

## CHAPTER III

### EXAMINATIONS

IT took me three tries to pass into Sandhurst. There were five subjects, of which Mathematics, Latin and English were obligatory, and I chose in addition French and Chemistry. In this hand I held only a pair of Kings—English and Chemistry. Nothing less than three would open the jackpot. I had to find another useful card. Latin I could not learn. I had a rooted prejudice which seemed to close my mind against it. Two thousand marks were given for Latin. I might perhaps get 400! French was interesting but rather tricky, and difficult to learn in England. So there remained only Mathematics. After the first Examination was over, when one surveyed the battlefield, it was evident that the war could not be won without another army being brought into the line. Mathematics was the only resource available. I turned to them—I turned on them—in desperation. All my life from time to time I have had to get up disagreeable subjects at short notice, but I consider my triumph, moral and technical, was in learning Mathematics in six months. At the first of these three ordeals I got no more than 500 marks out of 2,500 for Mathematics. At the second I got nearly 2,000. I owe this achievement not only to my own ‘back-to-the-wall’ resolution—for which no credit is too great; but to the very kindly interest taken in my case by a much respected Harrow master, Mr. C. H. P. Mayo. He convinced me that Mathematics was not a hopeless bog of nonsense, and that there were meanings and rhythms behind the comical hieroglyphics; and that I was not incapable of catching glimpses of some of these.

Of course what I call Mathematics is only what the Civil Service Commissioners expected you to know to pass a very

rudimentary examination. I suppose that to those who enjoy this peculiar gift, Senior Wranglers and the like, the waters in which I swam must seem only a duck-pond compared to the Atlantic Ocean. Nevertheless, when I plunged in, I was soon out of my depth. When I look back upon those care-laden months, their prominent features rise from the abyss of memory. Of course I had progressed far beyond Vulgar Fractions and the Decimal System. We were arrived in an 'Alice-in-Wonderland' world, at the portals of which stood 'A Quadratic Equation.' This with a strange grimace pointed the way to the Theory of Indices, which again handed on the intruder to the full rigours of the Binomial Theorem. Further dim chambers lighted by sullen, sulphurous fires were reputed to contain a dragon called the 'Differential Calculus.' But this monster was beyond the bounds appointed by the Civil Service Commissioners who regulated this stage of Pilgrim's heavy journey. We turned aside, not indeed to the uplands of the Delectable Mountains, but into a strange corridor of things like anagrams and acrostics called Sines, Cosines and Tangents. Apparently they were very important, especially when multiplied by each other, or by themselves! They had also this merit—you could learn many of their evolutions off by heart. There was a question in my third and last Examination about these Cosines and Tangents in a highly square-rooted condition which must have been decisive upon the whole of my after life. It was a problem. But luckily I had seen its ugly face only a few days before and recognised it at first sight.

I have never met any of these creatures since. With my third and successful examination they passed away like the phantasmagoria of a fevered dream. I am assured that they are most helpful in engineering, astronomy and things like that. It is very important to build bridges and canals and to comprehend all the stresses and potentialities of matter, to say nothing of counting all the stars and even universes and measuring how far off they are, and foretelling eclipses, the

arrival of comets and such like. I am very glad there are quite a number of people born with a gift and a liking for all of this; like great chess-players who play sixteen games at once blindfold and die quite soon of epilepsy. Serve them right! I hope the Mathematicians, however, are well rewarded. I promise never to blackleg their profession nor take the bread out of their mouths.

I had a feeling once about Mathematics, that I saw it all—Depth beyond depth was revealed to me—the Byss and the Abyss. I saw, as one might see the transit of Venus—or even the Lord Mayor's Show, a quantity passing through infinity and changing its sign from plus to minus. I saw exactly how it happened and why the tergiversation was inevitable: and how the one step involved all the others. It was like politics. But it was after dinner and I let it go!

