

**THE WRITINGS OF IAN HAY,
VOLUME VII. THE LIGHTER SIDE
OF SCHOOL LIFE. SCALLY, THE
STORY OF A PERFECT
GENTLEMAN**

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The Writings of Ian Hay, Volume VII. The Lighter Side of School Life. Scally, the Story of a Perfect Gentleman by Ian Hay

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IAN HAY

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Beith, John, Hay

Argyll Edition

THE WRITINGS OF
IAN HAY

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VOLUME VII

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**THE LIGHTER SIDE
OF SCHOOL LIFE**

SCALLY

**THE STORY OF A PERFECT
GENTLEMAN**

BY
IAN HAY



BOSTON AND NEW YORK
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1921

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AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

THIS book marks my first break-away from fiction. It was written as a farewell tribute to the great profession in which I had served my apprenticeship to life for more than ten years.

I never thought that a book so essentially, glaringly English, both in subject-matter and point of view, would ever find American readers. But I was wrong. *THE LIGHTER SIDE OF SCHOOL LIFE* has brought me into touch with yet another section of the American reading public, and has introduced me to yet more American friends. As a lecturer I have visited schools and colleges in almost every State in the Union, and have made the discovery (which I might really have taken for granted) that schoolboy nature, and for that matter, schoolmaster nature, is very much the same all the world over.

"We have all your types here," said a Headmaster to me — "and most of your institutions as well. Except, of course, Fagging. That is incomprehensible to us."

Yes, I suppose it is. When you come to think it over, Fagging must seem incomprehensible to everybody. That a boy of thirteen should be attached, with official sanction, as body-servant to

a boy of eighteen; should run errands, light fires, oil cricket bats, and make toast for him, in return for a certain shadowy patronage and under pain of certain corporeal penalties, must strike the unprejudiced observer as feudal, to say the least of it. But, like Universal Military Service, Fagging is rendered both fair and democratic if *everybody* undergoes it. There are no exemptions or soft jobs in the British public school Fagging system. Dukes' sons at Eton pass through the mill like every one else. And the proof of the pudding is in the eating. Some of us look back upon our school days with mingled feelings. Some memories are a pure joy; others keep us awake at night even now. But I never knew an English schoolboy who regretted having been a Fag. For one thing, none of us are any the worse for a course of instruction in humility and obedience. For another, boys are confirmed hero-worshippers; and a small boy of thirteen will give his last drop of blood for the privilege of calling some celebrity "master."

The relation endures, too, in after days. I know a man in British public life to-day who is notorious for his abrupt manner toward his subordinates. But there is one man in his department, a slow-moving, heavily-built, incompetent creature, to whom the great statesman behaves with a deference which amounts almost to rever-

ence. Forty years ago at school he was that nonentity's Fag; and the nonentity in those days once ran a mile in four minutes and forty-five seconds. He has achieved nothing since, but his pedestal is secured to him in one quarter, for all time.

The British public school system has been assailed more bitterly, both at home and abroad, than almost any other of our national institutions — which is saying a good deal. But in August, 1914, as some of us have cause to remember, the British Government found it necessary to raise an Army — not of hundreds, or thousands, but of millions. For officers, Britain turned to her public schools. Each of those schools possessed a purely voluntary Officers' Training Corps, maintaining a precarious existence against the superior attractions of cricket and football. When the great call came, those young Armies of ours were officered, without difficulty, by many thousand competent cadets furnished by this system. They were pathetically young; but they possessed two priceless qualifications: they knew their job, and they played the game. They never asked men to go where they would not go themselves. So, children though they were, their men followed them everywhere.

There are not many of them left now. They are lying in France, Belgium, Italy, Salonica, Galli-