

TOM BROWN'S SCHOOLDAYS



The group on the island slope – page 325

Tom Brown's Schooldays

by an Old Boy of Rugby
THOMAS HUGHES



WORDSWORTH CLASSICS

TO
MRS ARNOLD
OF FOX HOWE
THIS BOOK IS (WITHOUT HER PERMISSION)
DEDICATED
BY THE AUTHOR
WHO OWES MORE THAN HE CAN EVER ACKNOWLEDGE
OR FORGET TO HER AND HERS

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PREFACE TO THE SIXTH EDITION

I received the following letter from an old friend soon after the last edition of this book was published, and resolved, if ever another edition were called for, to print it. For it is clear from this and other like comments, that something more should have been said expressly on the subject of bullying, and how it is to be met.

MY DEAR —

I blame myself for not having earlier suggested whether you could not, in another edition of *Tom Brown* or another story, denounce more decidedly the evils of *bullying* at schools. You have indeed done so, and in the best way, by making Flashman the bully the most contemptible character; but in that scene of the *tossing*, and similar passages, you hardly suggest that such things should be stopped — and do not suggest any means of putting an end to them.

This subject has been on my mind for years. It fills me with grief and misery to think what weak and nervous children go through at school — how their health and character for life are destroyed by rough and brutal treatment.

It was some comfort to be under the old delusion that fear and nervousness can be cured by violence, and that knocking about will turn a timid boy into a bold one. But now we know well enough that is not true. Gradually training a timid child to do bold acts would be most desirable; but *frightening* him and ill-treating him will not make him courageous. Every medical man knows the fatal effects of terror, or agitation, or excitement, to nerves that are oversensitive. There are different kinds of courage, as you have shown in your character of Arthur.

A boy may have moral courage, and a finely organised brain and nervous system. Such a boy is calculated, if judiciously educated, to be a great, wise, and useful man; but he may not possess *animal courage*; and one night's *tossing*, or bullying,

may produce such an injury to his brain and nerves that his usefulness is spoiled for life. I verily believe that hundreds of noble organisations are thus destroyed every year. Horse-jockeys have learnt to be wiser; they know that a highly nervous horse is utterly destroyed by harshness. A groom who tried to cure a shying horse by roughness and violence would be discharged as a brute and a fool. A man who would regulate his watch with a crowbar would be considered an ass. But the person who thinks a child of delicate and nervous organisation can be made bold by bullying is no better.

He can be made bold by *healthy exercise* and *games* and *sports*; but that is quite a different thing. And even these games and sports should bear some proportion to his strength and capacities.

I very much doubt whether small children should play with big ones – the rush of a set of great fellows at football, or the speed of a cricket-ball sent by a strong hitter, must be very alarming to a mere child, to a child who might stand up boldly enough among children of his own size and height.

Look at half a dozen small children playing cricket by themselves; how feeble are their blows, how slowly they bowl. You can measure in that way their capacity.

Tom Brown and his eleven were bold enough in playing against an eleven of about their own calibre; but I suspect they would have been in a precious funk if they had played against eleven giants, whose bowling bore the same proportion to theirs that theirs does to the small children's above.

To return to the *tossing*. I must say I think some means might be devised to enable schoolboys to go to bed in quietness and peace – and that some means ought to be devised and enforced. No good, moral or physical, to those who bully or those who are bullied, can ensue from such scenes as take place in the dormitories of schools. I suspect that British wisdom and ingenuity are sufficient to discover a remedy for this evil, if directed in the right direction.

The fact is, that the condition of a small boy at a large school is one of peculiar hardship and suffering. He is entirely at the mercy of proverbially the roughest things in

the universe – great schoolboys; and he is deprived of the protection which the weak have in civilised society; for he may not complain; if he does, he is an outlaw – he has no protector but public opinion, and that a public opinion of the very lowest grade, the opinion of rude and ignorant boys.

What do schoolboys know of those deep questions of moral and physical philosophy, of the anatomy of mind and body, by which the treatment of a child should be regulated?

Why should the laws of civilisation be suspended for schools? Why should boys be left to herd together with no law but that of force or cunning? What would become of society if it were constituted on the same principles? It would be plunged into anarchy in a week.