The practical point is that if this aged, weary-souled Civil Service Commissioner had not asked this particular question about these Cosines or Tangents in their squared or even cubed condition, which I happened to have learned scarcely a week before, not one of the subsequent chapters of this book would ever have been written. I might have gone into the Church and preached orthodox sermons in a spirit of audacious contradiction to the age. I might have gone into the City and made a fortune. I might have resorted to the Colonies, or 'Dominions' as they are now called, in the hopes of pleasing, or at least placating them; and thus had, *à la* Lindsay Gordon or Cecil Rhodes, a lurid career. I might even have gravitated to the Bar, and persons might have been hanged through my defence who now nurse their guilty secrets with complacency. Anyhow the whole of *my* life would have been altered, and that I suppose would have altered a great many other lives, which in their turn, and so on. . . .

But here we seem to be getting back to mathematics, which I quitted for ever in the year 1894. Let it suffice that this Civil Service Commissioner putting this particular question

in routine or caprice deflected, so far as I was concerned, the entire sequence of events. I have seen Civil Service Commissioners since. I have seen them in the flesh. I have even appointed their Chief. I admire them. I honour them. We all do. But no one, least of all themselves, would suppose they could play so decisive and cardinal a part in human affairs. Which brings me to my conclusion upon Free Will and Predestination; namely—let the reader mark it—that they are identical.

I have always loved butterflies. In Uganda I saw glorious butterflies the colour of whose wings changed from the deepest russet brown to the most brilliant blue, according to the angle from which you saw them. In Brazil as everyone knows there are butterflies of this kind even larger and more vivid. The contrast is extreme. You could not conceive colour effects more violently opposed; but it is the same butterfly. The butterfly is the Fact—gleaming, fluttering, settling for an instant with wings fully spread to the sun, then vanishing in the shades of the forest. Whether you believe in Free Will or Predestination, all depends on the slanting glimpse you had of the colour of his wings—which are in fact at least two colours at the same time. But I have not quitted and renounced the Mathematick to fall into the Metaphysick. Let us return to the pathway of narrative.

When I failed for the second time to pass into Sandhurst, I bade farewell to Harrow and was relegated as a forlorn hope to a 'crammer.' Captain James and his highly competent partners kept an establishment in the Cromwell Road. It was said that no one who was not a congenital idiot could avoid passing thence into the Army. The Firm had made a scientific study of the mentality of the Civil Service Commissioners. They knew with almost Papal infallibility the sort of questions which that sort of person would be bound on the average to ask on any of the selected subjects. They specialised on these questions and on the answering of them. They fired a large number of efficient shot-guns into the

brown of the covey, and they claimed a high and steady average of birds. Captain James—if he had known it—was really the ingenious forerunner of the inventors of the artillery barrages of the Great War. He fired from carefully selected positions upon the areas which he knew must be tenanted by large bodies of enemy troops. He had only to fire a given number of shells per acre per hour to get his bag. He did not need to see the enemy soldiers. Drill was all he had to teach his gunners. Thus year by year for at least two decades he held the Blue Ribbon among the Crammers. He was like one of those people who have a sure system for breaking the Bank at Monte Carlo, with the important difference that in a great majority of cases his system produced success. Even the very hardest cases could be handled. No absolute guarantee was given, but there would always be far more than a sporting chance.

However, just as I was about to enjoy the advantage of this renowned system of intensive poultry-farming, I met with a very serious accident.

My aunt, Lady Wimborne, had lent us her comfortable estate at Bournemouth for the winter. Forty or fifty acres of pine forest descended by sandy undulations terminating in cliffs to the smooth beach of the English Channel. It was a small, wild place and through the middle there fell to the sea level a deep cleft called a 'chine.' Across this 'chine' a rustic bridge nearly 50 yards long had been thrown. I was just 18 and on my holidays. My younger brother aged 12, and a cousin aged 14, proposed to chase me. After I had been hunted for twenty minutes and was rather short of breath, I decided to cross the bridge. Arrived at its centre I saw to my consternation that the pursuers had divided their forces. One stood at each end of the bridge; capture seemed certain. But in a flash there came across me a great project. The chine which the bridge spanned was full of young fir trees. Their slender tops reached to the level of the footway. 'Would it not,' I asked myself, 'be possible to

