Crowning the Hierarchy of Education: The Reform of the British Public Schools

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Preface

All histories of the Great Public Schools have been written by Old Boys, those men who were educated in a public school and therefore have intimate knowledge of their subject's quirks and effects and a personal interest in reaffirming the primacy of these prestigious and historic institutions. I am unabashedly following in their footsteps and invoking my memories of long-gone school days. *Nobilis Fettesia, Floreat Fettesia*.

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Abstract

In the Victorian period, Britain was led by men who had been taught at public schools. Public schools were those endowed boarding schools that taught the ruling classes, focused primarily on the classics, and left their students to self-government. Though the schools were often criticized for their ineffectual education and institutional faults, it was not until 1861 that any effort was made by the government to reform them, via the Clarendon Commission (1861-1864) and the Public Schools Act (1868). This thesis examines why the British government chose to intervene in the public schools and what the effect of this intervention was on the larger group of endowed secondary schools and on the products of the public schools—the boys themselves. This analysis leads to the conclusions that 1) the government intervention was part of the piecemeal reforms of British institutions during the Victorian period; 2) the separation of nine public schools which were investigated by the Clarendon Commission stamped those schools as elite but flawed in pedagogy and governance, and prompted the other endowed boarding schools to attempt to associate themselves with the Clarendon Schools and thus identify as elite public schools by inclusion; 3) the institution which resulted from the attempts by each group to associate themselves with the other—the Headmasters' Conference—regulated the ranks of public schools but was also marked by hierarchy, as the Clarendon Schools attempted to state their primacy at the top of English education; and 4) the products of the expanded set of public schools, whose student body included members of both the upper class and the upper middle class, were prime candidates for the civil service, politics, the Church, universities and military because of their experiences in a boarding school environment, and their unified background created a cultural class of Old Boys. These findings add to the scholarship of public school education in Victorian England as well as contribute to a detailed background of the educational system that produced many of Britain's leaders in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.

To Bean, Alicat, Mumsie-wumsie and Daddykins

Introduction

The Victorian endowed public schools were some of the most paradoxical institutions in Britain. Though they were called public, they were private and extremely exclusive. Though they claimed to provide "education for young gentlemen," many of their methods were questionable, and they were commonly associated with beatings, bullies and barbaric athletics. In the age of competitive examinations, their curriculum centered on the classics, and most boys were so badly taught that they had to be prepped by an outside 'crammer' before they were prepared to entered any further school or profession. Though criticisms of public school education were quite frequent, Parliament did not interfere with them until 1861.

It was in that year that Eton College, the most prestigious school in England, was demonstrated to be financially corrupt and mismanaged, where boys lived in squalor and emerged poorly educated. Eton, and the schools that were associated with it, were deemed 'public schools' in light of their foundations as free, endowed grammar schools, and had long been associated with the education of the children of the aristocracy; but their image did not live up to their reputation, and they were in dire need of reform. Parliament began to inquire into the state of the public schools through a Royal Commission, the Clarendon Commission, which investigated nine endowed schools in 1861-1864 and published its Report of Public Schools Commission in 1867. The Report was followed with Public Schools Acts in 1868, 1869, 1871 and 1873. The Clarendon Commission and subsequent Acts marked the beginning of the standardization of public schools and an obvious growth in their ranks. This thesis investigates the nature of the change in public schools, as instigated by the Commission's inquiry, and follows the growth in the ranks of public schools and the type of man that the standardized group of public schools produced.

The Clarendon Commission was the second in a trio of Parliamentary commissions aimed at reforming English education. The first, the Newcastle Commission, formed in 1858, presided over an inquiry into "the education of boys and girls of the labouring classes"[1] and published its Report in 1861. While discussing the Newcastle Report, the topic of middle-class education arose, which was later inquired into with the Taunton Commission. The Clarendon Commission was formed in the same year that the Newcastle Report was published, and for three years it inquired into nine public schools. Its Report was published in 1864. The Taunton Commission was formed

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[1] Vivian Ogilvie, *The English Public School* (New York: MacMillan Company, 1957), 158.

in 1864 and resulted in a Report published in 1868. The three commissions' recommendations were taken into consideration when Parliament negotiated its bills concerning education in the following decade.

The reforms of British education fit into the larger "Reform Tradition" that historians of the Victorian period focus on. The "Tradition" began in Parliament under the reigns of George IV (1820-1830) and William IV (1830-1837) and continued through the century with the Catholic Emancipation of 1829, the Reform Act 1832, the abolition of slavery in 1833, the reform of the Poor Law in 1834, the repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846, and the second Reform Act 1868. And reforms were not just limited to politics—they were also enacted in the social sphere. Victorians had a fashionable concern for the poor and an ever-increasing attentiveness to human welfare.[2] This was the age of Florence Nightingale's reforms of the Army Medical Services[3] and Adelaide Manning's concern for women's medicine in India.[4] And yet for many of the first historians of the age, writing in the beginning of the 20th century, it was also a period of excessive pride in overestimated institutions. For instance, G.W.E. Russell writes of Victorian men in this *Collections and Recollections*: "in all departments of life and thought the Cocksure seem to have possessed the earth…Differing from one another in points neither unimportant nor few, they [the participants in debate] were at one in this—they were sure that they were right."[5] Historians like Lytton Strachey and writers like Charles Dickens and H.G. Wells criticized the Victorians. The latter author even calls the epoch "a hasty trial experiment, a gigantic experiment of the most slovenly and wasteful kind" in *The New Machiavelli*.[6] These critics were reacting to the legacy of values and institutions that was

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[2] Sydney W. Jackman, ed., *The English Reform Tradition 1790-1910* (New Jersey: Prentice Hall, 1965), 7.

[3] Monica E. Baly and H. C. G. Matthew, "Nightingale, Florence (1820–1910)," in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2005, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/35241 (accessed April 30, 2008).

[4] Gillian Sutherland, "Manning, (Elizabeth) Adelaide (1828–1905)," in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2007, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/48424 (accessed April 30, 2008).

[5] G.W.E. Russell, *Collections and Recollections*, cited Asa Briggs, *Victorian People* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1955), 5.

[6] H.G. Wells, *The New Machiavelli* (1911), cited Asa Briggs, *Victorian People*, 6.

left to them as they entered the 20th century and were confronted with World War I and then the Great Depression.[7]

In reaction to the critical accounts, historians like G.M. Young, Asa Briggs and George Kitson Clark took up arms to shed light and nostalgia on the complex and fascinating Victorian age. G.M. Young's *Portrait of an Age* is one of the most praiseworthy histories. In it, Young launches himself back in time to view the world through the eyes of a "boy born in 1810,"[8] and he captures the period with such appreciation and immersion that it is contagious. These historians did much to reestablish the reputation of the Victorians, partly in an effort to recapture the "vigorous and flexible intelligence of their early and mid-Victorian past" and provide hope for 20th century Britain.[9]

Historians of British education were similarly divided between condemning and revering the public schools for the part that they played in constructing their nation. One school of thought argues that public school life produced boys who were ill equipped to handle original thought, which had a negative impact on the country. Martin Wiener's *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit* alleges that public schools retarded the country's innovative spirit.[10] Colin Shrosbree, whose *Public Schools and Private Education*[11] was written in response to Margaret Thatcher's conservative social and economic policies,[12] argued that the Clarendon Commission was the first instance of privatization, in which the Victorian elite perverted public interest for their own reward. These histories use the schools as a scapegoat for 20th century national decline.

In the other corner stand the histories of the individual schools, anthologies like *Great Public Schools*,[13] and Vivian Ogilvie's *English Public School,* a sweeping history

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[7] James A. Colaiaco, "The Historian as Insider: G.M. Young and Victorian England," *The History Teacher*, Vol. 16, No. 4 (Aug., 1983),

[8] G.M. Young, *Portrait of an Age* (London: Oxford University Press, 1977), 21.

[9] Colaiaco, 525.

[10] Marin J. Wiener, *English Culture and the Decline of the Industrial Spirit, 1850-1980* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1981), 43.

[11] Colin Shrosbree, *Public Schools and Private Education* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988).

[12] Sheldon Rothblatt, "Review: Public Schools and Private Education" in *The American Historical Review*, Vol. 96, No. 1 (Feb., 1991), 167-168.

[13] Various Authors, *Great Public Schools* (London: Edward Arnold, 1893).

of the public schools from their earliest foundations to the 1940s. These texts were all written by Old Boys, whose affection for their own experiences in public schools and appreciation of their school's quirks, traditions and faults shades their scholarship. Due to the intimacies of public school life that these men experienced, their histories tend toward the sentimental rather than the critical.

It is with the sentimental Old Boys and the nostalgic historians (who were, incidentally, also Old Boys[14]) that I situate myself. My argument for the reform of public school education follows in the footsteps of historians like Asa Briggs and G. M. Young, who argue that the Victorian reforms were piecemeal, guided by underpinning ideologies. Though reforming elite education was approached as a unique problem, the corruption, inefficiency and anachronism of the public schools was exactly the type of institution that begged reform. The recommendations put forward by the Clarendon Commission and the Public School Acts were couched in a spirit of reform that marked the Reform Act 1832. The inquiry and the Acts tackled the most overwhelming institutional faults, brought the intentions of the schools' founders' up to date, and upheld the ultimate state control over private education. The Commission was concerned with reforming the curriculum so that the British elite was provided with a sounder education, but the Acts focused on reforming the schools' governing bodies. Both the Commission and the Acts, however, attempted to eradicate the gross inadequacies so that the nurseries of the nation's leaders were legitimized.

A major contention of school ranking erupted from the Clarendon Commission. Over the course of the 19th century the group of endowed public schools had grown as new schools were founded or revamped, but the Commission had only identified nine schools with the prestigious term 'public school.' In deciding which schools to include, the Commission decided that they would focus on the schools that were most connected to elite education. This decision reified social hierarchy in the public schools and instigated a dynamic in which the Clarendon Schools and those public schools that had not been included navigated their relationship to each other. The Clarendon Schools asserted their primacy, but wished to be recognized at the head of reformed education. The other public schools identified themselves with good teaching, but lacked institutional prestige. To rectify the split, the two groups joined together in the Headmasters' Conference, which rigidly defined their inclusion to the group of public schools and standardized public school pedagogy and tradition.

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[14] George Malcolm Young had been a scholar at St. Paul's in the late 19th century, and George Kitson Clark attended Shrewsbury in the 1910s.

With the standardization of public schools came a more uniform public school experience, which marked public school boys with inward values and outward behavior. They were formed to the mold of "Christian Gentlemen," which combined the middle class values of piety and self-reliance with the upper class emphasis on politeness and aesthetics. Through the hierarchical and sometimes very harsh experience of school life, boys were taught obedience to authority, responsibility, and loyalty. They emerged as a distinct and unified cultural class of Old Boys, whose influence reached the far corners of the empire.

Through this account of the reform and standardization of the public schools, I hope to paint a full portrait of the political and social motives for reform, the complexity of the relationship between the Clarendon Schools and their less-prestigious counterparts, and the values that went in to constructing the character of an Old Boy. Hopefully I will imbue a bit of public school spirit along the way.

Chapter 1: The Clarendon Commission

In April 1861 *The Edinburgh Review* published an exposé by an anonymous author of the living conditions, education, and financial misappropriation at Eton College, the most exclusive school in England. The article thrashed the system of public school education, calling it "corrupt and imbecile," [15] and pointed out in detail how the statutes of the college had been purposefully misinterpreted in order to augment the income of the provost, fellows, headmaster and masters to the detriment of the students. It then called for a "Royal Commission, armed—by Parliament if necessary—with full visitatorial powers" [16] to inquire into "Eton and her sister colleges." [17] Though the author was extremely critical of Eton, he was not attempting to topple the college from its perch at the apex of British education. Instead, he hoped that the findings of the Royal Commission would give "new life and increased power to the most venerable and popular seat of English education." [18]

The charges brought against Eton were not paltry. The *Review* supported its claims that Eton was financially corrupt by citing evidence provided to the Brougham Committee, which had presided over an inquiry into of the "education of the lower orders" [19] in 1818. Because Mr. Brougham had thought to include in his inquest the foundation scholars in great public schools, who were generally supposed to be sons of the poor, he set out to look into their living conditions. The article explained that Brougham's Committee had called two witnesses to attest to the financial stewardship of Eton. The first was the Rev. Peter Hinde, a fellow of King's College, Cambridge, and familiar with the statutes of both Eton and King's. Though knowledgeable of Eton's statutes, he did not endeavor to keep secret his disdain for the financial situation at the college:

> He stated that the income of [Eton's] foundation was between 10,000*l*. and 15,000*l*. a year; that the provost and fellows perverted the greater part of it to their own private advantage; that the poor

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[15] *Edinburgh Review*, "Eton College," 113, April 1861, attrib. M.J. Higgins, 389.

[16] *Ibid.,* 426.

[17] *Ibid.,* 426.

[18] *Ibid.,* 426.

[19] *Ibid.,* 392.

> scholars were stinted, neglected and defrauded; and that the head-master, who according to the statutes ought to be entirely supported by the establishment, and who by oath had bound himself not to make any pecuniary demands whatever upon either collegers or oppidans,[20] was, by a collusive arrangement with the provost, actually extracting from those boys an income of several thousand pounds a year.[21]

To defend the ways of the college's governing body, the committee brought forward Dr. Joseph Goodall, then the Eton provost and previously the headmaster. According to the *Edinburgh Review*, Dr. Goodall did little to credit his financial management of the college, and his testimony only proved that the provost, fellows and headmaster were funneling money into their own pockets:

> Dr. Goodall explained that the stipends [provided by the college statutes, in which it was stated that he should receive 279*l*. per annum] formed a very small portion of the remuneration of himself and the fellows, but that by a time-honoured custom, of which he could not explain the origin and to which he could affix no date, they appropriated to themselves the whole of the fines levied on the college property. When the leases of such property were about to lapse, they were in the habit of renewing them at the old rents; the increase in value being accounted for by fines [which passed into the pockets of the provost and fellows, without appearing at all in the annual accounts]…The result of this arrangement was, that, as far back as 1817, the provost's income occasionally reached 2500*l*. a year.

Though the graft of this arrangement was hardly in accordance with the wishes and intentions of the founder, the more blatant disregard for the statutes appeared when the Brougham Committee examined the headmaster's income. The tradition of paying fees directly to the headman, in all its fraudulence, was thus: though Eton's statutes dictated that the headmaster and under-master should be provided for solely by the foundation and should teach all the students without demanding compensation from them, a custom had arisen which held that the "collegers and oppidans should each pay the head-master 4*l*.

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[20] A 'colleger' refers to a scholar who, according to the statutes, is provided for by the endowment of the school. The collegers at Eton are also referred to as "foundationers," "King's scholars" or "scholars" and are lodged separately from fee-paying boys. An "oppidan" is the term for full fee-paying boys, and is derived from the Latin *oppidum*, or "town." At the close of 1861, the numbers of collegers at Eton stood at 61, while the number of oppidans was 722. *Report of HM Commissioners appointed to Inquire Into the Revenues and Management of Certain Colleges and Schools, and the Studies Pursued and Instruction Given Therein* (London, 1864),8.

[21] *Edinburgh Review,* "Eton College," 393.

4*s*. a year."[22] Because this payment was in direct disagreement with the statutes, "which the provost had repeatedly sworn to enforce faithfully and to interpret rigidly,"[23] the transaction was carefully disguised. At the end of each term, the bills that were sent to the boys' friends[24] by the assistant masters and dames, with whom the boys boarded, included a fee to be paid to the head-master. According to the *Edinburgh Review*, the custom was abhorrent.