One of our judges, not long ago, refused to extend the protection of the law to a child who had been ill-treated at school. If a party of navvies had given *him* a licking, and he had brought the case before a magistrate, what would he have thought if the magistrate had refused to protect him, on the ground that if such cases were brought before him he might have fifty a day from one town only?

Now I agree with you that a constant supervision of the master is not desirable or possible – and that telling tales, or constantly referring to the master for protection, would only produce ill-will and worse treatment.

If I rightly understand your book, it is an effort to improve the condition of schools by improving the tone of morality and public opinion in them. But your book contains the most indubitable proofs that the condition of the younger boys at public schools, except under the rare dictatorship of an old Brooke, is one of great hardship and suffering.

A timid and nervous boy is from morning till night in a state of bodily fear. He is constantly tormented when trying to learn his lessons. His play-hours are occupied in fagging, in a horrid funk of cricket-balls and footballs, and the violent sport of creatures who, to him, are giants. He goes to his bed in fear and trembling – worse than the reality of the rough treatment to which he is perhaps subjected.

I believe there is only one complete remedy. It is not in magisterial supervision; nor in telling tales; nor in raising the tone of public opinion among schoolboys – but in the *separation of boys of different ages into different schools*.

There should be at least *three* different classes of schools – the first for boys from nine to twelve; the second for boys from twelve to fifteen; the third for those above fifteen. And these schools should be in different localities.

There ought to be a certain amount of supervision by the master at those times when there are special occasions for bullying, e.g. in the long winter evenings, and when the boys are congregated together in the bedrooms. Surely it cannot be an impossibility to keep order and protect the weak at such times. Whatever evils might arise from supervision, they could hardly be greater than those produced by a system which divides boys into despots and slaves.

Ever yours, very truly,

F. D.

The question of how to adapt English public-school education to nervous and sensitive boys (often the highest and noblest subjects which that education has to deal with) ought to be looked at from every point of view. I therefore add a few extracts from the letter of an old friend and schoolfellow, than whom no man in England is better able to speak on the subject.

What's the use of sorting the boys by ages, unless you do so by strength: and who are often the real bullies? The strong young dog of fourteen, while the victim may be one year or two years older . . . I deny the fact about the bedrooms: there is trouble at times, and always will be; but so there is in nurseries; my little girl, who looks like an angel, was bullying the smallest twice today.

Bullying must be fought with in other ways – by getting not only the Sixth to put it down, but the lower fellows to scorn it, and by eradicating mercilessly the incorrigible; and a master who really cares for his fellows is pretty sure to know instinctively who in his house are likely to be bullied, and

knowing a fellow to be really victimised and harassed, I am sure that he can stop it if he is resolved. There are many kinds of annoyance – sometimes of real cutting persecution for righteousness's sake – that he can't stop; no more could all the ushers in the world; but he can do very much in many ways to make the shafts of the wicked pointless.

But though, for quite other reasons, I don't like to see very young boys launched at a public school, and though I don't deny (I wish I could) the existence from time to time of bullying, I deny its being a constant condition of school life, and still more the possibility of meeting it by the means proposed . . .

I don't wish to understate the amount of bullying that goes on, but my conviction is that it must be fought, like all school evils, but it more than any, by *dynamics* rather than *mechanics*, by getting the fellows to respect themselves and one another, rather than by sitting by them with a thick stick.

And now, having broken my resolution never to write a preface, there are just two or three things which I should like to say a word about.

Several persons, for whose judgement I have the highest respect, while saying very kind things about this book, have added, that the great fault of it is 'too much preaching'; but they hope I shall amend in this matter should I ever write again. Now this I most distinctly decline to do. Why, my whole object in writing at all was to get the chance of preaching! When a man comes to my time of life and has his bread to make, and very little time to spare, is it likely that he will spend almost the whole of his yearly vacation in writing a story just to amuse people? I think not. At any rate, I wouldn't do so myself.