leap on to one of them and slip down the pole-like stem, breaking off each tier of branches as one descended, until the fall was broken?' I looked at it. I computed it. I meditated. Meanwhile I climbed over the balustrade. My young pursuers stood wonder-struck at either end of the bridge. To plunge or not to plunge, that was the question! In a second I had plunged, throwing out my arms to embrace the summit of the fir tree. The argument was correct; the data were absolutely wrong. It was three days before I regained consciousness and more than three months before I crawled from my bed. The measured fall was 29 feet on to hard ground. But no doubt the branches helped. My mother, summoned by the alarming message of the children, 'He jumped over the bridge and he won't speak to us,' hurried down with energetic aid and inopportune brandy. It was an axiom with my parents that in serious accident or illness the highest medical aid should be invoked, regardless of cost. Eminent specialists stood about my bed. Later on when I could understand again, I was shocked and also flattered to hear of the enormous fees they had been paid. My father travelled over at full express from Dublin where he had been spending his Christmas at one of old Lord Fitzgibbon's once-celebrated parties. He brought the greatest of London surgeons with him. I had among other injuries a ruptured kidney. It is to the surgeon's art and to my own pronounced will-to-live that the reader is indebted for this story. But for a year I looked at life round a corner. They made a joke about it in those days at the Carlton Club, 'I hear Randolph's son met with a serious accident.' 'Yes? Playing a game of Follow my Leader,'— 'Well, Randolph is not likely to come to grief in that way!'

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The Unionist Government had been beaten, though only by forty, in the Summer Election of 1892 and Mr. Glad-

stone had taken office with the help of the Irish Nationalists. The new Parliament, having met to change the Administration, was in accordance with the wise and happy practice of those days prorogued for a six months' holiday. The Session of 1893 and the inevitable re-opening of the Home Rule struggle were eagerly and anxiously awaited. Naturally our household had not been much grieved at the defeat of what my father had described as 'a Government and party which for five years have boycotted and slandered me.' In fact our whole family with its many powerful branches and all his friends looked forward to the new situation with lively hope. It was thought that he would in Opposition swiftly regain the ascendancy in Parliament and in his party which had been destroyed by his resignation six years before.

No one cherished these hopes more ardently than I. Although in the past little had been said in my hearing, one could not grow up in my father's house, and still less among his mother and sisters, without understanding that there had been a great political disaster. Dignity and reticence upon this subject were invariably preserved before strangers, children and servants. Only once do I remember my father having breathed a word of complaint about his fortunes to me, and that for a passing moment. Only once did he lift his visor in my sight. This was at our house at Newmarket in the autumn of 1892. He had reproved me for startling him by firing off a double-barrelled gun at a rabbit which had appeared on the lawn beneath his windows. He had been very angry and disturbed. Understanding at once that I was distressed, he took occasion to reassure me. I then had one of the three or four long intimate conversations with him which are all I can boast. He explained how old people were not always very considerate towards young people, that they were absorbed in their own affairs and might well speak roughly in sudden annoyance. He said he was glad I liked shooting, and that he had arranged for me to shoot

on September 1st (this was the end of August) such partridges as our small property contained. Then he proceeded to talk to me in the most wonderful and captivating manner about school and going into the Army and the grown-up life which lay beyond. I listened spellbound to this sudden complete departure from his usual reserve, amazed at his intimate comprehension of all my affairs. Then at the end he said, 'Do remember things do not always go right with me. My every action is misjudged and every word distorted. . . . So make some allowances.'

