

**A BOOK  
ABOUT BOYS**

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A Book about Boys by A. R. Hope

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**A. R. HOPE**

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A BOOK ABOUT BOYS.

*Moncrieff, A. R. Hope*

A BOOK  
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By A. R. HOPE,  
AUTHOR OF 'A BOOK ABOUT DOMINIES.'

EDINBURGH:  
WILLIAM P. NIMMO.  
1868.

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## P R E F A C E.

' A SHORT and certain way to obtain the character of a reasonable and wise man,' says Swift, ' is, whenever any one tells you his opinion, to comply with it.' I fear that if judged by this rule I may seem to have taken a very roundabout way to gain credit among my contemporaries, for my opinions on many subjects are at issue with those of most people, and I take no pains to conceal the fact. In particular, I have formed an unusual estimate of the nature and value of Boys, the exposition of which is the subject of these pages.

I have paid more attention to the advice of the above-mentioned author where he says, ' Positiveness is a good quality for preachers and orators, because he that would obtrude his thoughts and reasons upon a multitude will convince others the more as he appears convinced himself.' Accordingly, in my Book about Dominies and in the present Book about Boys, I have been positive and egotistical to a degree



which I had expected to produce more hostile criticism than has been the result. My critics have certainly been kinder to me than I hoped; and more than one of my friends who have taken the trouble to read to me extracts from my own work, and to entertain me with guesses as to its authorship, has pronounced my efforts to be neither unpleasing nor uninteresting. Under these circumstances, what could restrain me from again presenting myself as a candidate for public favour? Nor am I deterred by hearing that a three-volumed novel, in its second edition, has been seen to turn up its title-page with scorn when placed beside my humble production, and that a ponderous folio, 'On the Wisdom of our Great-Grandmothers' is known to have expressed itself very decidedly as to the absurdity of my pretensions.

Another possible criticism I must relieve of its sting by meeting it half-way. Ignorant and envious people may possibly attempt to disparage my character for elegance and precision by asserting that I have repeated myself more than once, have said much the same thing in different places, with the view of distending my pages. I repudiate the insinuation with scorn. The fact is, my experience as a teacher has taught me that what is necessary to convince the

mass of mankind of the truth of any particular doctrine is to keep constantly repeating the enunciation of it till it become familiar, and therefore commends itself to their minds. If Mr. Carlyle had only once told the people of England that they were fools and flunkeys, who would pay any attention to him? So it is to be counted a merit, and not a fault, if in these pages it be found stated more than once *that boys are not so worthless as some people suppose them, or that some people are not so wise and virtuous as they think themselves.*

I do not know whether I am most pleased or disgusted to find that some of the things which I have said in this volume have been said with very little variety in a new book which has just come into my hands—Professor D'Arcy Thompson's 'Wayside Thoughts.' There is a remarkable coincidence both of thought and expression between some passages in his book and mine; and, to show that this is no more than a coincidence, I may mention that my MS. was in the publisher's hands before the appearance of 'Wayside Thoughts.' Two are said to be better than one, and I would fain hope that this practical similarity may be an augury that both his 'Wayside Thoughts' and mine may be destined to obtain some

deepness of earth, and to survive the attacks of the birds of the air. I cannot, indeed, pretend to be such a high mountain as Professor Thompson, but certain beams of light would seem to have dawned upon our summits at the same time. Still it would, of course, have been more gratifying to one's vanity to have had a small private sunrise all to one's-self.

Talking about vanity, I would draw attention to the fact that I have been too proud to imitate the example of most authorlings of the day by employing the form of fiction to gild the pill which I wish the public to swallow. Yet I have been tempted. One night, as I was meditating over my bold design of appearing for the second time in print, a certain Muse, who is a friend of mine, appeared to me, and addressed me in a foreign language :—

‘ Si tantus amor menti, si tanta cupido,  
Bis Stygios innare lacus, bis nigra videre  
Tartara,<sup>1</sup> et insano juvat indulgere labori,  
Accipe, quæ peragenda prius.’

With these words she laid on my table a small packet and a pile of books, mostly in three volumes, which I recognised as being the most widely-circu-

<sup>1</sup> *Tartara*. This word is supposed to have signified *unfavourable opinions of the press*.