To affect even more disgust towards the whole system, the article quoted Dr. Goodall as saying, "our statutes forbid the head-master to *demand* remuneration, but they do not forbid him to *receive* it."[25] When Mr. Brougham inquired whether the same payments were also exacted from the collegers, who were poor and supposed to be provided for by the foundation, Dr. Goodall explained that

> They were, but…the charge was made entirely from delicacy, that the head-master feared to hurt the feelings of the collegers by making any humiliating distinction between them and the oppidans... he added that nobody need pay the money unless they preferred doing so, and that the head-master would never seek to enforce its payment. But as up to that date the statutes had been kept secret, no man could possibly tell whether the demand was a legal one or not; and no parent in his senses would be likely to venture, whilst his son was a foundation scholar at a public school, to raise a question which might involve the loss of 3000*l*. to 4000*l*. a year to its head-master.[26]

These charges were of corruption, illegality and dishonesty, but combined they were merely one piece of the whole attack of the article on the state of the public schools in the mid-19th century.

To reinforce its argument for reforming the public schools, the *Edinburgh Review* paid special attention to the curriculum and living conditions of the students, and especially to the outrageously disproportionate number of students to teachers. The boys were educated by masters, and the article pointed out that the numbers of teachers were so insufficient that lessons were ill-taught, and nearly all subjects but Latin and Greek

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[22] *Ibid.,* 395.

[23] *Ibid.,* 396.

[24] Throughout the article, the term "friends" was used to indicate the adults who maintained the payment of the boys' school-fees.

[25] *Edinburgh Review,* "Eton College," 396.

[26] *Ibid.,* 396.

were neglected. It was exposed that the students lived in "wretched conditions,"[27] piled together in unfit quarters, served scanty meals and left largely to their own devices of self-government, which tended to be cruel and dangerous. Their only chance at procuring a fairly comfortable arrangement was to spend money on the "necessaries and the decencies of life,"[28] which oppidans could afford, but meant that the poorer boys who sought the same degree of comfort had to spend just as much money. In short, the situation of the students, according to the article, was wholly disagreeable, and consistently at odds with the intentions of the founders. These intentions were exactly what the article hinged on: "The statutes of founders are to be upheld and enforced wherever they conduce to the grand objects of the foundations, but that they are to be modified wherever they require a closer adaptation to the wants of modern society."[29] The issue was how to reform and bring the schools up to date, and how to wipe the grime of corruption, financial misappropriation, neglect, and poor education from the once highly regarded school classrooms, dormitories and playing fields.

On 18 July 1861, only three months after the *Edinburgh Review* published its indictment of Eton, Parliament appointed a commission to inquire "into the nature and application of the Endowments, Funds, and Revenues belonging to or received by certain specified Colleges, Schools, and Foundations, and into the administration and management of said Colleges, Schools and Foundations, and into the system and course of studies respectively pursued therein, as well as into the methods, subjects, and extent of the instruction given to the Students of the said Colleges, Schools and Foundations." The nine schools inquired into were Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Westminster, Winchester, Shrewsbury, Charterhouse, St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors. The Commission was headed by George Villiers, fourth Earl of Clarendon, and thus received the name 'the Clarendon Commission' to replace its rather lengthy official title. It was appointed under the second premiership of Lord Palmerston in an atmosphere of liberalism and was met without opposition.[30] After three years of research and deliberation, it published its report, and though some controversy occurred, its recommendations were amended and transformed into the Public Schools Acts of 1868, 1869, 1871 and 1873. Yet, despite the fairly peaceful course of both inquiry and report through Parliament, the Commission

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[27] *Ibid.,* 399.

[28] *Ibid.,* 399.

[29] *Edinburgh Review,* "Eton College," 425.

[30] Shrosbree, 43.

was a significant break from the general unquestioning veneration of the system of education for the ruling classes.

The Clarendon Commission was more than just a government intervention into an outdated system. In the face of an established, though disorganized and corrupt, tradition of education for the country's elite, the Clarendon Report and the Public Schools Acts provided order and legitimacy. The Clarendon Commission was couched in the terms and spirit of Victorian reform through the concepts of progress and modernization. In interpreting the state of upper-class education through the eyes of Victorian reformers, the commissioners did not want to intrude overzealously on those aspects of the public schools that were considered to be their defining characteristics. The schools were gatekeepers of the British elite's cultural capital, and therefore could not lose their status as the crown of British education, despite their pedagogical and financial shortcomings. Throughout the Commission's inquiry, as well as in its Report, the emphasis was on preserving the status of the public schools in a modern, reformed country. The effect of this was that the Commission, and the subsequent Public Schools Acts, symbolically and legally separated the nine schools from the rest of endowed schools and conferred the legitimacy of reform onto them.

Though the Clarendon Commission was a significant governmental interference into the public schools, the Commission's attempt to critique and reform the public schools was not without precedent. In fact, critics as far back as John Milton had been pointing out the flaws in public school pedagogy.[31] By the 19th century, these strictures had become more common. For instance in 1810, Sydney Smith wrote an article for the *Edinburgh Review*, in which he claimed that public school education did nothing to prepare its students for the life that they were to lead thereafter.[32] Though his article was written in response to a pamphlet, which claimed "the name of a public school brings with it immediately the idea of brilliant classical attainments," [33] it brought to light some of the educational wants of the public schools. In April 1830 the *Review* published another article, "Public Schools of England—Eton," [34] which illustrated the daily life of an Etonian to "enable our readers to form an opinion on the amount of intellectual and

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[31] John Milton, *Of Education*, 1644.

[32] *Edinburgh Review*, "Public Schools of England," 16, Aug. 1810, attrib. Sydney Smith, 327.

[33] *Ibid.,* 326.

[34] *Edinburgh Review*, "Public Schools of England—Eton," April, 1830, 65-80.

moral improvement to be expected from a residence in it."[35] The article highlighted Eton's absurd educational practices, judging that "as a means of imparting valuable knowledge, of imparting much knowledge, or of training and invigorating the intellectual faculties, the Eton system of education must be admitted to fail in every essential point."[36] Complaints like these were frequently in the pages of leading periodicals.

Criticisms had provoked attempts at change and reform prior to 1861. In 1818 Brougham's committee on charity abuses was able to insist that the provost of Eton disclose details of the college's finances, and it uncovered the injustice of the system's 'black' income.[37] But alas, Brougham's effort to include Eton, Winchester, Charterhouse, Harrow and Rugby in his Bill of 1820 was resisted by both the schools and by members of Parliament.[38] Another leading figure of public school reform was Thomas Arnold, who was the headmaster of Rugby School in 1827-1841. Although just how influential Arnold was as a headman is still contentious, it is generally agreed that his emphasis on the responsibilities of housemasters and prefects, and his inclusion of modern languages and history in the curriculum were productive additions to the education of Rugbeians. But Arnold's educational theories took greater effect through his memory than through his person, in works such as *Tom Brown's Schooldays* and *The Life and Correspondence of Thomas Arnold*, as well as through former students who then went on to be educators themselves. His reforms dealt with the pedagogical rather than the governance of the school or the living accommodations of the students. It seemed that neither the censure of Milton and Smith, nor the reforming attempts of Brougham and Arnold were able to uproot the core of antiquity that corrupted the finance, education and quality of life of public schools.

Attacks on the public schools' education, both moral and intellectual, and the living conditions of public schoolboys were quite frequent throughout the 19th century, but almost every censure was met with a defense. The neglect and bullying were said to build English character, excessive corporal punishment was explained away by "asserting the moral, Christian and political virtues of beating boys,"[39] and the irrational system of

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[35] *Ibid.*, 66.

[36] *Ibid.,* 71.

[37] More information on the subject may be found in Shrosbree, 41-71.

[38] Shrosbree, 34.

[39] Shrosbree*,* 8.

school organization was admired for being characteristically English. To be sure, the public schools had long been held to be an institution of Englishness, where the "poor scholars and the sons of Dukes and Marquises herd together without any difference."[40] As Leslie Stephen, who had attended Eton, put it in 1868, "Neither the British jury, nor the House of Lords, nor the Church of England, nay scarcely the monarchy itself, seems so deeply enshrined in the bosoms of our countrymen as our public schools."[41] According to Sydney Smith's *Edinburgh Review* article, it was a well-diffused assumption that "almost every conspicuous person is supposed to have been educated at public schools."[42] It was such a common presumption that Smith went to great lengths attempting to debunk it by listing off 101 names of preeminent Englishmen who were *not* educated in the public schools.[43] That said, Lord Palmerston had been educated at Harrow, Lord Russell at Westminster, and Viscount Melbourne, the Earl of Derby, Lord Grey and the Duke of Wellington at Eton. Even though critics went out of their way to point out all the individuals who had not attended a public school, the leading endowed schools still held a great influence through former schoolboys who had become leading politicians.

The schools certainly had a throng of strong supporters behind their practices. Inevitably, it was the children of the ruling classes who went to the public schools, and the system produced eminent men of government, so the schools held an almost sacred position as English institutions. Nothing drastic had changed among the men who were associated with the schools, and it would seem natural that they would have been defended in the 1860s just as much as they had been earlier. Even Grant Duff, who proposed the formation of an inquiring commission to Parliament, was surprised by the lack of opposition:

> When I put my motion on the paper in the early part of the session, I by no means expected to effect what I wished without much trouble and opposition, because, although the excellent articles which had appeared in the *Cornhill* and elsewhere had prepared the public for an inquiry into these institutions, I feared that as soon as the question was stirred in the House, the old '*Floreat Etona'* cry might be raised,

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[40] Anthony Trollope, "Public Schools" *Fortnightly Review*, 2, October 1865, 481.

[41] Leslie Stephen, as quoted by Asa Briggs, *Victorian People*, 143.

[42] Smith, attrib., "Public Schools of England," *Edinburgh Review*, 329.

[43] Smith, attrib., "Public Schools of England," *Edinburgh Review*, 330. Interestingly, Smith had himself gone to Winchester.

> and that the same bad success might attend my efforts, which proved fatal to those of Mr. Brougham in 1818.[44]

And yet, as stated above, the Clarendon Commission did not have to force through a scrum of Old Etonians and Rugbeians, bent on opposition. So what was different about 1861 that allowed an inquest, which had been shunned in 1818, to go through? What were the circumstances within which the Clarendon Commission emerged, and how was it able to reform a system in which the identity of Britain was so entrenched?

Victorian Reform

The Clarendon Commission was appointed in a complex age, and though explaining the intricacies of Victorian Britain is a task much bigger than what I can hope to do in this thesis, there are a few things that can be said about the broader time frame and the fervor of reform during the period.

The urge to reform rose out the profound changes that had rocked England with the Industrial Revolution and the political revolutions in France and America at the end of the 18th century, which brought with them new theories about society. Still reeling from the effects of the Industrial Revolution, England's intellectuals scrambled to make sense of the "changes that would in some measure be decisive of the future fate of mankind."[45] One of the groups of people that emerged during this period of profound change was the Evangelicals, whose ranks included Thomas Malthus and William Wilberforce and which greatly influenced politics, economic policy, and the conception of morality in early 19th century England. According to the preeminent Victorian historian G.M. Young, Evangelicalism was that "Vital Religion…[whose] force lay less in the hopes and terrors it inspired, than in its rigorous logic, 'the eternal microscope' with which it pursued its argument into the recesses of the heart, and the details of daily life, giving to every action its individual value in this life, and its infinite consequence in the next."[46] The main tenet of Evangelicalism, which manifested itself in political decisions and moral implications, was that a Christian should be concerned not just with the salvation of his own soul in the next life, but also with alleviating the distress and depravity of his fellow man's life on

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[44] Grant Duff, "At Elgin, September 18th, 1861" *Some Brief Comments on Passing Events*, 229-30. Cited Shrosbree, 85.

[45] Thomas Malthus, "An Essay on the Principle of Population" 1798. Cited Walter Arnstein ed., *The Past Speaks since 1688* (D.C. Heath and Company: MA, 1981), 156.

[46] G. M. Young, *Portrait of an Age* (Oxford University Press: London, 1977), 21.

earth. Because a number of prominent men in all areas of life were part of the Evangelical movement and Evangelical discipline was "secularized as respectability," [47] the national mood tended to incorporate Evangelical tendencies, while the Evangelical faith in turn evolved with the current events of the country.

Hand in hand with Evangelicalism was Utilitarianism, which emerged from the minds of men known as the Philosophic Radicals, a sect that articulated "the creed of progress." [48] Founded by Jeremy Bentham, who had gone to Westminster, and James Mill, Utilitarians pushed for reform:

> Between rulers and ruled there exists an inherent antagonism which can only be resolved if rulers and ruled are identified by means of universal suffrage and the ballot-box, and the identity is preserved by publicity and cheap press.[49]

Young stresses the ideological partnership between the Evangelical and Utilitarian ideologies: "It is dangerous to force historic movements into exaggerated symmetry. But the parallel operation of Evangelicalism and Utilitarianism cannot be ignored." [50]The two movements underpinned Victorian thought.[51]

In the minds of Englishmen was the combination of Evangelical faith and Utilitarian progress as well as an undeniable pride in the characteristics of British life. The country's self-importance stemmed from the features considered to be inherently English: prosperity, national security, the superiority of the English institutions of government and trust in them, a moral code based on duty and self-restraint, and a trust that the country was always changing for the better.[52] Concomitantly, the ideal Englishman was molded to these characteristics and peeled out to look suspiciously like a man of Government. The Englishman was not just the product of the country; he was its helmsman. To quote James Wilson, editor of the *Economist* in 1851: "statesmen have now learned to feel not merely that they are playing a noble game…but that they are called upon to guide a glorious vessel through fluctuating shoals, and sunken rockes, and storms of terrific violence…the greatest nation that ever stood in the vanguard of

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[47] Young, 25.

[48] *Ibid.*, 27.

[49] Young, 28.

[50] *Ibid.*, 29.

[51] Colaiaco, 531.

[52] Briggs, *Victorian People*, 2-3.

civilization and of freedom."[53] The bombast of the text is unmistakable, so too is the whiggery.

The term "whig history" was coined in 1965 by Herbert Butterfield,[54] who studied the interpretation of history of Whig historians like Thomas Babington Macaulay. The underlying assumption of the whig interpretation, according to Butterfield, was that "it studies the past with reference to the present…Through this system of immediate reference to the present-day, historical personages can easily and irresistibly be classed into the men who furthered progress and the men who tried to hinder it."[55] Macaulay, for instance, believed that history was teleological and it culminated in the cherished liberty and constitutional monarchy of Victorian England. His high opinion of Britain was seen rather clearly when he compared his great nation to Rome:

> We have classical associations and great names of our own, which we can confidently oppose to the most splendid of ancient times. Senate has not to our ears a sound so venerable as Parliament. We respect the Great Charter more than the laws of Solon…The enemy of English liberty was not murdered by men whom he had pardoned and loaded with benefits. He was not stabbed in the back by those who smiled and cringed before his face. He was vanquished on fields of stricken battle; he was arraigned, sentenced, and executed in the face of heaven and earth…Our liberty is neither Greek nor Roman, but essentially English.[56]

But pride and teleological thinking were not limited to historians; it pervaded the thought of the nation and emerged in all the leading periodicals. For instance, Wilson wrote in the same style as Macaulay when he looked back at the first half of the century:

> Perhaps the best way of realizing…the actual progress of the last half-century would be to fancy ourselves suddenly transferred to the year 1800…We should find our criminal law in the state worthy of Draco; executions taking place by the dozen; the stealing of five shillings punished as severely as rape or murder; slavery and the slave trade flourishing in their palmiest atrocity. We should find the liberty of the subject at the lowest ebb; freedom of discussion and

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[53] James Wilson, "The First Half of the Nineteenth Century: Progress of the Nation and the Race" *The Economist*, Jan 18, 1851. Cited Walter Arnstein, ed., *The Past Speaks Since 1688* (Lexington, MA: D.C. Heath and Company, 1981), 111.

