

**PUBLIC SCHOOL
LIFE; BOYS,
PARENTS, MASTERS**

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Public school life; boys, parents, masters by Alec Waugh

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ALEC WAUGH

**PUBLIC SCHOOL
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PUBLIC SCHOOL LIFE

BOYS PARENTS MASTERS

by

ALEC WAUGH

Author of 'The Loom of Youth,' 'Pleasure,' etc.



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A DEDICATORY LETTER TO ARNOLD LUNN

December 6, 1921:

MY DEAR ARNOLD,—It was with genuine surprise that I read the other day, while turning over the pages of *The Harrovians*, the date 1913 upon the title-page. Only eight years ago, and since then so much has happened. What a long while it seems since *The Harrovians* was the most borrowed book in the house, and we passed the hours of evening hall, that should have been spent in the study of irregular verbs, in eager discussions on your book. It was a revelation to us—we schoolboys of 1913. It explained us to ourselves. We thought then that the last word on the subject had been said.

But one can never say the last word on such a subject as the Public Schools, especially in a novel. In a novel one is constrained to tell a story or to reveal a character. In *The Harrovians* you dealt with the Public School System only in as far as it effected the development of Peter, and in *Loose Ends* you found yourself equally fettered with regard to Maurice. It is for this

A Dedicatory Letter

reason that I feel there is still room for a book such as this, which, though a narrative, has for its object simply the analysis and presentation of public school life. At any rate I hope that you may think, when you come to read it, that it was worth doing. If you do not, well then at least here is your name after the title-page in grateful tribute to many pleasant hours spent in the company of yourself and of your books, and in the hope of many more such hours.

For their sake, if not for its own sake, please accept this book, and believe me,

As ever, your sincere friend,

ALEC WAUGH.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

TWENTY years ago a father said to his son, who had just come down from Oxford with a batting average of 35.7: 'For ten years, my boy, you have been playing cricket all through the summer at my expense. You can now either come into my business and play first-class cricket during your month's holiday in August, or, if you want to continue to play cricket all through the season, you can go down to the Oval and apply to be taken on as a professional.' The moral, the obvious moral, that is to say, is admirable. And the elderly gentleman whom I overheard repeating this story in the pavilion, leant back in his seat and affirmed proudly, though with a deep sense of the passage of good things, that it was in such a spirit that the game had been played when he was young. 'That's what cricket meant to the Studds, the Lyttletons, the Fosters. We didn't have any of these amateur professionals, none of these fine fellows who get found soft jobs by their county committees. What's the difference, I should like to know, between the fellow who gets paid five pounds a match and the fellow who is presented with the directorship of a ladies' corset factory at a comfortable salary, and who has only to go to the office once

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a week to sign his name in the directors' attendance book?' The elderly gentleman shrugged his shoulders with disgust.

He was quite right, of course. There are too many cricketers who make as much money out of the game as any professional, yet are entitled to put initials before their name upon the score card. And the father was quite right when he insisted on the industry of his son. He was none the less right because things probably failed to turn out as they had been planned. They rarely do. We can guess what happened.

For a year the son worked hard. During his month's holiday he made a couple of centuries in first-class cricket, and various papers commenting on this achievement expressed their regret that so promising a cricketer should only be available in August. It is needless to add that the other members of the family saw to it that these references did not escape the attention of their father. Next season the county started so well, that by the end of May it stood at the head of the championship, and the young financier was entreated to turn out for the Yorkshire match in the middle of June. On such an occasion parental discipline was naturally relaxed. And an innings of 87 on a tricky wicket was followed by an invitation to play for the Gentlemen at Lords. Parental pride was flattered. Next season the same thing happened, only more frequently. There was, in fact, an understanding that he was available for all the important matches, and very soon not only the fixtures with