainsworth	<u>Mervyn Clitheroe</u>
1858	Frederic William Farrar	<u>Eric</u>
1858	Mrs. E. C. Gaskell	<u>My Lady Ludlow</u>
1858	Anna Maria Hall	<u>Cleverness</u>
1859	George Eliot	<u>Adam Bede</u>
1859	Anna Maria Hall	<u>Daddy Dacre's School</u>
1859	Henry Spicer	<u>Old Styles's</u>
1860	George Eliot	<u>The Mill on the Floss</u>
1860	Janet Leith Maughan	<u>Charley Nugent</u>
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1861	Holme Lee	<u>Warp and Woof</u>
1861	Anthony Trollope	<u>Framley Parsonage</u>
1861	Mrs. Henry Wood	<u>East Lynne</u>
1862	William Wilkie Collins	<u>No Name</u>
1862	Frederick William Farrar	<u>St. Winifred's</u>

1863	Charles Carlos Clarke	<u>Charlie Thornhill</u>
1863	Charles Kingsley	<u>The Water Babies</u>
1864	Dutton Cook	<u>The Trials of the Tredgolds</u>
1864	D'Arcy W. Thompson	<u>Day Dreams of a Schoolmaster</u>
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1871-2	George Eliot	<u>Middlemarch</u>
1872	Thomas Cooper	<u>Life</u>
1872	Thomas Hardy	<u>Under the Greenwood Tree</u>
1873	Juliana H. Ewing	<u>A Flat Iron for a Farthing</u>
1873	E. R. Bulwer Lytton	<u>Kenelm Chillingly</u>
1873	Anthony Trollope	<u>The Eustace Diamonds</u>
1875	Juliana H. Ewing	<u>Six to Sixteen</u>
1875	Louisa M. Gray	<u>Ada and Gerty</u>
1876	Mrs. G. L. Banks	<u>The Manchester Man</u>
1876	Juliana H. Ewing	<u>Jan of the Windmill</u>
1878	Thomas Hardy	<u>Return of the Native</u>
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1878	Walter Chalmers Smith	<u>Hilda among the Broken Gods</u>
1879	George Meredith	<u>The Egoist</u>
1881	Thomas Edward Brown	<u>Fo'c'sle Yarns</u>
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1881	Anthony Trollope	<u>Doctor Wortle's School</u>
1881-2	Talbot Baines Reed	<u>The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's</u>



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1899	Eden Phillpotts	<u>The Human Boy</u>
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1901	Ian Maclaren	<u>Young Barbarians</u>
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1902	E. H. L. Watson	<u>Christopher Deane</u>
1903	Samuel Butler	<u>The Way of All Flesh</u>
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1905	Frances Hodgson Burnett	<u>A Little Princess</u>
1905	Lionel Portman	<u>Hugh Rendal</u>
1905	Horace Annesley Vachell	<u>The Hill</u>
1905	H. G. Wells	<u>Kipps</u>
1906	Alice and Claude Askew	<u>The Etonian</u>
1906	Desmond F. T. Coke	<u>The Bending of a Twig</u>
1907	Angela Brazil	<u>The Fortunes of Philippa</u>
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1907	E. M. Forster	<u>The Longest Journey</u>
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