

**THE PUBLIC SCHOOL WORD-BOOK; A
CONTRIBUTION TO A HISTORICAL GLOSSARY
OF WORDS, PHRASES AND TURNS OF
EXPRESSION OBSOLETE AND IN PRESENT USE,
PECULIAR TO OUR GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS,
TOGETHER WITH SOME THAT HAVE BEEN OR
ARE MODISH AT THE UNIVERSITIES**

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The public school word-book; a contribution to a historical glossary of words, phrases and turns of expression obsolete and in present use, peculiar to our great public schools, together with some that have been or are modish at the universities by John S. Farmer

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BY

JOHN S. FARMER

EDITOR OF "AMERICANISMS—OLD AND NEW," "REGIMENTAL RECORDS
OF THE BRITISH ARMY," AND (WITH W. E. HENLEY)
"SLANG AND ITS ANALOGUES," ETC.

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PREFACE

IT has been a matter of note and, maybe, of surprise that no attempt has hitherto been made to gather in one volume the numerous Words, Phrases, and Turns of Expression peculiar to OUR GREAT PUBLIC SCHOOLS. Bare lists of a dozen or more examples may be found in certain (mostly out-of-date) Records and Histories; but taking the Schools individually, only in one instance—Winchester—has there been anything but the most perfunctory attention given to the subject; and in no case has the question received that analytical, scientific treatment—historically and comparatively—which has proved so invaluable in the "Oxford Dictionary" and in "Slang and its Analogues."

It would, however, seem almost necessary to emphasise the fact that this Word-Book is not, *per se*, a dictionary of school slang. On the contrary, it is far more than that. For, though such colloquialisms as are *peculiar* to Public School life are naturally and rightly included, yet by far the larger number of the examples here set down do not, by any accepted method of classification, fall within that category. I am led to make this clear at the outset by reason of a somewhat curious,

but altogether erroneous idea that the present book was to be a mere reprint of extracts from the larger work on which, for many years, I have been engaged. That is not so.

Nor, moreover, do these words and phrases appear, save in very few instances, in any other work—not even in so admirably complete a dictionary, in other respects, as “The Century,” while the monumental Oxford undertaking will not be available, as a complete authority, for many years to come.

Having thus stated what this work is *not*, it seems borne on me to explain, anew, what it *is*, or rather, what has been my method. Briefly put, my idea has been to collect such words, phrases, names, and allusions to customs as now are, or have been, *peculiar* to English Public School life, and to apply to their definition and elucidation what is known as the “historical” method, illustrating such examples as lent themselves to it by quotations from old and present-day writers.

The Public Schools with which I have been concerned, arranged chronologically in order of foundation or charter, are as follows:—

1160 Derby.	1564 Felsted.
1387 Winchester.	1567 Rugby.
1441 Eton.	1571 Harrow.
1515 Manchester Grammar.	1592 Stonyhurst.
1538 Royal High School, Edin.	1611 Charterhouse.
1541 Durham Grammar.	1619 Dulwich.
1550 Sherborne.	1830 Loretto.
1551 Shrewsbury.	1841 Cheltenham.
1552 Christ's Hospital.	1843 Marlborough.
1552 King Edward's.	1848 Lancing.
1553 Tonbridge.	1859 Wellington.
1560 Westminster.	1875 The Leys.

Also the Universities of Oxford, Cambridge, Durham, Aberdeen, Dublin, &c.

How far I have been successful in my task I leave others to judge. I must confess, however, that the extent and wealth of this special field of inquiry has somewhat astonished me: yet I fear my lists are, in some cases, still incomplete. But, even so, this contribution towards a more perfect glossary will, I think, be a revelation to many.

No wonder our Mother-tongue is so vigorous, adaptable, and expansive—reaching out in its creative energy to all the forms and necessities of modern life—when even Young England shows such aptitude in coining new expressions, and adapting older forms to its ever-changing (and, shall I say, ever-increasing) needs. Studied comparatively, there will be found much significance, not alone in the survivals from past generations, but also in the relatively newer phraseology. Many an interesting side-light, too, is thrown on ancient school customs and usages.

Though primarily addressing myself to past schoolmen, it is not without a hope that the general student and scholar, as well as those still *in statu pupillari*, will find something of use and to interest.

Finally, I desire, though holding myself alone responsible for aught that is solecismal in these pages, to acknowledge my indebtedness to those who have afforded me such unstinted aid in compiling this work. Especially are my thanks due to Mr. P. K. Tollit (Derby); Mr. W. Durnford (Eton); Mr. R. D. Hodgson (Manchester Grammar); Mr. C. A. Ross (Royal High School, Edin.); Rev. A. E. Hillard (Durham); Mr. W. B. Wildman (Sherborne); Rev. J. F. Cornish (Christ's Hospital); Rev. E. W. Badger (King Edward's, Birm.); Mr. C. H. Crofts (Tonbridge); Rev. E. Gepp (Felsted); Mr. G. Townsend Warner (Harrow);

the Rev. Fathers Gerard and Browne and Rev. A. Goodier (Stonyhurst); Dr. H. H. Almond (Loretto); Mr. J. F. L. Hardy (Marlborough); Mr. J. C. Isard (The Leys).

SPECIAL NOTICE

While the "Public School Word-Book" was passing through the press a certain amount of additional matter came to hand. Rather than omit altogether I have included it in an Appendix.

May I also say that I shall welcome any suggestions, additions, or corrections that may be forwarded to me?

Communications may be addressed to John S. Furmer, c/o Messrs. Hirschfeld Bros., 13 Farnival Street, London, E.C.



THE
PUBLIC SCHOOL WORD-BOOK



TO GET ONE'S "A," *verb. phr.* (Harrow).—To pass a certain standard in the Gymnasium: the next step being to the Gymnasium Eight. *See* Appendix.

Abber, *subs.* (Harrow).—1. An abstract: on history, &c.; set as a punishment.

2. An **ABSIT** (*q.v.*): on whole holidays, or under medical advice.

Abroad, *adv.* (Winchester).—Convalescent; out of the sick-room: *e.g.* "I have been (or come) **ABROAD** a week." *Cf.* **CONTINENT**.

1534. UDALL, *Roister Doister*, . . . I bid him keepe warme at home, For if he come **ABROADE**, he shall cough me a mome.

1598. SHAKESPEARE, *2 Hen. IV.*, i. 2. I am glad to see your Lordship **ABROAD**. I heard say your Lordship was sicke. I hope your Lordship goes **ABROAD** by aduice.

1761. *Letter* [WRENCH]. I have been exceeding ill . . . am not just got **ABROAD** again.

Abs, *adj.* (Winchester).—Absent: placed against the name when away from school. [From *absunt* on Rolls.]

Verb. To take (get, or go) away. Formerly (*circa* 1840) **TO ABS** a tolly (candle)=to put it out; it now=to take it away whether lighted or unlighted, the modern **NOTION** (*q.v.*) for putting it out being to "dump" it. As a neuter verb **ABS** is generally