Of course I was his vehement partisan and so in her mild way was Mrs. Everest, who had now become housekeeper in my grandmother's house, 50, Grosvenor Square, where we had all gone to live to save expense. When after twenty years of faithful service she retired upon a pension, she entrusted her savings to my father, who drove down to the city in his private hansom to a special luncheon with Lord Rothschild at New Court for the purpose of investing them with the utmost security and advantage. I knew quite well that the 'Old Gang' of the Conservative Party owed their long reign to his personal fighting, and to his revival of Tory democracy, and that at his first slip—a grave one—they had shown themselves utterly destitute of generosity or gratitude. We all of course looked forward to his reconquest of power. We saw as children the passers-by take off their hats in the streets and the workmen grin when they saw his big moustache. For years I had read every word he spoke and what the newspapers said about him. Although he was only a private member and quite isolated, everything he said even at the tiniest bazaar was reported verbatim in all the newspapers, and every phrase was scrutinized and weighed. Now it seemed that his chance had come again.

I had been carried to London, and from my bed I followed with keen interest the political events of 1893. For this I was well circumstanced. My mother gave me full accounts of what she heard, and Mr. Edward Marjoribanks,



afterwards Lord Tweedmouth, Mr. Gladstone's Chief Whip, was married to my father's sister Fanny. We thus shared in a detached way the satisfaction of the Liberals at coming back to power after their long banishment. We heard some at least of their hopes and fears. Politics seemed very important and vivid to my eyes in those days. They were directed by statesmen of commanding intellect and personality. The upper classes in their various stations took part in them as a habit and as a duty. The working men whether they had votes or not followed them as a sport. They took as much interest in national affairs and were as good judges of form in public men, as is now the case about cricket or football. The newspapers catered obediently for what was at once an educated and a popular taste.

Favoured at first by the indulgences accorded to an invalid, I became an absorbed spectator of Mr. Gladstone's last great Parliamentary battle. Indeed it far outweighed in my mind the dreaded Examination—the last shot—which impended in August. As time wore on I could not help feeling that my father's speeches were not as good as they used to be. There were some brilliant successes: yet on the whole he seemed to be hardly holding his own. I hoped of course that I should grow up in time to come to his aid. I knew that he would have received such a suggestion with unaffected amusement; but I thought of Austen Chamberlain who was allowed to fight at his father's side, and Herbert Gladstone who had helped the Grand Old Man to cut down the oak trees and went everywhere with him, and I dreamed of days to come when Tory democracy would dismiss the 'Old Gang' with one hand and defeat the Radicals with the other.

During this year I met at my father's house many of the leading figures of the Parliamentary conflict, and was often at luncheon or dinner when across his table not only colleagues, but opponents, amicably interchanged opinions on the burning topics of the hour. It was then that I first met

Mr. Balfour, Mr. Chamberlain, Mr. Edward Carson and also Lord Rosebery, Mr. Asquith, Mr. John Morley and other fascinating ministerial figures. It seemed a very great world in which these men lived; a world where high rules reigned and every trifle in public conduct counted: a duelling-ground where although the business might be ruthless, and the weapons loaded with ball, there was ceremonious personal courtesy and mutual respect. But of course I saw this social side only when my father had either intimate friends or persons of high political consequence as his guests. I have heard that on neutral ground he was incredibly fierce, and affronted people by saying the most blunt or even savage things. Certainly those who did not know him well approached him with caution or heavily armed.

So soon as I was convalescent I began to go to the House of Commons and listen to the great debates. I even managed to squeeze in to the Distinguished Strangers' Gallery when Mr. Gladstone wound up the second reading of the Home Rule Bill. Well do I remember the scene and some of its incidents. The Grand Old Man looked like a great white eagle at once fierce and splendid. His sentences rolled forth majestically and everyone hung upon his lips and gestures, eager to cheer or deride. He was at the climax of a tremendous passage about how the Liberal Party had always carried every cause it had espoused to victory. He made a slip, 'And there is no cause,' he exclaimed (Home Rule), 'for which the Liberal Party has suffered so much or *descended so low*.' How the Tories leapt and roared with delight! But Mr. Gladstone, shaking his right hand with fingers spread clawlike, quelled the tumult and resumed 'But we have risen again. . . .'