[54] Herbert Butterfield, *The Whig Interpretation of History* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1965).

[55] *Ibid.*, 11.

[56] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "History" *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays* (New York: D. Appleton and Company, 1857-60), 162-3.

> writing always in fear and frequently in jeopardy; religious rights trampled under foot; Catholics, slaves and not citizens; Dissenters still disabled and despised. Parliament was unreformed; public jobbing flagrant and shameless; gentlemen drank a bottle where they now drink a glass, and measured their capacity by their cups; and the temperance medal was a thing undreamed of. Finally, the *people* in those days were little thought of, where they are now the main topic of discourse and statesmanship.[57]

The pride that gushed from the pens of Victorian Englishmen was hard to escape. British pride and their conception of nationality were instrumental in encouraging reform, which in turn reaffirmed their pride.

Thus, the handle of Victorian thought turned and from its spigot flowed forth Evangelicalism, Utilitarianism, humanitarianism, liberalism and whiggery. The heated mixture of these ideas gushed into Parliament and resulted in the Catholic Emancipation of 1829,[58] the Reform Act in 1832, the abolition of slavery in 1833, the reform of the Poor Law in 1834, the repeal of the Corn Laws under Sir Robert Peel in 1846, and the second Reform Act 1868. Peel was especially important as an image of humanitarianism when he put aside his party loyalties in the face of the oncoming Irish famine and repealed the Corn Laws. His selfless actions added to the general conception of moral government that had been instigated by the reforms and abolitions. The combination of these acts and the conceptions of the men behind them cemented a specific understanding of the purpose of governmental responsibility, and the expectation that English institutions ought to conform to the model of introspection and improvement, which Parliament's self-reform in 1832 had exemplified.

The Reform Act of 1832 was the legislation that was constantly harked back to as a brilliant example of the self-consciousness of democracy. The Act's purpose was to restructure the country's constituencies, many of which had fallen in numbers, and to extend suffrage to more affluent middle-class households. Before 1832, England was speckled with rotten boroughs, which were generally old, rural towns whose numbers had fallen over the previous centuries and who were therefore over-represented in Parliament. Because of the small amount of voters, it was very easy for elections to be influenced by the patrons of the boroughs, and thus Parliament was seen to be partially based in corruption. Though some measures had been taken since the Elizabethan era to

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[57] Wilson, Cited Walter Arnstein, 178.

[58] Although the Catholic Emancipation was surely not a topic that most Britons agreed with, and although the suffrage given to Catholics was the catalyst for the restructuring of the constituencies in the *Reform Act* 1832, the Emancipation did prove that an influential few were committed to giving Catholics the right to vote.

disenfranchise towns whose numbers had fallen and to enfranchise the growing urban areas, there had been no more changes since the reign of Charles II. By 1831, boroughs that had as little as 14 households were given the representation of 2 Members of Parliament.[59] It was for this reason that Lord John Russell, who was Paymaster of the Forces in 1831, drafted and introduced the first Reform Bill in Commons on 1 March 1831. It was over one year later that the third Reform Bill passed in Parliament and was given Royal assent, and the interim was full of debate over the nature of reforming the government. One of the most eloquent expressions of the Whig party's conception of reform was given to the Commons by Macaulay, the Whig MP from Calne, on 2 March 1831. His speech expressed both pride in England's freedom and a belief that reform would quell any chance at a popular revolution among the people.[60] Macaulay urged Parliament that the portents of the age and the spirits of revolution were upon England, and it was therefore necessary to realize that in order to save the traditions of monarchy and representative democracy it was necessary to reform Parliament.

Macaulay's speech described some of the main tenets of reform. The point of it was to save the traditions of the English society—specifically the English social hierarchy — while also guarding against a popular revolution like the one that had been witnessed once again in France only one year before.[61] Reform in Parliament encouraged lesser institutions to follow suit. From the Reform Act 1832 onwards, the British reforms were piecemeal, but each was taken with a sense of the gravity of change and pride in the English institutions in question. It was in the spirit of bettering the country that Parliament undertook to inquire into education.

The first of their endeavors was the Newcastle Commission, which was proposed by George Leveson-Gower, second Earl Granville, and which examined "the education of boys and girls of the labouring classes."[62] With the help of Robert Lowe, a Liberal MP

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[59] For more information on *The Reform Act* 1832 and rotten burroughs, see John Cannon, *Parliamentary Reform 1640-1832* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973).

[60] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Parliamentary Reform, The House of Commons, 2 March, 1831" *Speeches of Lord Macaulay* (London: Longmans, Green & Co. 1875).

[61] The July Revolution of 1830, which overthrew the Bourbon Restoration.

[62] Ogilvie, 158.

and Old Wykhamist,[63] the Commission sought to improve standards of education at a low cost. To the Commons, Lowe stated "If it is not cheap it shall be efficient; if it is not efficient, it shall be cheap." [64] In the same spirit of educational reform, Granville again advocated for an inquest, this time into the great public schools:

> Lord Clarendon had identified himself with the reform of the great public schools, a task which he had taken in hand with the support of the Government, and the special goodwill of Lord Granville, who like Lord Clarendon, desired to see modern languages, history and science, occupying some proportion of the time too exclusively devoted, especially at Eton, to the practice of writing Latin verses.[65]

Granville and Clarendon anticipated the needs of their time. By the mid-1860s, education had been brought to the fore in the debate about suffrage. The second Reform Bill, which passed in 1867, would mandate an extension of suffrage to members of the working classes, and Lowe, who was an elitist intellectual,[66] could not stand the thought of "brute votes." Education, to him and others, was the hallmark of a legitimate voter, and it was for this reason that so much effort was spent inquiring into and reforming education in the mid-19th century.

The reform of the public schools fit like a jigsaw piece into the general reform craze that swept the nation. The venerable historian Asa Briggs declared its near-inevitability when he discounted Thomas Arnold's significance in reforming the public schools: "While Arnold was important in the reconciliation [of necessity and tradition], it would probably have been accomplished without him. A society of the type of mid-Victorian England had much at stake in the schools question; the answer it reached bore all the marks of what has been called 'the mid-Victorian compromise.'" [67] The reform of the public schools did not *just* fit into the larger plan of the reform of the country; the

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[63] Men who have gone to public schools are called 'Old Boys.' Each school attaches their own nomenclature to distinguish leavers. An 'Old Wykhamist' refers to a man who attended Winchester.

[64] W.F. Connell, *The Educational Thought and Influence of Matthew Arnold* (London: Routledge & K. Paul, 1950), 207.

[65] Lord Edmond Fitzmaurice, *The Life of Granville George Leveson Gower, Second Earl Granville K.G. 1815-1891*, London, 1906, vol. I, 421. Cited Shrosbree, 76.

[66] See Asa Briggs, "Robert Lowe and the Fear of Democracy" *Victorian People*.

[67] Briggs, *Victorian People*, 142.

schools were *exactly* the type of institutions that were "corrupt, inefficient and took no account of the changes of society" [68] that were begging reform.

By the beginning of the 1850s, the notions of moral necessity and progress from the Evangelical and Utilitarian movements, mixed with the teleological conceptions of history and the industrialization of the country, had fermented and produced "a distinctive civilization of its own." [69] Briggs stated that in this civilization, "the key words of the times were 'thought,' 'work,' and 'progress.' Clear thinking was preferred to impulse or prejudice and the battle of ideas to the dictatorship of slogans; hard work was considered the foundation of all material advancement; and both clear thinking and hard work were deemed essential to continue national progress." [70] The public schools clashed with all of these ideas: the poor conditions of the boys and small proportion of masters to students meant that many were able to pass through without working hard, the curricula didn't include any of the sciences or modern languages that continental schools offered, and the students' experiences in self-government and sport were either morphed into exercises in tyranny and slavery or were completely unneeded for the boys' later lives. To reform the country, one had to turn his attention to the base from which the country supplied its leaders, and England's base—the public schools—could not live up to the scrutiny.

The Growth of Unpalatable Traditions

The schools had not always been bastions of neglect and mismanagement. Consequently, the main source of criticism in the 1860s was that the institutions had strayed so far from their original purpose. All of the public schools that the Clarendon Commission investigated grew from the same seeds as hundreds of other schools that provided secondary education. The majority of these seeds were grammar schools, which had been founded far back in the 14th century,[71] and charitable foundations and denominational schools made up a small proportion. [72] The grammar school curricula centered on what was called the *trivium*, which was made up of basic Latin grammar,

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[68] Geoffrey B.A. Finlayson, "Decade of Reform" (New York: W.W. Norton and Company, 1970), 1.

[69] Briggs, *Victorian People,* 1.

[70] *Ibid.,* 1.

[71] Ogilvie, 13.

[72] *Ibid.,*11.

rhetoric (composition in Latin) and dialectic (logic, based on the Boethius translation of Aristotle). The education was intended as the first step to being ordained, but the skills it imparted were useful in most any profession. Because of the broad jurisdiction of the medieval Church, it assumed the duty of providing an endowment for the provision of upkeep and the education of poor scholars, which rendered the education "free" and "public."[73] Thus, when secular bodies began founding schools, they were obliged to endow their institutions as well to keep with the *status quo*. As endowed institutions, these types of schools were created with the intent to educate those who would not be able to otherwise afford an education, and the statutes provided for a set number of children of the poor residents of the area. The key to later financial abuses was that, despite the specified endowments, schools were not forbidden to charge fees for entry, extras, tuition (for boys who were not "poor" enough to qualify for free education), or money for general upkeep of the school. In nearly all grammar schools, sons of the upper echelons did not attend. However, in 1382 William of Wykeham founded Winchester College, and included in the statutes the provision of places for ten boys who were sons of "noble or influential persons [or] special friends of said college."[74] This inclusion invited boys of the upper classes for the first time to partake in the "public" education, and as a consequence also invited in a lay aspect to the student body, since noble or well-off boys were less likely to go into the clergy. Wykeham's clause, because it mixed the social classes, laid the foundation for the seemingly oxymoronic title "public school" of later years.

The intentions of founders were first disregarded during the Reformation, when the Dissolution of the Monasteries, and later the Chantries Act, ripped the basis of most grammar schools from underneath their feet. This forced most schools that wanted to continue to exist to look to private benefactors for finance, and schools found these benefactors in the bodies of well-off individuals or companies, such as the Merchant Taylors. It also forced the schools with ties to university colleges to further bind themselves together with the hope that they would be classified as university, rather than Church, property.[75] Though the Dissolution prompted the closure of a large number of grammar schools, for some this was also a period of restoration and foundation.

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[73] *Ibid.,* 16.

[74] Statutes of Winchester College. Cited Ogilvie, 24.

[75] This was the catalyst for the cyclical relations between Eton and King's College and Winchester and New College.

Westminster, for instance, was created by Henry VIII in the same breath as he dissolved the monastery of the same name. In the place of Catholicism came the Protestant Anglicanism, and with the urging of preachers that education be a cornerstone of the Anglican Church, other schools were established. These new schools were thus given new statutes, and it was with these statutes that the tree of the Victorian public schools and their abuses began to grow.

To begin with, the statutes dictated the salary of the governing bodies of schools, the headmaster and the masters. Ogilvie states that during the 16th century, the "average salary at a good school was £20."[76] By the end of the century, the salary of the headmaster at both Eton and Rugby was £16.[77] Since the statutes came from un-renewable sources and the government did not augment endowments to account for inflation, the endowments were wholly insufficient to support the teachers, headmaster and governing bodies of later years. Due to this insufficiency unofficial, "black" incomes became an acceptable way to fund a school. As the schools grew more popular, not only did their need for funds grow, but the financial base from which they could draw to augment their endowments also grew. As Shrosbree succinctly puts it: "The rising demand for education, and the large number of parents who could pay fees, made potential private finance available to fund the schools' growth beyond the original endowments and the founders' intentions."[78] A similar pattern occurred at the classroom level, as it was in the interests of teachers to keep adding to the number of students in their classes and charging them for extra teaching while keeping the amount of masters the same. These customs arose from necessity, but as the years progressed, 'black' incomes became imbedded in the framework of the school and began to be abused. By 1861, reformers understood that the men of the public schools were not at fault for the system that they benefited from because it had been established out of necessity.

Masters consistently employed corporal punishment when governing the boys. Though headmasters sometimes overstepped their boundaries, physical punishments were understood to be necessary. For example, Nicholas Udall, who had been headmaster of Eton under Edward VI in the 16th century, "had the reputation of being 'the best schoolmaster and the greatest beater of our time'. But he had been sacked and sent to

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[76] Ogilvie, 55.

[77] *Ibid.*, 55.

[78] Shrosbree, 42.

prison for cruelty to the boys, theft of the college plate and gross immorality."[79] After securing his release from prison, he went on to be the headmaster of Westminster, his previous transgressions apparently not playing too much of a role in his appointment. This tradition of corporal punishment was carried through the centuries, and in 1810, Dr. Keate, headmaster of Eton, publicly birched about eighty boys.[80] However, headmasters weren't always allowed to rule with an iron paddle. There were times when boys were ungovernable, and rebellions were a fairly common occurrence in the latter half of the 18th century and into the early 19th. For instance, while Dr. Keate birched the schoolboys, angry students pelted him with rotten eggs. The same headman was faced with a riot in 1818 over the hour of lock-up, and boys both smashed his desk and pelted him with rotten eggs once again![81] These rebellions generally had to do with the headmaster infringing on what the boys deemed to be their rights, and were often led by the prefects. Prefects were also the instigators of beatings, as the beating of Randolph Stewart at Harrow in 1853 showed,[82] and this tradition was part of the governance of the school. Schools largely used the 'hands off' approach in caring for the boys, and though dames and servants stayed in the houses with the boys at night, all of the masters went home and the students were left to govern themselves. Self-governance was certainly a problem, as proved by the prevalent issue of bullying. This problem began to be solved under Dr. Arnold at Rugby, who encouraged his prefects to take on more authority and therefore helped the masters to police the ranks of boys, but bullying and cruelty continued to be a hall mark of public school life.

The public school curriculum was intricately tied to the first two problems, but it did not stray as far from the intentions of the founders. The classical focus of public school education stemmed from the grammar school *trivium*, and though it should have

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[79] Ogilvie, 53.

[80] Shrosbree, 19.

[81] *Ibid.*, 19

[82] Randolph Stewart was beaten by Platt, the son of Baron Platt, and the event led to Dr. Vaughan, the contemporary headmaster, corresponding with Palmerston, who was then the Home Secretary. Platt was a prefect, and had been refereeing a game of football when Stewart quarrelled over Platt's ruling. Platt had tried to beat Stewart at this time in punishment, but Stewart had resisted. Both boys were called to see Dr. Vaughan, who decided to let Platt punish Stewart for disobedience. As a consequence, Stewart received 32 strikes of a thick cane and required immediate and prolonged medical attention. Shrosbree, 21.

provided a sound foundation for most professions, in most cases it was pursued with moderate to poor results. As early as 1644 we hear complaints from Milton that the curriculum did not prepare a boy for university studies:

> [The students] having but newly left those grammatic flats and shallows, where they stuck unreasonably, to learn a few words, with lamentable construction…now on the sudden transported under another climate, to be tossed and turmoiled with their unballasted wits in fathomless and unquiet deeps of controversy, do for the most part grow into hatred and contempt of learning.[83]

In 1756, Thomas Sheridan used Milton's qualms with English higher education to further his proposal in *British Education* that curricula include a recovery of the art of speaking and a study of the English language. However, neither man's criticisms did much to affect the course of study at public schools, and a system evolved whereby boys were taught Greek and Latin by a small number of masters and had to pay an additional price either for extra lessons in modern language or for the privilege of more tutelage in the classics. Similar to the 'black' incomes of schools, neither boys nor teachers were held responsible for this problem with the schools, but the fact that the curriculum was found wanton proved to reformers that the schools were out of date and weren't taking into account the needs of the modern aristocracy.