The fact is, that I can scarcely ever call on one of my contemporaries nowadays without running across a boy already at school, or just ready to go there, whose bright looks and supple limbs remind me of his father, and our first meeting in old times. I can scarcely keep the Latin Grammar out of my own house any longer: and the sight of sons, nephews, and godsons, playing trap-bat-and-ball and reading *Robinson Crusoe*, makes

one ask oneself whether there isn't something one would like to say to them before they take their first plunge into the stream of life, away from their own homes, or while they are yet shivering after the first plunge. My sole object in writing was to preach to boys: if ever I write again, it will be to preach to some other age. I can't see that a man has any business to write at all unless he has something which he thoroughly believes and wants to preach about. If he has this, and the chance of delivering himself of it, let him by all means put it in the shape in which it will be most likely to get a hearing; but let him never be so carried away as to forget that preaching is his object.

A black soldier in a West Indian regiment, tied up to receive a couple of dozen for drunkenness, cried out to his captain, who was exhorting him to sobriety in future, 'Cap'n, if you preachee, preachee; and if floggee, floggee; but no preachee and floggee too!' to which his captain might have replied, 'No, Pompey, I must preach whenever I see a chance of being listened to, which I never did before; so now you must have it all together; and I hope you may remember some of it.'

There is one point which has been made by several of the reviewers who have noticed this book, and it is one which, as I am writing a preface, I cannot pass over. They have stated that the Rugby undergraduates they remember at the universities were 'a solemn array', 'boys turned into men before their time', 'a semi-political, semi-sacerdotal fraternity', &c., giving the idea that Arnold turned out a set of young square-toes who wore long-fingered black gloves and talked with a snuffle. I can only say that their acquaintance must have been limited and exceptional. For I am sure that everyone who has had anything like large or continuous knowledge of boys brought up at Rugby, from the times of which this book treats down to this day, will bear me out in saying, that the mark by which you may know them, is, their genial and hearty freshness and youthfulness of character. They lose nothing of the boy that is worth keeping, but build up the man upon it. This is their *differentia* as Rugby boys; and if they never had it, or have lost it, it must be, not because they were at Rugby, but in spite of their having been

there; the stronger it is in them the more deeply you may be sure have they drunk of the spirit of their school.

But this boyishness in the highest sense is not incompatible with seriousness – or earnestness, if you like the word better. Quite the contrary. And I can well believe that casual observers, who have never been intimate with Rugby boys of the true stamp, but have met them only in the everyday society of the universities, at wines, breakfast parties and the like, may have seen a good deal more of the serious or earnest side of their characters than of any other. For the more the boy was alive in them, the less will they have been able to conceal their thoughts, or their opinion of what was taking place under their noses; and if the greater part of that didn't square with their notions of what was right, very likely they showed pretty clearly that it did not, at whatever risk of being taken for young prigs. They may be open to the charge of having old heads on young shoulders; I think they are, and always were, as long as I can remember; but so long as they have young hearts to keep head and shoulders in order, I, for one, must think this only a gain.

And what gave Rugby boys this character, and has enabled the school, I believe, to keep it to this day? I say fearlessly – Arnold's teaching and example – above all, that part of it which has been, I will not say sneered at, but certainly not approved – his unwearied zeal in creating 'moral thoughtfulness' in every boy with whom he came into personal contact.

He certainly *did* teach us – thank God for it! – that we could not cut our life into slices and say, 'In this slice your actions are indifferent, and you needn't trouble your heads about them one way or another; but in this slice mind what you are about, for they are important' – a pretty muddle we should have been in had he done so. He taught us that in this wonderful world, no boy or man can tell which of his actions is indifferent and which not; that by a thoughtless word or look we may lead astray a brother for whom Christ died. He taught us that life is a whole, made up of actions and thoughts and longings, great and small, noble and ignoble; therefore the only true wisdom for boy or man is to bring the whole life into obedience to Him whose

world we live in, and who has purchased us with His blood; and that whether we eat or drink, or whatsoever we do, we are to do all in His name and to His glory; in such teaching, faithfully, as it seems to me, following that of Paul of Tarsus, who was in the habit of meaning what he said, and who laid down this standard for every man and boy in his time. I think it lies with those who say that such teaching will not do for us now, to show why a teacher in the nineteenth century is to preach a lower standard than one in the first.