I was also a witness of his celebrated tribute to Mr. Chamberlain on his son Austen's maiden speech. 'I will not enter upon any elaborate eulogy of that speech. I will endeavour to sum up in a few words what I desire to say of it. It was a speech which must have been dear and refreshing to a

father's heart.' From where I crouched on the floor of the Gallery peering through the balustrade I could see the effect these words instantaneously produced on Mr. Chamberlain. He was hit as if a bullet had struck him. His pale almost sallow countenance turned pink with emotion he could not, or did not care to restrain. He half rose and made a little bow, and then hunched himself up with lowered head. There does not seem to be much in these words however well chosen, when they are written down. It was the way the thing was done that swept aside for a moment the irreparable enmities of years.

On another occasion when I was in the Gallery I heard my father and Sir William Harcourt have some very fierce and rough interchanges. Sir William seemed to be quite furious and most unfair in his reply, and I was astonished when only a few minutes later, he made his way up to where I sat and with a beaming smile introduced himself to me, and asked me what I thought of it all.

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What with the after-weakness of my accident and these political excitements Captain James hardly had a fair chance in preparing me for my examination. Nevertheless my third attempt achieved a modified success. I qualified for a cavalry cadetship at Sandhurst. The competition for the infantry was keener, as life in the cavalry was so much more expensive. Those who were at the bottom of the list were accordingly offered the easier entry into the cavalry. I was delighted at having passed the examination and even more at the prospect of soldiering on horseback. I had already formed a definite opinion upon the relative advantages of riding and walking. What fun it would be having a horse! Also the uniforms of the cavalry were far more magnificent than those of the Foot. It was therefore in an expansive spirit that I wrote to my father. I found to my surprise that

he took a contrary view. He thought it very discreditable that I had not qualified for the infantry. He had proposed that I should enter the 60th Rifles, a famous four-battalion regiment which although habited in black had a red flash on cuffs and collar. 'By going into the 60th Rifles,' he had said, 'you will be able to serve two or three years in a Mediterranean fortress, and thus be fully matured before you begin your service in India.' He had, it seemed, already written to the Duke of Cambridge who was the Colonel-in-Chief of the 60th, suggesting that I should ultimately enter his regiment, and had received a gracious response. Now all these plans were upset, and upset in the most inconvenient and expensive manner. The Duke would never have a chance of welcoming me: and cavalry are not required in Mediterranean fortresses. 'In the infantry,' my father had remarked, 'one has to keep a man; in the cavalry a man and a horse as well.' This was not only true, but even an understatement. Little did he foresee not only one horse, but two official chargers and one or two hunters besides—to say nothing of the indispensable string of polo ponies! Nevertheless he was extremely dissatisfied and in due course I received from him a long and very severe letter expressing the bleakest view of my educational career, showing a marked lack of appreciation at my success in the examination, which he suggested I had only scraped through, and warning me of the danger in which I plainly lay of becoming a 'social wastrel!' I was pained and startled by this communication, and made haste to promise better results in the future. All the same I rejoiced at going to Sandhurst, and at the prospect of becoming a real live cavalry officer in no more than 18 months: and I busied myself in ordering the considerable necessary outfit of a gentleman-cadet.

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My brother and I were sent this summer by our parents for a so-called walking-tour in Switzerland, with a tutor.