Old Schoolboys and the Influence of European Education

The system, with all of its faults, had been growing as the schools moved further away from their foundation. Although the corruptions were general knowledge, it wasn't until articles were published in *Cornhill Magazine*[84] in 1860 and the *Edinburgh Review* in 1861 that the government was obliged to reform the public schools. These articles were the primary catalyst for the Clarendon Commission,[85] but they were backed and pushed through by individuals who represented the interests of the aristocracy. The articles were not just an external force, impugning the lifestyles of the aristocracy and forcing reform. They were brought about by members of the upper class and sanctioned by their peers. The criticisms of the schools were widespread amongst the upper class, and their disquiet was largely over the moral depravity and lack of education that their sons were receiving

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[83] John Milton, "Of Education" cited in Sheridan, *British Education* (London: 1756), 18-20.

[84] M.J. Higgins, "Paterfamilias to the Editor of the 'Cornhill Magazine'" *Cornhill Magazine* (May 1860), 608-615.

[85] Shrosbree, 43.

from the public schools. One need only look at the educational background of the authors of the main critiques to appreciate the source of the reform: M.J. Higgins, who wrote the 1860 *Paterfamilias* letter to *Cornhill Magazine*, has been attributed the anonymous 1861 article "Eton College" in the *Edinburgh Review*, and was a pupil at Eton. Sydney Smith, whom Higgins salutes in his "Eton" article, attended Winchester.

At the time that the articles came out, periodicals were immensely influential, and there was a contemporary understanding that these publications were the arena where major debates were fought. It is important to note that periodicals had links to political parties, as, for instance, the Whigs had with the *Edinburgh Review*.[86] Therefore, when the *Review* published "Eton College," the opinion expressed within was in line with the stance taken by the Whigs, who were in power at the time. Indeed, Clarendon was intricately involved with the *Edinburgh Review* and handled the cooperation between the party and the publication to ensure that articles were favorable both to party unity and to Whig polices.[87] Colin Shrosbree asserted: "The article about Eton in the *Edinburgh Review* of April, 1861 must have been written with Clarendon's knowledge and approval, so that Clarendon himself helped to initiate the criticisms of Eton that led to the Royal Commission." [88]Why Clarendon would have believed the article to be favorable to both party unity and Whig policies is easy to understand: the reform did "not threaten party unity, it was supported by public opinion, and it attacked, on irrefutable financial grounds, an institution associated with Conservative tradition and Tory politics. In its financial dealings, Eton could not be defended without appearing to condone greed and mismanagement; here was an issue where the Liberals could not lose and the Conservatives could not win." [89]

Clarendon also held personal reasons for believing in a reform of the public schools. He had not been educated in the institutions, but had a stake in them because his son attended Harrow. Clarendon's experience in foreign affairs augmented his interest in the schools. He first became foreign secretary under Sir John Russell in 1851, having started his career as attaché at St. Petersburg, and moved on to such lofty positions as Ambassador to Spain and President of the Board of Trade. These positions allowed him to take in the varied continental approaches to education, and certainly affected his

[86] The periodical of the Tory party was the *Quarterly Review.*

[87] Shrosbree, 48.

[88] *Ibid.*, 48.

[89] *Ibid.*, 48.

position on the curriculum of the public schools, especially concerning modern languages. His opinion was exposed in his conception of his son's education:

> I wish the best years of his life were not spent in forgetting French, making bad Latin verses and acquiring nothing that will fit him to be a prominent or useful member of society. I have long been of opinion that our public schools do not keep pace with the requirements of the age; indeed they seem to ignore or be indifferent to them; and altho' of late years some reformation has been forced on them by public opinion, yet it is always unwillingly adopted by masters who seem to be as much attached to routine as they are to dead languages.[90]

Clarendon's high opinion of foreign education was evident in the opening pages of the Clarendon Report, which gave thanks to M. von Bethmann Hollweg, the Prussian Minister of Education, for helping the Commission to inquire into the higher education of that country. Though the foreign inquiry was influenced more by Clarendon's ambassadorship than by Prussia's advanced education system, they highlighted both Clarendon's appreciation of foreign expertise and also how Clarendon's involvement with the Commission was largely due to his position in government in 1861.

Though Clarendon certainly held some critical opinions on the public schools, it was his opposition to Palmerston's foreign policy that cemented his leadership of the Commission. Palmerston had long suspected Clarendon of intrigue and ambition, and though Clarendon had been Foreign Secretary during his first administration (1855-1858), the Prime Minister did not offer him the office during his second premiership (1859-1865) and Clarendon declined what was offered—the Colonial Office. Therefore Clarendon, who was both an influential political figure and without a post in Palmerston's cabinet,[91] was problematic for the returning prime minister. Shrosbree argued that the solution was fairly simple for Palmerston and Russell; they only needed to redirect Clarendon away from political involvement and into the reform of the public schools.[92] Thus the ramifications of Clarendon's involvement in foreign affairs on the reform of the schools were twofold: his understanding of European education influenced

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[90] Clarendon to Sir George Lewis, 28 August 1859, quoted Maxwell, *Fourth Earl of Clarendon*, II, 196. Cited Shrosbree, 83.

[91] See Shrosbree, 78. Clarendon's name had been submitted as a possible Prime minister and he held a close friendship with the Queen, often accompanying her on trips to Balmoral and once to Paris.

[92] Shrosbree, 82.

his opinions of the quality of education taught in the public schools, while his political background pushed him into a position where his opinions could be put into action.

Clarendon was not the only politician associated with the inquiry to bring a non-English idea of education to the table. In addition to the criticisms in the *Edinburgh Review* and *Cornhill Magazine* articles was the lobbying of Grant Duff, a Scotsman who first proposed the Royal Commission to investigate the public schools. Duff was well traveled in Europe, and his criticisms of the English schools derived from his familiarity with the contemporary trends in European education.[93] His original request was for an investigation into all endowed schools, but because of the enormity of such a task, as well as the political problems it would pose the government, the inquiry was restricted to Eton and the schools that were associated with it. Thus a decision was made that changed the face of public schools forever—they were defined as a distinct group, with Eton at the head and eight schools following close behind in its footsteps. It was this grouping that was so influential in cementing the Clarendon schools as the most prestigious of English secondary education.

Along with the push from the articles and Duff's lobbying were the more subtle feelings of the aristocracy and the upper classes towards the public schools. In the age of industrialization and competition, education was the key to social mobility, and therefore education was an important issue to the upper class, which rathered their ranks stay closed. There had, by 1861, been two commissions to inquire into the education of the lower classes,[94] and even the members of the middle classes "complained that their children were being displaced by those who were getting, at the expense of the state, a better education than they could provide for their own children." [95]The same fear dogged the upper classes. Concern that children were receiving adequate education enough to compete with lower, better-educated classes was mostly in relation to fields of study. The feelings were brought out especially with science, an area of study that Prince Albert had firmly associated himself with after the Great Exhibition of 1851. Even Lord Clarendon expressed his uneasiness about his own lack of science education in a letter to the

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[93] *Ibid.*, 85.

[94] Mr. Brougham's Committee to inquire into the education of the lower orders (1818) and the Taunton Commission (1861).

[95] Lord Harrowby, *Hansard*, CXII, 2 July 1850, col. 821. Cited E.E. Rich, *The Education Act, 1870* (London: Longmans, 1970), 72.

Duchess of Manchester in November 1862, in which he told her about his task of examining some of the leading scientists of the time:

> I never felt more shy, as of course I did not want to expose my own ignorance more than was necessary…Can't you fancy all this being very interesting, when you consider the immense national importance of the education of the upper classes in these days of active and general competition, and the stick-in-the-mud system of our great public schools, which places the upper classes in a state of inferiority to the middle and lower?[96]

But while there was a fear that their children would lose out to those who were of lower birth but better education, the aristocracy seemed to be of a conflicting opinion about whether to condemn or to revere the schools that did such a bad job at teaching their sons. On one hand, there was the obvious lack of education in most everything, including the classics. There was also the widespread criticism about the drinking, gambling and other vices that were bred in the public schools. On the other hand, the schools were both the gateways and the gatekeepers of the English elite. Their classical education served as a symbol of the upper class while the social networks that were formed in the houses, hallways and pitches helped perpetuate the onward march of public school boys through Parliament. To bring these diverging ideas into accordance, reform was necessary to eradicate the bad aspects so that the aristocratic gateways could be justified.

Once it was realized how corrupt the public schools were and how much their reform would benefit the country, it was hard to stop the cannonball of reform that was rolled into the Commons by M.J. Higgins' articles and Grant Duff's lobbying. Given how optimal the issue was for the Whig party and Clarendon's personal backing of the exposé on Eton, it would have been a mistake for the Whigs not to pursue the issue. And with Clarendon at the helm of the inquiry, the Commission was guided by an aristocrat with a European background, who was intricately involved in the governance of Britain and had a personal stake in the system he was reforming.

The very nature of creating a commission and choosing nine schools legalized the term 'public schools' and named those schools, which were undoubtedly associated with the term. Though this issue is dealt with in the second chapter, it is helpful to go into it here as well. Prior to the Commission, the definition of public schools was fairly ambiguous. The ranks of public schools were largely a matter of public opinion, and because of the ability of smaller endowed grammar schools to increase in size and achievement, the mass of schools was growing. When the Clarendon Commission chose

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[96] Clarendon to the Duchess of Manchester, 20 November 1862, in Maxwell, *Fourth Earl of Clarendon*, II, 269-70. Cited Shrosbree, 65.

nine schools to investigate, it singled out the institution that was at the core of the public school system—Eton—and then chose six other boarding schools and two day schools which were closely associated with Eton and were "acknowledged types and principal centres."[97] Defining a group of nine schools confirmed that those schools would forever be associated with the term. Furthermore, the Commission's purpose of inquiry and reform symbolically legitimized the public schools as modern institutions in the eyes of Victorians, who had been fervently reforming the nation over the course of the 19th century.

The Victorian Reform in the Public Schools

The results of the Clarendon Commission's inquiry were formulated in line with the themes of greater reform that ran through the Victorian era. The issue at the base of the Clarendon Report was the struggle against outdated statutes. What overlay this concern were the outright corruption, bad teaching, and financial misappropriation examined in the *Cornhill* and *Edinburgh Review* articles. The whole Report and its findings were governed by the belief that it was not the individuals, but the system that was at fault. The findings of the Commission and their recommendations, as laid out in their General Report, were constructed in the same spirit as the Reform Act 1832. Their recommendations were set out to rectify the anachronism, venality and inadequate education that had been problematic for England's upper classes.

In nearly every section of the General Report, the Commissioners were concerned with the correct way to interpret the statutes of each school in question. In order to bring the schools into the 19th century, the Commission had to translate 14th, 15th and 16th century intentions into 19th century actions. The commissioners were quick to realize the problems that they were up against, since the statutes were governed by the time in which they were written and were unable to provide for the changes in society:

> Several of these schools possess ancient statutes of rules designed to settle permanently, with more or less of minuteness, their organization and their course of teaching… Statutes, specific and precise in their character, and guarded by careful and solemn provisions for securing their perpetual observance, are accompanied by none for the realization of them, or for their adaptation to new circumstances and a different state of society…In the absence of [men in whose hands lies the power of adaptation and amendment], recourse is inevitably had to the principle, as it may be called, of desuetude; and it is assumed that old constitutions which contain

[97] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* Vol. I, 3.

> minute directions and create no authority for varying them, must, when the lapse of time has rendered an exact compliance with them impracticable, be construed by the aid of such usages as have been gradually established by necessity or convenience. Often too, owing to the absence of power to alter the letter of statutes which has become obsolete, the spirit, which it would be desirable to observe, is violated or forgotten.[98]

The effect of this statement was twofold: first, it absolved the masters and governors of the schools of responsibility for the school's condition, because they were working with an impractical and imperfect system. Second, it identified the Commission's purpose as being the preserver and interpreter of the spirit of the statutes. Since the statutes were strict, but unable to provide for the vast changes in society that the centuries before 1861 had seen, they were useless. Thus, if the Commission was to interpret anything from them, it had to be from the spirit of the statutes rather than their actual text.

The commissioners stated their purpose of interpretation and modernization again and again when they compared the differences between the founders' time and the Victorian era. For instance, in concern with who was eligible for scholarships:

> It must be said that the difficulty of assigning a precise meaning to the word poverty, the doubt what class of persons, if any, at the present day really answers to the *pauperes et indigentes scholars* of the Lancastrian and Tudor periods, and the further doubt whether poverty is not after all best served by giving the widest encouragement to industry, coupled with the interest which every school has in collecting the best boys from the largest surface, have tended, and will continually tend, to render the qualification of indigence practically inoperative.[99]

The reformers had to deal with interpreting the intentions of the founders while concurrently taking into account the modern-day needs. In other words, they shaped the oft-times medieval statutes to the form of Victorian England. This spirit of reform was in line with that of Whigs like Macaulay, with whom Clarendon had some contact. The two were definitely acquaintances and associated with the same social circles.[100] They had

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[98] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* Vol. I.

[99] *Ibid.,* 10.

[100] Macaulay mentioned Clarendon in a letter to his daughters written on 23 July 1832. Both men had dined with the Listers at Knightsbridge. Theresa Lister (née Villiers) was Clarendon's sister. Macaulay mentioned how changed the manners of the Villiers brothers were in their sister's presence, and his dislike of Clarendon's brother Charles, but was not concerned much with Clarendon in his letter. Thomas Pinney, ed., *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 157.

been contemporaries at Cambridge, Clarendon at St. John's and Macaulay at Trinity,[101] and both men had strong relationships with the *Edinburgh Review*. Macaulay's opinions of time and history, as laid out in his *History of England*,[102] were that England had been the battleground on which an epic war was fought between the supporters of progress and innovation and the supporters of tradition.[103] In order to fit the model to the public schools in 1861, it was expanded to three battling sides: the intentions of their founders as laid out in the statutes; the corruption, neglect and lack of education that had become traditional, but fit neither the founders' intention nor the Victorian's sensibility; and the intentions of the reformers to rearticulate the school rules, applying the spirit of the founders to the contemporary circumstances.

The Spirit of Reform

The Clarendon Report was couched in the spirit of reform that had led to the other piecemeal reforms of the age. The Commission was moderate in its suggestions and recommended defining a hierarchy within each school's structure, interpreting or rewriting statutes to better fit modernity, expanding the curriculum, and focusing energies primarily on studies. Its purpose was to systematize public school education and to make it more accountable to the wants of society.

To better illustrate how the Clarendon Commission fell in line with the greater themes of the Victorian age, Macaulay's speech on the Reform Act 1832 is instructive as a comparison. Macaulay's speech is generally believed to have summarized the Whig party's concept of reform. I do not wish to draw a direct relationship between Macaulay and the Clarendon Report, but rather to use Macaulay's speech as a fine example of the spirit of reform in the 19th century and to locate Clarendon's recommendations in the same reforming tradition. In 1831 Macaulay congratulated the "Ministers for not attempting, at the present time, to make the representation uniform…The Government

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[101] Thomas Pinney, ed., *The Letters of Thomas Babington Macaulay* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 157.

[102] Thomas Babington Macaulay, *History of England from the Accession of James II* (London: Dent, 1953).