However, I won't say that the reviewers have not a certain plausible ground for their dicta. For a short time after a boy has taken up such a life as Arnold would have urged upon him, he has a hard time of it. He finds his judgement often at fault, his body and intellect running away with him into all sorts of pitfalls, and himself coming down with a crash. The more seriously he buckles to his work the oftener these mischances seem to happen; and in the dust of his tumbles and struggles, unless he is a very extraordinary boy, he may often be too severe on his comrades, may think he sees evil in things innocent, may give offence when he never meant it. At this stage of his career, I take it, our reviewer comes across him, and, not looking below the surface (as a reviewer ought to do), at once sets the poor boy down for a prig and a Pharisee, when in all likelihood he is one of the humblest and truest and most childlike of the reviewer's acquaintance.

But let our reviewer come across him again in a year or two, when the 'thoughtful life' has become habitual to him, and fits him as easily as his skin; and, if he be honest, I think he will see cause to reconsider his judgement. For he will find the boy grown into a man, enjoying everyday life, as no man can who has not found out whence comes the capacity for enjoyment, and Who is the Giver of the least of the good things of this world – humble, as no man can be who has not proved his own powerlessness to do right in the smallest act which he ever had to do – tolerant, as no man can be who does not live daily and hourly in the knowledge of how Perfect Love is for ever about his path, and bearing with and upholding him.

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PART ONE

CHAPTER I

The Brown Family

*'I'm the Poet of White Horse Vale, Sir,
With liberal notions under my cap.'*

BALLAD

The Browns have become illustrious by the pen of Thackeray and the pencil of Doyle, within the memory of the young gentlemen who are now matriculating at the universities. Notwithstanding the well-merited but late fame which has now fallen upon them, anyone at all acquainted with the family must feel, that much has yet to be written and said before the British nation will be properly sensible of how much of its greatness it owes to the Browns. For centuries, in their quiet, dogged, homespun way, they have been subduing the earth in most English counties, and leaving their mark in American forests and Australian uplands. Wherever the fleets and armies of England have won renown, there stalwart sons of the Browns have done yeomen's work. With the yew bow and cloth-yard shaft at Cressy and Agincourt – with the brown bill and pike under the brave Lord Willoughby – with culverin and demi-culverin against Spaniards and Dutchmen – with hand-grenade and sabre, and musket and bayonet, under Rodney and St Vincent, Wolfe and Moore, Nelson and Wellington, they have carried their lives in their hands; getting hard knocks and hard work in plenty, which was on the whole what they looked for, and the best thing for them; and little praise or pudding, which indeed they, and most of us, are better without. Talbots and Stanleys, St Maurs, and suchlike folk, have led armies and made laws time out of mind; but those noble families would be somewhat astounded – if the accounts ever

came to be fairly taken – to find how small their work for England has been by the side of that of the Browns.

These latter, indeed, have until the present generation rarely been sung by poet, or chronicled by sage. They have wanted their *sacer vates*, having been too solid to rise to the top by themselves, and not having been largely gifted with the talent of catching hold of, and holding on tight to, whatever good things happened to be going – the foundation of the fortunes of so many noble families. But the world goes on its way, and the wheel turns, and the wrongs of the Browns, like other wrongs, seem in a fair way to get righted. And this present writer having for many years of his life been a devout Brown-worshipper, and moreover having the honour of being nearly connected with an eminently respectable branch of the great Brown family, is anxious, so far as in him lies, to help the wheel over, and throw his stone on to the pile.

However, gentle reader, or simple reader, whichever you may be, lest you should be led to waste your precious time upon these pages, I make so bold as at once to tell you the sort of folk you'll have to meet and put up with, if you and I are to jog on comfortably together. You shall hear at once what sort of folk the Browns are, at least my branch of them, and then, if you don't like the sort, why cut the concern at once, and let you and I cry quits before either of us can grumble at the other.

In the first place, the Browns are a fighting family. One may question their wisdom, or wit, or beauty, but about their fight there can be no question. Wherever hard knocks of any kind, visible or invisible, are going, there the Brown who is nearest must shove in his carcase. And these carcases for the most part answer very well to the characteristic propensity; they are a square-headed and snake-necked generation, broad in the shoulder, deep in the chest, and thin in the flank, carrying no lumber. Then for clanship, they are as bad as Highlanders; it is amazing the belief they have in one another. With them there is nothing like the Browns, to the third and fourth generation. 'Blood is thicker than water,' is one of their pet sayings. They can't be happy unless they are always meeting one another. Never were