I need hardly say we travelled by train so far as the money lasted. The tutor and I climbed mountains. We climbed the Wetterhorn and Monte Rosa. The spectacle of the sunrise striking the peaks of the Bernese Oberland is a marvel of light and colour unsurpassed in my experience. I longed to climb the Matterhorn, but this was not only too expensive but held by the tutor to be too dangerous. All this prudence however might easily have been upset by an incident which happened to me in the lake of Lausanne. I record this incident that it may be a warning to others. I went for a row with another boy a little younger than myself. When we were more than a mile from the shore, we decided to have a swim, pulled off our clothes, jumped into the water and swam about in great delight. When we had had enough, the boat was perhaps 100 yards away. A breeze had begun to stir the waters. The boat had a small red awning over its stern seats. This awning acted as a sail by catching the breeze. As we swam towards the boat, it drifted farther off. After this had happened several times we had perhaps halved the distance. But meanwhile the breeze was freshening and we both, especially my companion, began to be tired. Up to this point no idea of danger had crossed my mind. The sun played upon the sparkling blue waters; the wonderful panorama of mountains and valleys, the gay hotels and villas still smiled. But I now saw Death as near as I believe I have ever seen Him. He was swimming in the water at our side, whispering from time to time in the rising wind which continued to carry the boat away from us at about the same speed we could swim. No help was near. Unaided we could never reach the shore. I was not only an easy, but a fast swimmer, having represented my House at Harrow, when our team defeated all comers. I now swam for life. Twice I reached within a yard of the boat and each time a gust carried it just beyond my reach; but by a supreme effort I caught hold of its side in the nick of time before a still stronger gust bulged the red awning again. I

scrambled in, and rowed back for my companion who, though tired, had not apparently realised the dull yellow glare of mortal peril that had so suddenly played around us. I said nothing to the tutor about this serious experience; but I have never forgotten it; and perhaps some of my readers will remember it too.

My stay at the Royal Military College formed an intermediate period in my life. It brought to a close nearly 12 years of school. Thirty-six terms each of many weeks (interspersed with all-too-short holidays) during the whole of which I had enjoyed few gleams of success, in which I had hardly ever been asked to learn anything which seemed of the slightest use or interest, or allowed to play any game which was amusing. In retrospect these years form not only the least agreeable, but the only barren and unhappy period of my life. I was happy as a child with my toys in my nursery. I have been happier every year since I became a man. But this interlude of school makes a sombre grey patch upon the chart of my journey. It was an unending spell of worries that did not then seem petty, and of toil uncheered by fruition; a time of discomfort, restriction and purposeless monotony.

This train of thought must not lead me to exaggerate the character of my schooldays. Actually no doubt they were buoyed up by the laughter and high spirits of youth. Harrow was a very good school, and a high standard of personal service prevailed among its masters. Most of the boys were very happy, and many found in its classrooms and upon its playing-fields the greatest distinction they have ever known in life. I can only record the fact that, no doubt through my own shortcomings, I was an exception. I would far rather have been apprenticed as a bricklayer's mate, or run errands as a messenger boy, or helped my father to dress the front windows of a grocer's shop. It would have been real; it would have been natural; it would have taught me more; and I should have done it much better. Also I

should have got to know my father, which would have been a joy to me.

Certainly the prolonged education indispensable to the progress of Society is not natural to mankind. It cuts against the grain. A boy would like to follow his father in pursuit of food or prey. He would like to be doing serviceable things so far as his utmost strength allowed. He would like to be earning wages however small to help to keep up the home. He would like to have some leisure of his own to use or misuse as he pleased. He would ask little more than the right to work or starve. And then perhaps in the evenings a real love of learning would come to those who were worthy—and why try to stuff it into those who are not?—and knowledge and thought would open the ‘magic case-ments’ of the mind.

I was on the whole considerably discouraged by my school days. Except in Fencing, in which I had won the Public School Championship, I had achieved no distinction. All my contemporaries and even younger boys seemed in every way better adapted to the conditions of our little world. They were far better both at the games and at the lessons. It is not pleasant to feel oneself so completely outclassed and left behind at the very beginning of the race. I had been surprised on taking leave of Dr. Welldon to hear him predict, with a confidence for which I could see no foundation, that I should be able to make my way all right. I have always been very grateful to him for this.

I am all for the Public Schools but I do not want to go there again.

My greatest friend at Harrow was Jack Milbanke. He was nearly two years my senior. He was the son of an old baronet whose family had lived at Chichester for many generations. He was not remarkable either at games or lessons. In these spheres he was only slightly above the average of his contemporaries. But he had a style and distinction of manner which were exceptional, and a mature outlook and

conversation the like of which I never saw in any other Harrow boy. He was always the great gentleman, self-composed, cool, sedate, spick and span and faultlessly dressed. When my father came down to see me, he used to take us both to luncheon at the King's Head Hotel. I was thrilled to hear them talk, as if they were equals, with the easy assurance of one man of the world to another. I envied him so much. How I should have loved to have that sort of relationship with my father! But alas I was only a backward schoolboy and my incursions into the conversation were nearly always awkward or foolish.