[103] William Thomas, "Macaulay, Thomas Babington, Baron Macaulay (1800–1859)," in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, October 2005, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/17349 (accessed December 5, 2007).

has, in my opinion, done all that was necessary for the removing of a great practical evil, and no more than was necessary."[104] His praise implied that the actions of the Government were perfect in their moderation. The Clarendon Commission was similarly moderate, and took account of the various differences between the nine schools. Under nearly every heading of the Report, the Commission explained that it had to consider each school's case separately. Also, the Report focused less on concrete, overbearing reforms, but rather on the extent and principles of reforms in each instance. Thus, though they believed that in some cases, "the Governing Body should be nominated by the Crown,"[105] their broader reasoning was the essence of moderation: "The Governing Bodies of the several colleges and schools should be reformed, so far as may be necessary, in order to render them thoroughly suitable and efficient for the purposes and duties they are designed to fulfill."[106] In fact, the recommendations were full of compromises: between the Governing Body and the state, the Headmaster and the Governing Body, the Headmaster and the Masters, and the Students and their teachers. In each case of compromise, every member of the system had a responsibility to the other members and had the right to alter his situation. By laying out these relationships, the Report set up a pyramid of authority, which ultimately made every aspect of the school accountable to the Government. The Clarendon Commission wished to impose an official structure that would allow for growth while maintaining authority.

Although Macaulay was in favor of expanding suffrage, he did not support universal suffrage because he assumed that the poor were in a constant state of distress, which blinded and disabled them to vote in any intelligent manner. His rationale did not blame the poor themselves for being swayed by passion, but rather the system by which they were constantly distressed, which was too pervasive to change. This idea of the system, rather than the individuals, being corrupt was one that pervaded public school reform as well. It was not just stated in the Clarendon Report, but also in the various periodicals, including the *Edinburgh Review* articles in 1810 and 1861. In both the Reform Act and the reform of the public schools, the goal was to bring the institutions up to date, since their antiquated foundation was inadequate for the needs of contemporary society. In both the reforms of the Parliament and of the public schools, those who had

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[104] Thomas Babington Macaulay, "Paliamentary Reform, The House of Commons, 2 March, 1831," Cited Jackman, 54.

[105] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners* Vol. I, 5.

[106] *Ibid.,* 52.

benefited from corrupting the old system—either the men who controlled the rotten boroughs or the masters who appropriated more funds than would have been adequate to provide for themselves—lost out on the gains that they had achieved. But in neither case were the individuals who prospered from corrupting the system held accountable. The commissioners were realistic: masters who were expected to teach 60 boys a dead language in a cold room in the mid-19th century could hardly do so for £16, and no one should have expected them to teach in such conditions out of a sense of duty.

Macaulay's third point was that the people who would benefit from the reform of Parliament were those who ought to benefit: men of property and intelligence who were unfairly left out of the previous system. His argument was that the men who were not represented under the pre-reform system were unjustly suffering, since their class and status indicated that they had the right to be represented. Similarly, the rationale behind the Clarendon Report was to make sure that the students of the schools were benefiting from their education in the ways that the founders had intended. This included making sure that the collegers, whom the foundations had been set up to assist, were still profiting from them. This also included checking the quality of education of the boys who were paying full fees. In order to assess the condition of these, the Commission recommended implementation of examinations for admission and promotion to the next grade, which would exclude from the schools those boys whose intellect would unjustly bring down the standard of scholarship. To make their point blatant, the Clarendon Commission declared that learning must be the first priority of the school, and that traditions such as fagging, in which a younger boy was responsible for doing chores for an older 'fag master,' had to be kept to a minimum so that boys could focus on their studies.

Given the teleological whiggish conceptions of progress in England, it is surprising to learn that the public schools weren't considered blatant examples of a lack of progress, or progress in the 'wrong direction.' The abuses in the public schools proved that they were somewhat confused institutions, halfway between their foundation and their mythical English greatness. Though the schools had strayed from the original statutes and intentions of the founders, they still held on to old traditions and they misinterpreted the statutes in order to provide for their contemporary circumstances. However, their abuses clashed with the whiggish belief that Victorian modernity was full of optimal institutions. The Clarendon Report was able to sort out this contradiction by emphasizing the progress that had been made.

> The question whether the foundation boys at these schools enjoy advantages equal to those which the founders intended for them may be generally answered in the affirmative. Their situation has at

> several of the schools been greatly and progressively improved during the present century; and we have no doubt whatever that it is now considerably better than it has been at any former period. They are better lodged, better fed, better taught, better attended to than they ever were before…The habits of the present age render it at once necessary and equitable that out of the increased revenues of these institutions suitable comfort, proper supervision, and reasonable privacy should be provided for those to whom a place on the foundation is offered as a boon, or proposed as an object for competition… The best education of the present day, given by a staff of highly trained teachers at a public school, is certainly very much better than was the best education of the 15th or 16th century, imparted to from 50 to 150 boys by a master and usher very moderately paid, at a time when the scholastic profession ranked somewhat low in the social scale.[107]

Although the schools were certainly a blemish on the idealistic image of a reformed and modern England, because of their revered place in English society the schools could not be portrayed as institutions that had been evilly diverted from their path. They certainly had made a great progress since their foundation and the Commission recognized the implications of judging the schools too harshly. They were aware that members of Parliament, who were Old Harrovians, Etonians and Wykhamists, supported and defended their *almae mater*s. The commissioners also had to keep in mind that the progression of these schools away from their foundations resulted in establishing them as the schools for the ruling class. Thus Rugby, which had been criticized for no longer educating "the children of Brownsover and Rugby chiefly," [108] had to be recognized also for growing to its 'best form' by drawing in so many upper class children: "It is no mean credit to Rugby to have grown until it can fill a place similar in position, if not in extent, to that held by Winchester or Eton." [109] The point of the commissioners was not to establish just how far the schools had drifted from their foundation, since the drift had largely benefited the ruling classes. Instead, their purpose was to point out how best to reform the schools, an action which would finally lead them to their place among the other reformed, and thus great, English institutions.

It was this emphasis on reform, while preserving the esteemed traditions and reputations of the schools, that marked the Public Schools Bills, which were put before Parliament between 1865 and 1868.[110] Though the introduction of the Bills stemmed

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[107] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners* Vol. I, 9.

[108] *Ibid.,* 267.

[109] *Ibid.,* 269.

[110] Shrosbree, 177.

directly from the Clarendon Report, and though members of the Clarendon Commission played a large role in their debate and formulation, the Bills and later Public Schools Acts did not address many of the recommendations that the Commission had made clear. The first of these Bills,[111] Public Schools (No. 32) Bill, included all the schools from the Clarendon Report except for St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors,[112] and its format, like the Report, split the Bill between giving general provisions and focusing on individual schools. It was essentially concerned with the imposition of direct government approval on governing bodies and changes to statutes, and though the Bill did not propose to hinder the types of decisions that a governing body could make, it did wish that changes be put before the Queen and Parliament for approval.[113] The Bill also proposed that each school's governing body, which was made up of a Provost, Vice-Provost, and a number of Fellows, be subject to individual changes. For Eton, whose governing body had the most corruption and 'black' income, the Bill proposed that existing Provost, Vice-Provost and six Fellows be increased to one Provost and fourteen Fellows, of which nine would be honorary and five paid.[114] All of the men would have to be Anglican, though they need not have been former pupils at Eton. The Crown would nominate the Provost, and the parameters of his appointment would be that he must be a graduate of either Oxford or Cambridge, over thirty-five years old, and must live on the grounds of the school during terms. The unpaid Fellows would be made up of the Provost of King's College, Cambridge, three who were nominated by the Crown and who must be graduates of Oxford or Cambridge, and the last four would be elected by the governing body of the school. The five paid Fellows would have to live on the school grounds for at least three months of the year, and would receive £700 per annum and a house. At least three of the paid Fellows had to be clergymen, and the governing body would elect all five, basing their decision on who was "either distinguished for literary or scientific attainments, or

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[111] *Public Schools (No. 32) Bill*, presented for first reading on 13 March 1865 and for its second on 3 April 1865.

[112] St. Paul's and Merchant Taylors were omitted from the Bill and its subsequent Act because they were both managed by a company and claimed private property in their endowments. Merchant Taylors was managed by the Merchant Taylors Company, and St. Paul's by the Mercers' Company. They were also distinctive because they were the only two day schools in the Clarendon Commission's inquiry.

[113] Shrosbree, 179.

[114] *Ibid.*, 178.

have done service to the school as Head or Assistant-Masters." [115] Similar, though amended and less intrusive, proposals were laid out for the other schools included in the Bill.[116]

The Bill further examined the types of pupils who were being educated and the backgrounds that they came from. It was in this capacity that the Bill broke with the Clarendon Commission's endeavor to preserve the intentions of the founders in educating *pauperes et indigentes scholars*. Eton was not to privilege any boy due to where he was born or where he lived. At Harrow and Rugby, the Bill proposed to abolish the right of local children to attend the schools for free, and only gave a window of ten years for those children that were living there at the time to finish up their education. At Shrewsbury, those rights were to be abolished after 1880, and the school would be obliged to award forty full scholarships to boys through an open competition.[117] Though all of the schools would have to go further and fund education for the local children by founding a new school, the message was clear: the public schools' purpose was no longer to assist the community; its purpose was to educate the children of the upper class. Though the Bill was outvoted by eight to three, the belief that the public schools should cater only to the ruling classes was mirrored in the vote. Lord Lyttleton, who had been a member of the Clarendon Commission, objected to the Bill (though he voted in favor of it) because he believed that it was not extreme enough in eradicating a school's responsibility towards local boys.[118]

The Bills, quite like the Commission, had the tough job of protecting the distinctive qualities and characters of the public schools, while simultaneously trying to bring the schools into a more modern form. The Public Schools Act 1868 differed little from the initial Public Schools (No. 32) Bill, but the debates that floundered in Parliament for those three years, during which time ten Public Schools Bills were put forward and either lapsed or were objected to, focused on the nature of aristocratic education. The debates between the Tory and Whig parties on the Bills tended to fall along the lines of their ideas for the country. The Whigs attempted to modernize the aristocracy through focusing the schools on "fashionable progress, scholarship and European culture," [119]

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[115] Shrosbree, 178.

[116] *Ibid.*, 178.

[117] *Ibid.*, 179.

[118] *Ibid.*, 182.

[119] *Ibid.*, 190.

while the Tories believed that the schools' purpose lay in "emphasis on the classics, on traditional ways, and on the preservation of hallowed institutions and of the influence of the Church of England,"[120] all of which were already staples of the public school education.

An echo of the Public School Bill 1868 can be found in the pages of Howard Staunton's *Great Public Schools of England*, published only one year later:

> If the noblest instincts of the people were consulted, they would assuredly oppose organic change in these venerable institutions, but they might demand that their cloistered aspect should be diminished, their aristocratic associations elevated, their classical power expanded and fertilized, and their national leaven and lineaments increased. The best friends of these Schools confess that they contain much that is pedantic, much that is puerile, much that is antiquated, much that is obsolete, much that is obstructive, and not a little that is barbarous; and that, like other English institutions, they are apt to confound stolidity with solidity. Let, then, abuses be removed, let absolute obscurantism cease, and let such improvements be adopted as commend themselves, not to superficial progress, but to the most exalted wisdom.[121]

Staunton was concerned that the schools be included in the reform of the country. He admitted that the nature of public schools left much to be desired, but they were also instances of the celebration of Englishness. Staunton, like reformers who had only just laid down the plans for change, understood the delicate nature of preserving the distinctive qualities that made the public schools such bastions for the English upper class, while also reforming them so that they could optimally fulfill their most important role as the educators of England's elite.

Conclusion

The Clarendon Commission was a direct result of the exposé on Eton's financial corruption, but was ushered into Parliament because of its favorable political implications. Its inquiry fell in line with the reforming mentality that gripped the nation. Although the Commission proposed to change the schools in governance, finance and curriculum, the Public Schools Acts that followed were more concerned with the former two issues and left the reform of curriculum up to the individual schools. The inquiry brought the schools under state control, but did so in order to reaffirm the social hierarchy

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[120] *Ibid.*, 191.

[121] Howard Staunton, *The Great Schools of England* (London: Sampson, Low, Son, and Marston, 1865), xix.

and legitimize the centers of elite education. The most resounding aspect of the reform was that the Commission distinguished only nine schools and the Acts only seven. These schools were about enter into a struggle with the public schools not included in the Clarendon Commission that would result in an expansion of ranks and a new definition of the Great Public Schools.

Chapter 2: Expansion and Definition

In the second half of the 19th century the group of public schools expanded as new schools were founded and others renewed, and by the 1890s public schools no longer fit the definition that Sydney Smith had penned in 1810:

> By a public school, we mean an endowed place of education of old standing, to which the sons of gentlemen resort in considerable numbers, and where they continue to reside, from eight or nine, to eighteen years of age. We do not give this as a definition which would have satisfied Porphyry or Duns-Scotus, but as one sufficiently accurate for our purpose. The characteristic features of these schools are, their antiquity, the numbers, and the ages of the young people who are educated at them.[122]

Some public schools in 1890 directly conflicted with Smith's definition. Fettes College, for example, was founded in 1886–hardly "old standing," and Rossall School, whose object was "educating, at a moderate cost, the sons of clergymen and others, on a plan similar to that of other public schools, and embracing a general course of instruction in science and modern literature," [123] was neither bending itself towards "the sons of gentlemen" nor was placing much emphasis on studying antiquity. These schools were part of the expanding classification of public schools, which was profoundly affected by the Clarendon Commission.

The nine schools which the Commission inquired into and the seven of those that were reformed in the Public Schools Acts were legally differentiated from the growing mass of endowed grammar schools. Because the reasoning for inquiring into those specific schools was that they were associated most closely with the education of the upper class, separating them reified the social hierarchy within education. But legally reforming only seven of them with the Public Schools Acts created a rigid and narrow classification that was problematic for both the Clarendon Seven and the new public schools, which were implied to be 'second tier' when they were excluded from the Clarendon Commission. Because the 'second tier' and the Clarendon schools were so similar in appearance, governance, and intent to educate 'young gentlemen,' separating them seemed arbitrary. It created a dynamic in which both groups navigated their relationship to one another and to the ambiguous definition of 'public schools.' The Seven protected their preeminence through snobbery, but wished to be associated with

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[122] Sydney Smith, "Remarks on the System of Education in Public School," *Edinburgh Review,* 119-120.

[123] ——, *The Public Schools Year Book* (London: Swan Sonenschein & Co, 1891), 110.

reformed and effective education. The ‘second tier’ schools strived to provide a good education, but they lacked institutional prestige and were held back by their association with the middle classes. A few ‘second tier’ headmasters solved the immediate symbolic problems that arose from the separation by including both the Clarendon Schools and the ‘second tier’ in the Headmasters’ Conference, which was founded in 1869 by Edward Thring. The Headmasters’ Conference defined the parameters of the public schools group, but there were still echoes of hierarchy within the public schools as they worked towards a standardized public school education.

Social Class and Education

The three Parliamentary commissions to inquire into education were intricately connected with social class. The Newcastle Commission inquired into “the education of boys and girls of the labouring classes”[124] in 1858-1861, the Clarendon Commission followed it in 1861-1864, and the Taunton Commission inquired into endowed schools in 1864-1868 and was “sometimes referred to as the commission on middle-class education.”[125] But because of the amorphous nature of ‘class’ in 19th century Britain, it was often hard to decide which schools fit which commission. At the inception of the Clarendon Commission, there was no definitive list of which schools would be included. Grant Duff, whose lobbying in the early months of 1861 instigated the Clarendon Commission, had originally wished for a committee to inquire into “the Colleges of Eton, Winchester and Westminster, as well as of Harrow, Rugby, Charter House, Christ’s Hospital, and all endowed, collegiate, cathedral, and prebendal Schools in Great Britain and Ireland in which the Greek and Latin languages are taught, with a view to ascertain whether the great resources of these institutions may not be rendered more serviceable to education and learning.”[126] However, Sir George Lewis, the Home Secretary under Palmerston, disagreed with Duff and wished the Commission to be concerned with the “principal public schools,” those “endowed public schools in which the Greek and Latin languages were taught.”[127] When Duff pressed him for the names of specific schools Sir George would not go into greater detail. His answers demonstrated the ambiguity of the

[124] Ogilvie, 158.

