

**THE SCHOOLMASTER: A
COMMENTARY UPON THE AIMS
AND
METHODS OF AN ASSISTANT
MASTER IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL**

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The Schoolmaster: A Commentary upon the Aims and Methods of an Assistant Master in a Public School by Arthur Christopher Benson

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ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON

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THE SCHOOLMASTER

A COMMENTARY UPON THE AIMS AND
METHODS OF AN ASSISTANT-MASTER
IN A PUBLIC SCHOOL

BY
ARTHUR CHRISTOPHER BENSON
OF ETON COLLEGE

"Le travail, il n'y a que ça!"

LONDON
JOHN MURRAY, ALBEMARLE STREET

1903
S

H. Head



PREFACE

THE following pages do not profess to be a scientific educational treatise; they merely aim at considering the life of the schoolmaster from within. It seems a pity that one who has exercised the profession of a schoolmaster for a good many years should make no attempt to gather up and record experience; it is useful simply to compare impressions; and though the following is merely a personal view, and lays claim to no sort of scientific or philosophical treatment, yet it may be of interest to other teachers, and may even be of use to those who have not yet begun their professional life, but are looking forward to joining the ranks of the profession.

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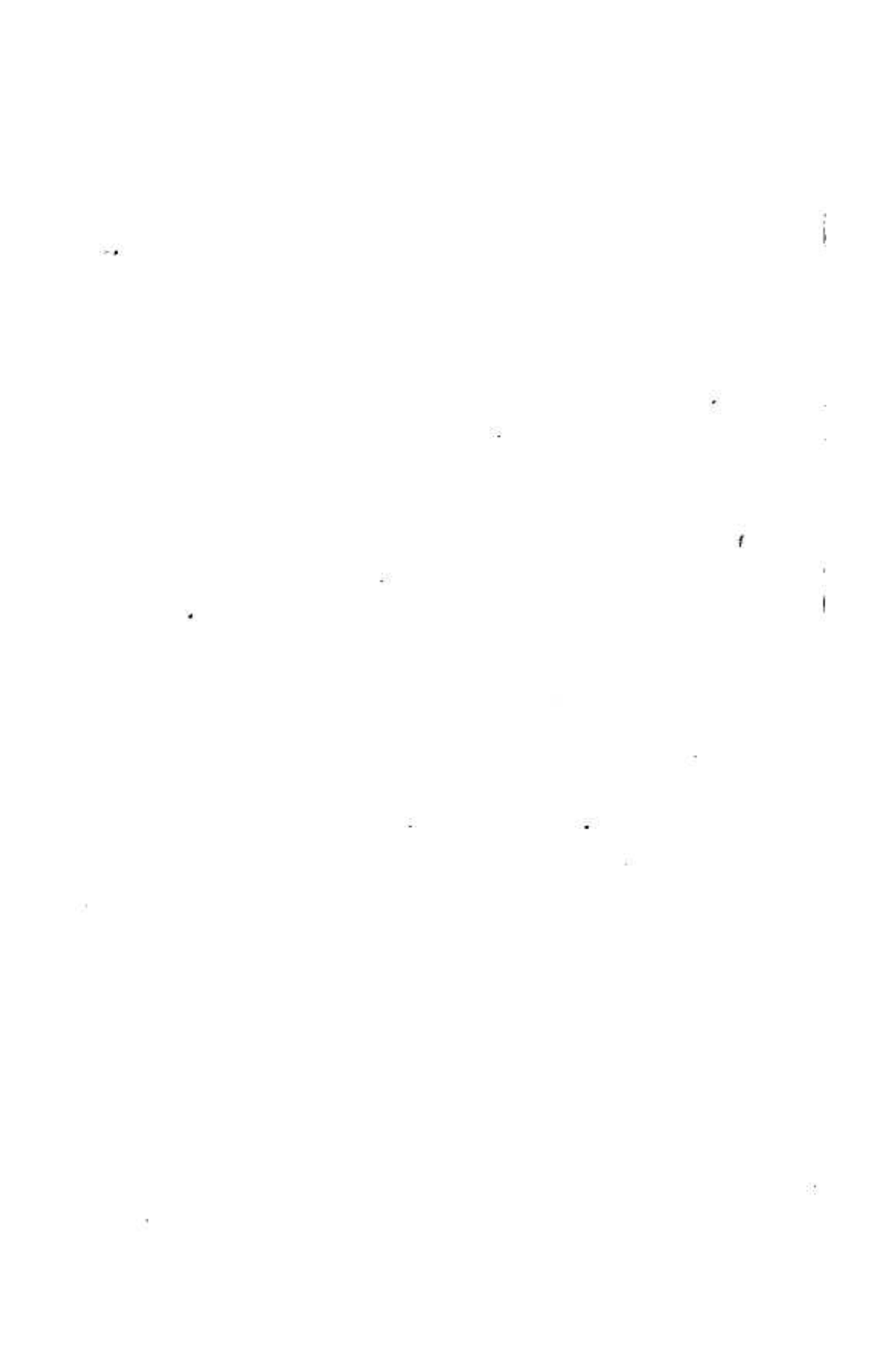
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The schoolmaster is perhaps not so much criticised at present as he ought to be; or such criticism is of a secret character. The public schools of England just now enjoy a considerable popularity, rightly or wrongly, in the country; but what is still needed is that schoolmasters should have a more definite aim, a theory of their art, and it seems a pity that so many of us schoolmasters do our work in so fortuitous a way. I therefore venture to gather up the fruits of my experience, and to try to uphold, not boldly but sedately, the dignity of the profession to which I have given my best years.

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THE SCHOOLMASTER

I

INTRODUCTORY

I THINK it must be conceded at the outset that there clings about the profession of schoolmastering a certain slight social disability; it is regarded as one of the less liberal of the liberal professions:* it is not a profession which, to use a vile phrase, "leads to" anything in particular; that is to say, it is not held to be a profession for a very capable or ambitious

* It may roughly be said that the professions which stand highest in the social scale are the army, the navy, the bar, land agency, and the civil service. We may perhaps include with these artists, architects, and literary men. In the second rank come the solicitor, the engineer, the doctor, the schoolmaster; the Church, which formerly belonged to the upper grade, now stands somewhat apart, and may be called a vocation rather than a profession.

man. This is not necessarily a low point of view. Ambition is a fine quality, and a man who is conscious of ability and power, who holds energetic views, who has decided proclivities, who becomes aware that his own views influence other people more than their views affect him, is naturally anxious to play a big, brave part in life. Putting aside the merely artistic pleasure in applause and admiration, which is without doubt a strong motive in many cases, a man may well desire to wield power and influence, to be somebody, to handle large interests successfully, to have his hand on the machine of politics or commerce or society. Such an ambition is not necessarily a mean one, though this depends upon whether a man looks to the doing of great work in a great way, or to the rewards and emoluments of such work. Probably *monstrari digito*, as Horace said, is a powerful motive with the young; it seems an admirable thing to be received