Milbanke and I embarked upon one adventure together. We discovered that by an old custom there should be no compulsory football in trial week. This rule had fallen into desuetude for some years. We therefore refused to play, citing the custom and alleging that we must concentrate upon our studies. By so doing we courted a severe caning from the monitors. Nevertheless it could not be denied that we 'had the law of them.' The issue was gravely debated in the highest circles. For three or four days we did not know what our fate would be. Our case was prejudiced by the suspicion that we were not wearing ourselves out by study, but on the contrary might even have been called idle. However in the end it was decided that we must have our way, and I trust the precedent thus boldly established has not been lost in later generations.

Milbanke was destined for the Army and had set his heart upon the 10th Hussars. His father allowed him to go in through the Militia, a course which though slightly longer, avoided most of the examinations. He therefore left Harrow a year before I did and soon blossomed out into a Militia subaltern. We kept up a regular correspondence and often saw each other in the holidays. We shall meet him again in these pages. He was destined to the highest military honours. He gained the Victoria Cross in the South African War for rescuing, when he was already



grievously wounded, one of his troopers under a deadly fire. He fell in the Gallipoli Peninsula, leading a forlorn attack in the awful battle of Suvla Bay.

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I enjoyed the Harrow songs. They have an incomparable book of school songs. At intervals we used to gather in the Speech Room or even in our own Houses, and sing these splendid and famous choruses. I believe these songs are the greatest treasure that Harrow possesses. There is certainly nothing like them at Eton. There they have only got one song and that about Rowing, which though good exercise is poor sport and poorer poetry. We used also to have lectures from eminent persons on scientific or historical subjects. These made a great impression on me. To have an exciting story told you by someone who is a great authority, especially if he has a magic lantern, is for me the best way of learning. Once I had heard the lecture and had listened with great attention, I could have made a very fair show of delivering it myself. I remember five lectures particularly to this day. The first by Mr. Bowen, the most celebrated of Harrow masters and the author of many of our finest songs, gave us a thrilling account in popular form of the battle of Waterloo. He gave another lecture on the battle of Sedan which I greatly enjoyed. Some years afterwards I found that he had taken it almost literally from Hooper's *Sedan*—one of my colonel's favourite books. It was none the worse for that. There was a lecture on climbing the Alps by the great Mr. Whymper with wonderful pictures of guides and tourists hanging on by their eyelids or standing with their backs to precipices which even in photographs made one squirm. There was a lecture about how butterflies protect themselves by their colouring. A nasty tasting butterfly has gaudy colouring to warn the bird not to eat it. A succulent, juicy-tasting butterfly protects himself by making himself exactly like his usual branch or leaf.

But this takes them millions of years to do; and in the meanwhile the more backward ones get eaten and die out. That is why the survivors are marked and coloured as they are. Lastly we had a lecture from Mr. Parkin on Imperial Federation. He told us how at Trafalgar Nelson's signal—'England expects that every man this day will do his duty'—ran down the line of battle, and how if we and our Colonies all held together, a day would come when such a signal would run not merely along a line of ships, but along a line of nations. We lived to see this come true, and I was able to remind the aged Mr. Parkin of it, when in the last year of his life he attended some great banquet in celebration of our victorious emergence from the Great War.

I wonder they do not have these lectures more often. They might well have one every fortnight, and afterwards all the boys should be set to work to write first what they could remember about it, and secondly what they could think about it. Then the masters would soon begin to find out who could pick things up as they went along and make them into something new, and who were the dullards; and the classes of the school would soon get sorted out accordingly.

Thus Harrow would not have stultified itself by keeping me at the bottom of the school, and I should have had a much jollier time.