[125] John Lawson & Harold Silver, *A Social History of Education in England* (London: Methuen & Col Ltd, 1973), 297.

[126] Shrosbree, 88-89.

[127] *Ibid.*, 89.

term ‘public schools’ and the lack of a coherent group to which one could point as exemplars of the term. It was not until July 1861 that the nine schools were announced in Letters Patent, and the decision had come from a fair amount of debate over the nature of public schools and the social class associated with them. It was the case of Shrewsbury, a school distinguished in history and scholarship,[128] which proved the classism that underlined educational reform:

> This foundation now lies at the boundary line, I think, we may say, between the public schools usually so called and the other endowed schools of the country, and some controversy has arisen in recent years as to whether its future should be that of a first-rate school, or whether it should be adequate rather to the wants of the middle class, as of course the majority of the endowed schools ought to be. The Commissioners have decided that it should remain a first-rate school, and I think they have decided wisely…The Commissioners say that the people of Shrewsbury should turn their attention rather to creating a good proprietary school in the town, than to making the present school fulfill the purpose of an institution for giving what is loosely called a middle class education.[129]

The commissioners established that the Clarendon Nine were Britain’s ‘first-rate’ schools designated for the upper class, and that the majority of endowed schools ought to benefit the middle classes. Their decision reified social class within education. By implication, the Taunton Schools were part of the “majority of endowed schools” designated for the middle classes and considered ‘second tier.’

The notion of ‘class’ that emerged in the half-century prior to the inquiries of the Newcastle, Clarendon and Taunton Commissions defined the boundaries of education. England was constructing its ideas about social ‘class’ over the course of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. Though social ‘classes’ had not existed before then, British society had always been very hierarchical, and the 19th century was largely a time when the new, self-conscious classes bloomed within the old social traditions. In the wake of the Industrial Revolution, wealth augmented the ‘middling sorts,’ who then became more politically conscious. There was not, however, any defined ‘middle class.’ Instead, there were “middle classes—growing, eager, confident, but divided by economic differences, geographical isolation, religion, and a host of competing enthusiasms.” [130] Though suffrage had been extended to the middle classes in the Reform Act 1832, the

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[128] Shrobree, 90.

[129] Grant Duff, *Hansard*, CLXXV, 6 May 1864, cols. 125-7. Cited Shrosbree, 90.

[130] R.K. Webb, *Modern England* (New York: Harper & Row, 1980), 222-223.

government did not function differently.[131] The middle classes were not able to form their own political party, and it seemed that, though they constituted the majority of the electorate, they continued to elect a predominantly aristocratic Parliament and Cabinet.[132] Meanwhile, the laboring classes stemmed from labor unions, and were pitted against the middle classes in towns where the two were segregated.[133] Yet, like the middle classes, the laboring classes were also fragmented and held conflicting interests. Though members of the working classes tended to gravitate to either labor unions or friendly societies,[134] these groups were more ameliorative than revolutionary. Both classes trusted the aristocracy with the responsibility of government.

Though social classes at the time were still fairly ambiguous, during the 1850s and 1860s the language of 'class' was used frequently in Parliament in both deferential and pejorative senses.[135] The term 'class' became individualized, and was frequently applied to a person or family, which implied a degree of fluidity. Social mobility was common enough to blur the lines between a father's 'class' and his son's, which could be heightened by a good education, a respectable job and social ties of marriage and friendship. The historian Asa Briggs surmises that by 1850, society valued social climbing much the way Beatrice Webb describes in *My Apprenticeship*:

> It was the burden duty of every citizen to better his social status; to ignore those beneath him, and to aim steadily at the top rung of the ladder. Only by this persistent pursuit by each individual of his own and his family's interest would the highest general level of civilization be attained.[136]

It was the implicit purpose of the Newcastle, Clarendon and Taunton Commissions to define the type of education for each rung of that social ladder.

Using education as a means to ascend the social ladder was an obvious choice for middle class parents to utilize. Nathaniel Woodard, who was involved in founding 17

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[131] Webb, 222.

[132] Harold Perkin, *The Origins of Modern English Society* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), 374.

[133] Asa Briggs, "The Language of Class," *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs* Vol. 1 (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1985), 6.

[134] Perkin, 382.

[135] Briggs, *The Collected Essays of Asa Briggs*, 21.

[136] Beatrice Potter Webb, *My Apprenticeship* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1926), 13.

schools over the mid-19th century and who published *A Plea for the Middle Classes* in 1848, explained that "gentlemen with small incomes, solicitors and surgeons with limited practice, unbeneficed clergymen, naval and military officers, etc., etc." would "wish to obtain the best education possible for their children." [137] Families who were newly wealthy but came from a lower class background used education to give their children a foot up in society and accumulate the social capital which they lacked. At the same time, advancements in transport allowed for children to be sent farther away from their homes and opened up the market of boarding schools to the entire country. Since social prestige was associated with a public school education it would only seem natural for a debate to arise over which institutions were 'true' public schools.

Unfortunately, there was no cut and dried definition of 'public schools,' and public opinion was the general measurement by which one could determine the schools that fell within the ambiguous term. The general understanding of which schools were 'public' fueled the Commission's choice of schools. In both the above excerpt and in the introduction to the Clarendon Report, the commissioners made mention of the "so called" public schools, and explained that they were looking into what was "commonly called Public School Education." [138] Identifying nine schools was therefore an effort to specify the schools that were public schools by everyone's standards, but was not supposed to be an exhaustive list. Even during the debates over the Public Schools Bill in 1868, it was reaffirmed that the legislation was exclusive, but not definitive. Objections were raised by a member of Parliament, who thought that naming the legislation "Public Schools Act" implied that the Seven were the only public schools, but these concerns were rescinded after another member explained that the title "did not imply that these were the only public schools; it simply indicated what public schools were dealt with in 1868." [139] Though the Act certainly stated that the Seven were the top rank of public schools, up until the establishment of the Headmasters' Conference it was public opinion that was the effective judge of which endowed grammar schools were public schools.

The lack of definition of the ranks of public schools catalyzed the struggle between the 'second tier' and the Clarendon Schools over inclusion to the term. The Clarendon Commission was just as obtuse about the definition of "public schools" as anyone else in the period. They could only indicate that those schools in their inquiry

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[137] Ogilvie, 155

[138] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* Vol. I, 3.

[139] Shrosbree, 199.

were considered 'first-rate,' and were the models for younger institutions. In the General Introduction to their Report, they explained:

> From the prominent positions [the schools] have long occupied as places of instruction for the wealthier classes, and from the general though by no means exact resemblance of their systems of discipline and teaching, they have become especially identified with what in this country is commonly called Public School Education. We adopt for the present a phrase which is popular and sufficiently intelligible, without attempting to define its precise meaning. Public School Education, as it exists in England and in England alone, has grown up chiefly within their walls, and has been propagated from them; and, though now surrounded by younger institutions of a like character, and of great and increasing importance, they are still, in common estimation, its acknowledged types, as they have for several generations been its principal centers.[140]

The Clarendon Commission's decision to base their inquiry into the archetypal public schools laid the groundwork for those "younger institutions of a like character" to define what the Commission could not. By examining its "principal centers," which soon after were legally separated from those institutions "of great and increasing importance" by the Public Schools Act 1868, the Commission neglected to give boundaries to the term 'Public School.' It was the lack of boundaries that propagated the 'second tier' public schools to assert their "increasing importance" and to create an institution which would rigidly define their inclusion in what was "commonly called Public School Education."

Growing Public

For the academic year 1890-1891 *The Public Schools Year Book*, an annual publication that recorded statistics for each public school, listed 30 public schools. Of the 30 public schools, 15 were schools of old standing, all of which had been founded before 1619.[141] The other half was made up of new schools that had been founded in the 19th century, between 1841-1889. These numbers indicate the expansion of the ranks of public schools in the 19th century. The new public schools were entering into an elitist and exclusive system of education. Their image reflected a desire to be a part of the group of Clarendon public schools, but they were legally excluded from that group by the Endowed Schools Act 1869. Their separation from the Clarendon Schools provoked a debate over the differences between the 'second tier' and the Clarendon Seven.

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[140] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, Vol. I, 3.

[141] ——, *The Public Schools Year Book 1890-1891* (London: Swan Sonenschein & Co, 1891).

The new public schools were founded in various ways. Oftentimes, a group of people would get together to start either a proprietary or boarding school. Cheltenham, which opened in 1841, was founded by a group of local residents who were concerned that their town had no appropriate school for the sons of the upper-middle class. They formed a private company of shareholders and started the school, the roll of which had grown to over 600 boarders and day boys by 1861.[142] In some cases, schools were founded specifically to be boarding schools. Marlborough College was flung together as a boarding school in 1843 by a group of clergymen, lawyers and country gentlemen, and because they fixed their school fees at a lower price than other boarding schools, they grew to over 500 students in just five years.[143] Quite a few of the schools were founded by private venture, and others were opened as denominational schools for Roman Catholics, Nonconformists or Anglicans. [144] Many of the new schools were founded in an effort to emulate one of the Clarendon Schools. For instance, Mill Hill was based on Eton when it was founded in 1807, and Malvern, which opened in 1865, was founded on a system adopted from Winchester.[145] But not all of the 'second tier' public schools were newly founded during the 19th century. Many of the new public schools had been decaying institutions that were revitalized by the Educational Council after 1869.

Parliament formed the Taunton Commission in 1864 to inquire into 782 endowed schools. The Taunton Commission's recommendations resulted in the Endowed Schools Act 1869, which created the Endowed Schools Commission, also known as the Educational Council,[146] to oversee and monitor the schools in its purview. It was this Council that would later have its powers absorbed by the Board of Education. The Educational Council was able to alter statutes and approve new schemes and many endowed schools were reborn in this way. But a local endowed grammar school could not just one day decide to become a public school. The change was predominantly a matter of luck, combined with the work of a fine headmaster.[147] Many of the best headmasters were

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[142] Ogilvie, 151.

[143] *Ibid.*, 152. Ogilvie alleges that the school fees were so low because the founders were naïve and had no experience with running a school.

[144] *Ibid.*, 153.

[145] *The Public Schools Year Book*, 83.

[146] To avoid confusion, the Endowed Schools Commission will only be referred to as the 'Educational Council,' since this was how contemporaries referred to it.

[147] Ogilvie, 166.

products of the Clarendon Schools. For instance, the disciples of Dr. Arnold at Rugby went on to be esteemed headmasters at Marlborough, Wellington, Haileybury and Clifton.[148] Thring, whose hard work revitalized Uppingham, had attended Eton. Their success rested on their ability to attract more boarders and to restructure their schools to best suit the needs of the types of boys they were attempting to educate.[149] After that, it was a matter of opinion and enrollment.

These new, 'second tier' public schools waded into a very hierarchical system of education where the upper echelons of public schools reaffirmed their primacy through snobbery. For instance, in 1866, the Captain of the Westminster Eleven[150] snubbed the Captain of the Shrewsbury Eleven, who had requested a match, with this disdainful reply:

> The Captain of the Westminster Eleven is sorry to disappoint Shrewsbury, but Westminster plays no schools except Public Schools, and the general feeling in the school quite coincides with that of the Committee of the Public Schools Club, who issue the list of Public Schools—Charterhouse, Eton, Harrow, Rugby, Westminster and Winchester.[151]

Shrewsbury was a Clarendon School, though it had been on the cusp of being lumped in with the rest of schools that provided a "middle class education,"[152] and the Westminster Captain's judgment proves that there was a hierarchy even within the Clarendon Seven. Obviously, the top public schools were anxious to uphold their position at the head of British education. Given the multiplication of like institutions, protecting the boundaries of their elite group must have seemed paramount. But the differences between the schools in the Clarendon and Taunton Commissions were not black and white. In fact, the choice of which schools to include in the Clarendon Commission seemed arbitrary because of their similarities. Quite a few were intimately connected with each other through their headmasters or because one school was founded in emulation of another. In most ways, the 'second tier' schools' appearance, methods and governance were far more similar to the Clarendon Schools than to the endowed day schools included with them in the

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[148] *Ibid.*, 148.

[149] *Ibid.*, 166.

[150] The 1st Eleven refers to cricket, which was for public schools what Varsity Baseball or football is for American High Schools.

[151] Ogilvie, 168.

[152] Grant Duff, *Hansard*, CLXXV, 6 May 1864, cols. 125-7. Cited Shrosbree, 90.

Taunton Commission. It is therefore understandable that members of the 'second tier' fought the bit when they were placed in a category that brought with it lower prestige.

A New Pedagogy

A pedagogical conflict arose between the two groups of schools, and it was woven in with social class and the changing understanding of how to educate Britain's elite. The older pedagogy, which had grown up within the Clarendon Schools, was connected to social class because of the vocational associations with each class. Victorians readily associated 'class' with profession, and one's profession was based on one's education. Therefore if a school mixed social classes, it meant that each student was getting an inappropriate education. There was no need to teach a local farmer's son classics nor to bother an aristocrat's son with the trivialities of English or arithmetic. But with the growth in new public schools came a competing pedagogical approach, which emphasized a broader curriculum, comfortable material surroundings, and preparation for University, Civil Service and Military examinations. The 'second tier' also brought more sons of the upper-middle class, whose parents bought them a boarding school education and the prestige that went along with it. When both groups of schools combined in the Headmasters' Conference, they brought their different pedagogical approaches to the table.

The Clarendon Schools' approach to education based on social class was most evident when they divided their endowments to create a separate school in order to educate the lower classes. For Harrow, this started in the first half of the 19th century when it dealt with the clash between local boys and boarders. In 1810, local parents went to the Court of Chancery to complain that the school was not fulfilling its intended purpose of educating local boys.[153] They explained that they did not wish to send their sons there "partly from the ill-treatment they receive from such Foreigners[154] and partly from the apprehension of their acquiring expensive habits by an association with persons of rank and fortune superior to their own." [155]The governors won the case, in most part because they had not, according to the Master of the Rolls, conspired to exclude the parish boys, and instead the circumstance had come about because the governors had

[153] Ogilvie, 160.

[154] Meaning boarders, who were not from the local area.

[155] Ogilvie, 161.

followed their founder's intentions and only taught the classics.[156] But in response to the case the governors took better care to follow the letter of their statutes, and in the mid-1800s the school set up the 'English Form,' which was founded "to meet the wants of a class of residents in Harrow who may not desire for their sons a High Classical Education, and who yet are reasonably unwilling to confound the mutual division of ranks by sending them to the National School." [157] The school taught Latin for free, and charged 5*l.* per annum for instruction in English, arithmetic, history and geography. Though the 'English Form' had been neglected after its founding headmaster left, and had decreased to only 24 boys by the time of the Clarendon Commission, the commissioners approved of the idea, and thus the Public Schools Act 1868 required Harrow to fully divide itself and found the Lower School of John Lyon. This fully dispelled the lower classes from Harrow and allowed the school to cater solely to the upper class.

Linking social class and pedagogy was not confined to the Clarendon Schools, but was also a general understanding in society. In 1860 Bristol Grammar School petitioned to take on boarders, but was denied by the Master of the Rolls Sir John Romilly. Romilly cited the underlying assumption about the social class of public school students in his decision:

> The existence of free grammar schools without boarders provides the necessary instruction for the lower classes of the community; the existence of free grammar schools like Eton, Harrow, and Rugby, without, or almost without free scholars, provides the necessary instruction for the sons of the higher classes of the community.[158]

Sir John assumed that class was the driving force behind the type of education a boy should have. His approach to social class and education was echoed in the way that 'second tier' schools advertised themselves, but the sentiment was combined with a new, more comfortable approach to boarding and a broader curriculum. Many of the new public schools' daily advertisements in *The Times* adhered to a similar form:

> **EDUCATION** for **YOUNG GENTLEMEN**, at a boarding school of 30 years' standing, delightfully situate, nine miles south of London and of easy access. Terms, including French by a resident professor, 36 guineas per annum. Pupils are prepared for the public examinations. The religious training is anxiously attended to and the emulative system of education carried out chiefly by a liberal reward of prizes. The diet is unlimited, and the household arrangements are conducted by the wife of the principal with every possible regard to

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[156] *Ibid.*, 161.

[157] C.J. Vaughan. Cited Ogilvie, 162.

[158] Ogilvie, 165.

> domestic comfort. The mansion stands within 10 acres of its own grounds. The schoolroom, dormitories, &c., are spacious and well ventilated, the playground, cricket-field, and pleasure grounds are fitted up for the recreation of the pupils; an excellent and safe swimming bath, 120 feet in length, Address W.L., 74, King William-st., E.C. [159]

The advertisement hinged on the social class of students they were accepting, the longevity of their establishment, their curriculum, and the luxuries that pupils would enjoy. The term "young gentlemen" did not limit its scope to the upper class. For many schools, this was a stock phrase for boys who were to become merchants as well as those preparing for competitive examinations. Despite the more open-ended term of 'young gentlemen,' the schools made an effort to form themselves to the model 'public school' that was exemplified by the Clarendon Seven. They emphasized that their school was primarily boarding, and that the goal of the education was public examinations, the grounds were full of places to pursue athletics and other leisurely gentlemanly activities, and by including their mansion they implied that their location was aristocratic. By associating itself with other boarding schools who educated 'young gentlemen' on spacious grounds and used an 'emulative system of education carried out chiefly by a liberal reward of prizes,' this school, like so many others, was including itself in the public school group.

Other new schools shied away from emulation of the Seven and instead advertised their differences in pedagogy:

> **HIGH-CLASS SCHOOL.—** Whereas, parents justly complain of the too little attention given in schools to a sound English education, it will be one great object in this to make English and its literature of paramount importance. Students for the Universities, Army, Navy, and Civil Service Examinations are guaranteed success. The Principal is a clergyman, graduate in honours, and assisted by eminent professors. System of education as far as possible conversational and explanatory. Spacious country residence, in a proverbially healthy locality, easy of access. Gymnasium, cricket grounds, and pony exercise. Terms to meet family circumstances. Address D.D., Torrington-lodge, Kitham, near Blackheath.[160]

Many of the new schools were not just concerned with establishing themselves and gaining prestige; they were simultaneously attempting to drum up business. Distancing themselves from the Clarendon Schools, whose education was elite but also narrow and ill-taught, could be an essential part of that process.

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[159] *The Times* (2 April 1869).

[160] *The Times* (26 March, 1869).

The Elite Seven and their Unpalatable Past

Negotiating the relationship between the Clarendon Seven and the 'second tier' became more pertinent once the Endowed Schools Bill 1869 was passed but it was catalyzed when the Clarendon Commission proclaimed the elite status of its nine chosen institutions. Though the Commission was effectively a cane to the buttocks of Eton, which had long enjoyed a tradition of 'black' income and unsavory practices, the Public Schools Act 1868 was mainly concerned with the governance and finance of the colleges. Though the governors, at the time of the Act's passing, were replaced, the new governing bodies were allowed a degree of autonomy, and any large changes went to Parliament, Queen and country for approval. The implication of this arrangement was that the regulation of the Clarendon Schools was too important to the country to be overseen by a committee or council. Protectors in Parliament ensured that the Seven were legally distinguished and their primacy upheld. One year later, the Seven's distinction was reaffirmed with the Endowed Schools Act 1869, which exempted the Clarendon boarding schools, arguing that the Public Schools Act 1868 had already dealt with them. This meant that the Seven were exempted from the jurisdiction of the Educational Council,[161] and were therefore separated even further from the rest of endowed education. It also negatively impacted the Clarendon Schools, since they could not appeal to the Council for a new scheme of internal arrangements and statutes if their institution started to decay.

Many were dissatisfied with leaving the Seven outside of the Educational Council's jurisdiction, and alleged that the legislation placed the Clarendon Seven on a pedestal. *The Times* correspondence column was the general public sphere where these debates played out. One correspondent, 'M.A.' wrote on 31 March 1869 and explained his objections to the Endowed Schools Bill. Although M.A. was content with exempting the Seven from the Taunton Commission's inquiry, since Clarendon Commission had dealt with them, he objected to the practical distinctions that would arise from placing the Clarendon Schools outside of the Educational Council's power. M.A. argued that the Educational Council should have control over all of the endowed schools, and that it was unfair to both the Clarendon Seven and the 'second tier' if they should be separated:

> Either the Educational Council is good for Eton and Rugby, or it is not good for Marlborough and Uppingham. Why should Parliament trust the governors and masters of Charterhouse and Shrewsbury more than of Tunbridge and Sherborne? What have the parents who send their sons to Westminster and Harrow done that they should be deprived of a test which is granted to the parents who select Canterbury or Repton? Why should old endowments like Winchester

[161] Ogilvie, 159

> be left unguarded, and new ones like Wellington College, Bradfield, and Lancing stand in need of additional safeguards?[162]

This demonstrated the problem with sequestering the Clarendon Schools. Although no one denied that the Clarendon Seven were more distinguished than many of the newer, 'second tier' endowed boarding schools, in most respects they were the same type of institution. And according to M.A., Parliament ought to have recognized their similarities and treated both the Clarendon Schools and the 'second tier' as one group with a uniform set of rights and responsibilities.

M.A. also objected to the issues that would arise from legally and symbolically disassociating the Clarendon Seven from the rest of the endowed schools. The distinction had already taken hold by inquiring into them with a separate commission, but would be inescapable if the Endowed Schools Act erected a wall between them and the 'second tier.'

> The exemption looks like a concession to some silly desire of social distinction, and although I have no doubt that this would be truly disclaimed by the promoters of the Bill of last year, as well as the promoters of the Bill of this year, yet there will be plenty of others who will plume themselves on belonging to schools which are too high for the Educational Council to touch. It seems to me a pity that Parliament should draw a shadowy line between Grammar Schools, which constitution, history, habits, and studies have made like, by stamping seven of them as "Public Schools" and the rest as "Endowed Schools;" but it is much worse to give substance to the shadow by selecting just these seven Public Schools for exemption from the Public Board of Examinations, which they are about, I hope, to establish.[163]

M.A. drew attention to the similar origins of the Clarendon schools and the newer, 'second tier' schools. Though the Seven had arrived at their "constitution, history, habits, and studies" earlier, they still shared a background in endowed grammar education. M.A. made an astute, though veiled, observation of what had occurred in Parliament: the "exemption looks like a concession to some silly desire of social distinction" was exactly correct. As the conversation between the Clarendon Commissioners on the topic of Shrewsbury proved, the Clarendon Schools were largely chosen due to the social status of their students.

M.A. argued that the Clarendon Seven needed to have the same tabs on them as the Taunton schools. In light of the abuses that sparked Clarendon's inquiry, it was surprising that the Seven were given more autonomy than the Taunton schools. Although

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[162] M.A., "To the Editors of the Times" *The Times* (31 March 1869).

[163] M.A., *The Times.*

they were elite and prestigious, the Clarendon Schools had been marked as producers of ill-equipped men. Another article in *The Times*, printed in response to the Clarendon Commission Report a few years earlier, confirmed that reputations were in jeopardy:

> In one word we may say that [the Clarendon Commission] find [Public School education] to be a failure–a failure even if tested by those better specimens, not exceeding one-third of the whole, who go up to the Universities. Though a very large number of these have literally nothing to show for the results of the school hours from childhood to manhood but a knowledge of Latin and Greek, with a little English and arithmetic, we have here the strongest testimony that their knowledge of the former is most inaccurate, and their knowledge of the latter contemptible…A small proportion become brilliant composers and finished scholars, if they do not manage to pick up a good deal of information for themselves, but the great multitude cannot construe an easy author at sight, or write Latin prose without glaring mistakes, or answer simple questions in grammar, or get through a problem in the first two books of Euclid, or apply the higher rules of arithmetic…'Most of them,' says an Oxford tutor of great experience and judgment, 'are persons who were allowed as boys to carry their idleness with them from form to form, to work below their powers and merely to move with the crowd; they are men of whom something might have been made, but now it is too late; they are grossly ignorant, and have contracted slovenly habits of mind.'"[164]

The Clarendon's School's pedagogy had not made a good impression on the Commission, which exposed the schools' faults to the general public. They had been associated with academic failure and their students were apt to be idle, ignorant and slovenly. This public loss of reputation was certainly felt by the headmasters of the Clarendon Schools.

Frederick Temple, headmaster of Rugby in 1858-1870, attempted to distance his school from an association with bad education and corruption. His response to M.A. was published in *The Times* four days later, where he cast in his lot with the rest of the endowed schools, but made certain that Rugby and the other Clarendon Schools would still be considered elite.

> I entirely agree with your correspondent, "M.A.," that there is no reason why the "seven schools" should not be examined by the Council proposed in the Endowed Schools Bill. If we are really worthy of special distinction, our proper place is not apart from the great body of English education, but at the head of it. We owe a duty to all other English schools, which we cannot fulfill if we are to be kept in a dignified but selfish isolation. We can do our part only by standing in the front rank, side by side with these of our fellow schools that are doing the same kind of work. If we are excluded, the Council is damaged by a false impression that it is only inferior work

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[164] *The Times*. Cited Bernard Darwin, *The English Public School* (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1929), 107-8.

> that ought to be examined; and we ourselves are damaged by being shut out from the discharge of a most important duty to the whole country. We have nothing to fear from examination by an independent and impartial body if our work is good; and if our work is not good, we ought to be ashamed of a distinction which rests upon a falsehood. I hope with all my heart that if the Bill passes Parliament will have the courage to transfer the "seven schools" from clause 8 to clause 13, and so bring them within the province of the proposed Council.[165]

Temple made the elitist point that the Clarendon schools should be at the head of "the great body of English education," drawing a parallel between education and social class. This was a veiled way of still constructing a wall between the Seven and the rest. He buttressed his argument with the subtle insult towards the Taunton Schools that "The Council is damaged by a false impression that it is only inferior work that ought to be examined." It is unclear whether he meant a pedagogical or a social inferiority, but either way he demeaned an aspect of the non-Clarendon public schools. Temple emphasized that the Clarendon Schools were undoubtedly associated with the ruling classes, and their primacy was undeniable. But at the same time, he wanted it understood that the Seven had been reformed, and that they had "nothing to fear from examination by an independent and impartial body if our work is good." His commentary was the first instance of the Clarendon schools seeking inclusion into the untainted, if less prestigious, body of British education. Though neither Temple's opinion nor M.A.'s commentary were able to keep Parliament from excluding the Seven from the Educational Council's jurisdiction, the schools soon united on their own grounds. In 1870 Temple's words were put into action when the Clarendon Schools joined the Headmasters' Conference.

Thring and the Headmasters' Conference

Edward Thring was by far the most remarkable of 'second tier' headmasters. In 1853 he became headmaster of Uppingham School, an Elizabethan schoolhouse staffed by two masters, which taught 25 schoolboys. By 1863 he had raised those numbers to 30 masters and 320 boys, and had ushered in a new pedagogical theory. First, Thring took up the task of bettering school life for his pupils. He believed that material conditions affected character,[166] and that "to educate, you must have the right tools and those tools included 'the permanent conditions under which work has to be done.'"[167] Unlike the

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[165] F. Temple, "To the Editor of The Times" *The Times* (4 April 1869).

[166] Ogilvie, 171.

[167] *Ibid.*, 171.

barren barracks at the Clarendon Schools, Uppingham had more comfortable surroundings to promote better work. Thring also believed that "every boy is good for something,"[168] and it was the teachers responsibility to find out "how to reach the mind of each boy."[169] He endeavored to know each boy personally, and it was for this reason that the school body did not increase much past 320 students. Neither were many boys lost through expulsion, since he "could not bear the notion of getting rid of unpromising material and thought it a confession of failure."[170] Thring's belief in boys' varied abilities led him to broaden the curriculum so that every boy had an outlet for his own talents. It was this same egalitarian ideal within an elitist framework that brought the esteemed headmaster to his ideas about the grouping of public schools.

Thring had been a schoolboy at Eton, but although he had quite a successful time there, having been Captain of the Collegers, he did not endeavor to create a replica of it at Uppingham. He explained his mistrust of the Educational Council in this regard: "They have tacitly assumed that certain schools not within their province of inspection are models, and that all the schools that fell within their net need only be like them."[171] This was a quandary for the headman, since his school had made quite a turnaround in the previous few years and had grown in size and reputation. He was certainly not following the same course of education as he had experienced at Eton, but was attempting to create a school that would challenge the pedagogy of the Clarendon Seven. "I desire," he explained, "to separate my lot entirely from the fashionable schools, and to cast it in with the smaller schools, which one may hope to see doing honest work."[172] Thring distrusted the alleged reform of the Clarendon Schools, since it was in the small, 'second tier' schools that he recognized the quality of education which he desired for Uppingham. He struggled to distinguish his school in prestige and associate it with others of a like nature.

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[168] Edward Thring. Cited Donald P. Leinster-Mackay, "Thring, Edward (1821–1887)," in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004), http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/27389 (accessed March 25, 2008).

[169] Edward Thring, *Theory and Practice of Teaching* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1899), 156.

[170] Darwin, 132.

[171] Ogilvie, 172.

[172] Thring. Cited Ogilvie, 166.

In 1869 Thring began to solve his problem. John Mitchinson, the headmaster of Kings School, Canterbury, organized a meeting among 25 of the headmasters of 'second tier' schools in order to send a delegation to the minister in charge of education policy. They distinguished their group by asserting that they had different needs from the rest of the schools covered by the Educational Council. The action proved the solidarity of the 'second tier,' based on their exclusion from the heights of the Clarendon Seven and from the locally based endowed grammar schools. It was this meeting which gave Thring an idea. He proceeded to send to 37 headmasters the suggestion that the heads should meet annually for a conference, the Headmasters' Conference. That December the headmasters of Repton, Sherborn, Tonbridge, Liverpool College, Bury St. Edmunds, Richmond, Bromsgrove, Oakham, Canterbury, Felsted, Lancing and Norwich were all in attendance. Nine other schools were unable to attend, but would have accepted the invitation under other circumstances. None of the Clarendon schools welcomed the invitation, and thirteen others also turned Thring down. But their aversion was not to last. Soon after the first meeting of the Headmasters' Conference, the Uppingham headman proclaimed, "We rest on our vitality and work, they on their prestige and false glory. If they will meet us on common ground, well and good. If not, not." [173]The following year all of the schools that had balked previously were in attendance.

The decision in 1869 to decline the invitation to the Headmasters' Conference was the result of 'the silly desire of social distinction' that *The Times* correspondent M.A. had identified. It would be folly to assume that in 1870 the nine Clarendon schools' attendance was not due in some part to negating Thring's allegations. This is not to say that Thring's comment was the sole instigator of their attendance, but rather that his words invoked their sullied reputations, from which the schools had been trying to distance themselves. The Clarendon schools were associated with the upper classes, true, but they had been shown to inculcate ignorance and to rely on their high connections. By joining the Headmasters' Conference, both the 'second tier' and the Clarendon schools were able to gain status. The 'second tier' was finally able to associate itself firmly with the top tier, and thus earn the title of 'public school' by inclusion, while the Clarendon schools were able to reaffirm their reformation while also reestablishing themselves as the head of the "great body of English Education." To this day, membership in the Headmasters' Conference is the defining characteristic of English Public Schools.

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[173] Thring. Cited Ogilvie, 166-7.

Embellishing on Definition

In 1890, only twenty-two years after the first Public Schools Act, the first *Public Schools Year Book* was published. By its second publication, for the school year 1890-1891, its pages compiled the educational and athletic achievements of thirty-four public schools, including four military academies, and listed some of the preparatory schools that prepared boys for the public school examinations. The *Year Book* did not include all of the schools from the Headmasters' Conference, since it was concerned only with the boarding schools, but the omission reflected the general understanding that the term 'Public School' was associated more with boarding than with day schools. The very publication of such a definitive text exhibited the standardization of public schooling. The elitism, the emphasis on sport, the prominent place of classical studies is all there, but it is regimented, documented and organized. By 1890 the group of public schools was agreed upon enough that a group of three old boys from the Clarendon Schools compiled them! But it should be noted that this was only a partial change. Within the pages of the *Public School Yearbook* emerges a distinct hierarchy.

Athletics, always a key aspect of public school life, continued on. Given that the Westminster Captain in 1866 had snubbed Shrewsbury, another Clarendon school, and declined to play cricket against them, it is interesting to note that they did not play cricket against them in 1891 either. In fact, within the pages of the *Year Book* there is evidence of a distinct hierarchy in the athletics fixtures. The Clarendon Seven only played against other Clarendon Seven, which might naïvely be attributed to location, except that in each school's case there were non-Clarendon public schools within a short distance. In football both Eton and Harrow only played games which were the sole invention and tradition of their own schools. For instance:

> Two games are played at Eton, —at the "Wall," and in the "Field". They are both peculiar to Eton, and totally unlike each other…The "Field" game is that ordinarily played by the whole School. It is a dribbling game, played with a ball much smaller than the Association ball. The goals, too, are much narrower, and the field both larger and broader than an ordinary Association field…teams to play matches under the Eton rules can only be obtained from Oxford, Cambridge, the Old Etonians F.C., Sandhurst, the Guards, and the Masters.[174]

All the teams which could play by Eton's rules were either associated with Eton through direct connection or were schools for higher education. Both Harrow and Eton kept their distance from the other colleges by keeping their games to themselves. When they did meet on the Cricket pitch, it was only to play one another and occasionally either

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[174] "Part II—Athletics" *The Public Schools Year Book*, 61.

Westminster or Rugby, but on the whole they established their rank through sport. A similar, though less haughty, discrimination marked the other Clarendon Seven, who participated in Football (Rugby Union Rules),[175] but only played the University squads, club teams, or the squads made of the old boys from the other Clarendon schools. Rugby School, for instance, played various Oxford Colleges and the Old Rugbeians,[176] while Westminster played Association Football against a number of club teams (on account of their prowess, which encouraged strong teams to challenge the school), Charterhouse, the Old Harrovians, and the Old Wykehamists.[177] Athletics had become the field in which most of the top-tier public schools chose to assert their prestige, and they had not outgrown their old habits of snubbing others to distinguish themselves.

Though the old hierarchy was reaffirmed on the playing field, it was remarkable how much the curriculum and pedagogy had changed in the way that the 'second tier' had been pressing for. The entries in the *Year Book* dealt with the intricacies of each school's life: the topics studied, boarding houses, admission and entrance examinations, fees, scholarships and exhibitions, and school prizes. Every school retained its individual characteristics, but a broader curriculum and emphasis on attainments after school were standardized.

Measurements of the schools' curricula can be found in the advertisements for books in the front of the *Year Book*, in the lists of masters in each school, and in the prizes. Both indicate that a broader curriculum with more emphasis on Modern Languages, Sciences and Mathematics had become standardized by 1890. Though the majority of textbook topics were still classical, advertisements also included "The Principal of History and Language," "An Introduction to English, French, and German Phonetics," and introductory books on Geography, Petrology, Botany, Arithmetic and Geometry. Though at almost every school the Classics department was the largest, in many schools Modern Languages and Mathematics trailed by only a few masters, and the Sciences tended to be about half the size of Classics. Classical prizes also dominated the Founder's Day stages, though there usually also tended to be prizes in History, Divinity,

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[175] It is interesting to note that the preeminence of Rugby school was already won through the dissemination of 'Rugby Football' throughout the rest of the public schools. Though at one point their form of football had been protected in quite the same way as Eton's "Wall" and "Field" games, Rugby Football had gained popularity, and grew to the point where it is now unheard of for a public school *not* to have a Rugby squad.

[176] "Part II—Athletics" *The Public Schools Year Book*, 74.

[177] *Ibid.,* 81.

Science and Literature. While the public school curriculum seemed to have expanded, there continued to be a strong emphasis on their roots as institutions for Classical scholarship.

Though Classics were still the basis of the classroom, most schools divided their curriculum in two, and let students decide whether they wished to study the "Classical Side" or the "Modern Side." Though the exact curriculum varied depending on the school, they fit a general form, and the two sides were geared towards different career paths. The "Classical Side" was based on the traditional public school education and included Greek, Latin, Divinity, Mathematics, Modern Languages, Natural Science, History, Geography, English Literature, Vocal Music and drawing.[178] It was intended to provide an ample education for University and the Indian Civil Service Examination. The "Modern Side" was geared towards boys who "intended to go straight from school into business or professional life"[179] or into the Military. It included Modern Languages, Latin, English, Commercial and Political Geography, History, Physics, Chemistry and Drawing. In many schools Army Classes were also provided to prepare boys for the entrance examinations for Woolwich, Sandhurst or Cooper's Hill Military Academies. Though a varied curriculum was offered, schools also recommended that boys join the "Classical Side" if they were unsure about their educational plans, since it was much easier to switch from "Classical" to "Modern" than the other way round.[180] The schools had recognized that students could use the education they provided for a number of career paths, but continued to push boys towards a more Classical education, which endured as a defining characteristic of a public school education.

Competition had spread amongst the schools and within the ranks of the boys, who were given ample inducements to do well in school and achieve success after they left. Each school offered its students 'Leaving Exhibitions', which were small scholarships to be redeemed at a university. Boys were elected to receive the Exhibition, the amount and number of which depended on the school, at the end of their term, based on academic achievement. Prizes were awarded in every subject, and the *Year Book* documented these honors. This custom had been practiced in the Clarendon Schools, but had generally been focused on specific subjects. Broadening the custom to all of the

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[178] This list is based on Rugby's "Classical Side" as listed in "Part I—Educational" *The Public Schools Year Book,* 117.

[179] Ibid., 117.

[180] Ibid., 111.

public schools increased competition within each institution and amongst the schools themselves, since leavers went on to represent their school in the larger world.

It seemed that, though the public schools had gained definition and a standardized pedagogy, many of the old traditions still dominated the classrooms and corridors. The 'second tier' had brought in the upper-middle class to the predominantly upper-class system, and the change was catered for by expanding the curriculum in anticipation of a broader set of post-school opportunities. The Clarendon Schools still asserted their elite standing, but they did through sport rather than academics. By the end of the 19th century, the public schools had standardized their education to fit the needs of both the upper and the upper-middle classes, but continued to hold on to their old traditions and hierarchies.

Conclusion

In 1905 the *Harmsworth Encyclopaedia*[181] listed 34 schools that were considered "Great Public Schools," which coincided with popular opinion. This top tier of British schools did not vary over the 20th century; the expansion in the second half of the 19th century has defined elite British education to the present day. The public schools were defined and standardized after 1868 as a result of the Clarendon Commission, the Public Schools Act 1868 and the Endowed Schools Act 1869, which symbolically and legally separated the Clarendon Schools from the larger body of endowed secondary education. The two groups were separated based on the social class that they educated, which implied that there were different pedagogical approaches for different social classes. It also reified the social hierarchy within education. As the two groups navigated their relationship with one another and finally united in the Headmasters' Conference, their pedagogical approaches were mixed and standardized. The resulting standardized group of public schools combined the public school traditions, hierarchy, and boarding experience with a broadened curriculum that provided education to both the upper and the upper-middle classes.

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[181] *Harmsworth Encyclopedia* (London, 1905). Cited Ogilvie, 180.

Chapter 3: Producing Civil Gentlemen

In 1865 Howard Staunton, a great chess player and literary scholar of his age,[182] wrote, "The great Endowed Schools are less to be considered as educational agencies, in the intellectual sense, than as social agencies… they are the theatres of athletic manners, and the training places of a gallant, generous spirit for the English gentleman." [183] His contemporaries shared this opinion. The public schools were not expected to be institutions of superior intellectual or moral enrichment; they did not produce the great scholars, nor did they yield "the most heroic, exalted, and disinterested men." [184] The schools were an English phenomenon, where national loyalty and gentlemanly grace took precedence over intellectual discipline. In place of scholars they produced civil servants, and off the rugby and cricket pitches marched military officers. Their purpose was to inculcate the character traits to serve the nation. To quote Frederick Harrison:

> Eton, Harrow, Winchester, and a half dozen more public schools are really the nidus out of which is bred our present aristocratic conservatism in Church and State. The entire prelacy, civil and military service, governments, army and navy, and even literary potentates issue out of these seminaries, which are the true keystone of British society.[185]

By 1882, when Harrison wrote this, the schools were almost twenty years out from the Clarendon Commission's report. The ranks of endowed schools who were considered in the same class as Eton and Harrow had grown, and their curricula, finances and governing bodies had been amended, but not everything had changed—the public schools were still educating the nation's elite. In the wake the expansion and reforms, what sort of the elite did the public schools produce?

With the standardization of public schools, students had similar experiences, which inculcated inward values and outward behavior that marked them as public school

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[182] Sidney Lee, "Staunton, Howard (1810–1874)," rev. Julian Lock, in Oxford Dictionary of National Biography, ed. H. C. G. Matthew and Brian Harrison (Oxford: OUP, 2004); online ed., ed. Lawrence Goldman, May 2007, http://www.oxforddnb.com/view/article/26327 (accessed February 11, 2008).

[183] Staunton, xvii.

[184] *Ibid.,* xvii.

[185] Frederick Harrison, "Education and the Public Schools" in B. Simon, ed., *The Victorian Public School* (Dublin: 1975), 3.

boys. Outwardly, students were marked as elite through accent, dress, and custom. Inwardly, they were taught to be 'Christian Gentlemen' who worked effectively within a hierarchy, independent from the comforts of family, were loyal to Queen and country, and yearned to relive their schooldays once they left school. The social prestige that came with these traits and the networks that public schools provided through alumni were highly sought after. The facets of character, which the public schools sought to inculcate in the production of 'gentlemen,' combined with the rigors of public school life, produced boys who were well suited for public service. As the ranks of the public schools swelled and their curriculum both expanded and deepened, the students that emerged were part of the increased cultural class of Old Boys, which were a dominant fixture in British society.

Public School Preparation

Boys bound for public school were brought up with values concerning masculinity that were later continued on the muddy pitches and boarding houses. Victorian families of the upper-middle and upper classes detached the adults' world from the children's through the use of wet-nurses, nurses and nannies.[186] Children were brought "up in a highly structured, orderly, and regimented routine, partly to make life easy for parents by keeping children out of the way except when they were wanted, and partly because this was regarded as the best way to begin to train character and prepare children for their eventual adult duties and responsibilities." [187]The nursery separated children from their parents, and it was there that sons were taught the "rules of discipline, obedience, honesty, cleanliness, tidiness, and humility…play was supervised for its moral content, and it was very early established that the rougher stuff was for boys, and dolls were for girls." [188]Sending boys off to public school to be educated was an extension of cultivating a boy's character. The boarding school environment was considered an apt preparation for the real world, whereas home was considered a retreat from both the classrooms of school and the offices that would someday replace them.[189]

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[186] Thompson, F.M.L. *The Rise of Respectable Society* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1988), 126.

[187] *Ibid.*, 126.

[188] *Ibid.*, 126.

[189] *Ibid.*, 152.

For families of high social status, a public school education implied more than just character virtues. It was also a way to condition the future, both of one's son and one's social class. Admission to a public school was an entrance into a way of life and an exclusive social circle. It would affect everything from professional prospects to marrying a girl from a respectable family.[190] The public schools conformed boys to the proper behavior of the upper classes, and consequently the social circles of the upper classes absorbed men who had attended public school.[191] An education at a public school was a signal of respectability to the outside world, and it was partly through the networks set up at the schools that the ruling classes were able to perpetuate their social status.

The importance of getting a son into a public school was so great that the process commenced around age eight by sending him to a preparatory school. Preparatory schools were predominantly boarding, were usually tied to a specific public school, and were often even harsher on their students than the public schools because of the boys' tender age. The sole purpose of these institutions was to train boys to pass the entrance examinations for the endowed schools, and they strove to send as many boys as possible to Eton and Harrow. Eric Blair,[192] who attended the prep school St. Cyprian's in the early 20th century, explained his early education:

> The whole process was frankly a preparation for a sort of confidence trick. Your job was to learn exactly those things that would give an examiner the impression that you knew more than you did know, and as far as possible to avoid burdening your brain with anything else… it was impressed upon me that I had no chance of a decent future unless I won a scholarship at a public school…Indeed, it was universally taken for granted at Crossgates that unless you went to a "good" public school (and only about fifteen schools came under this heading) you were ruined for life. It is not easy to convey to a grown-up person the sense of strain, of nerving oneself for some terrible, all-deciding combat, as the date of the examination crept nearer—eleven years old, twelve years old, then thirteen, the fatal year itself![193]

Certainly the examinations and admittance to a public school weighed heavily on the boys, but the emphasis on them simultaneously perpetuated the ruling class' priorities.

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[190] Thompson, 145.

[191] It was through this cycle that 'Old Boy' networks, which will be discussed a little later, were set up.

[192] More commonly known as George Orwell.

[193] George Orwell, "Such, Such were the Joys" in Phillip Lopate, ed., *The Art of the Personal Essay* (New York: Anchor Books, 1995), 274-278.

The system aligned boys' short-term goal of passing their entrance exams with parents' goals of setting up their son, and by extension their family, for success. If prep school boys passed the scholarship examinations, they could be assured of an elite education, and even if they were not completely aware of the full meaning of passing or failing, the gravity of the situation was stressed enough that the memory was retained for decades after.

By sending a boy away to a boarding school, parents attempted to privilege the relationship between a boy and his peers over that of a son and his family. The overt reasoning for this was to educate him with his own generation, but depending on the family, there were often more social-climbing motivations. The Clarendon Commission observed that a family's purpose in schooling their son at a public school made an impact on the boy:

> Of all the incitements to diligence and good conduct which act upon the mind of a school-boy, the most powerful, generally speaking, is the wish to satisfy his parents; and his view of his duty when at school will always depend very much on the light in which he feels that it is regarded at home…If their real object in sending him to a public school is merely or chiefly that he should make advantageous acquaintances and gain knowledge of the world, this is likely to be no secret to him, and the home influence which ought to be the Master's most efficacious auxiliary becomes in such cases the greatest obstacle to progress.[194]

The government was aware that parents often used schooling in order to gain social status, and believed that this motivation was unhelpful to a boy's education. There was a consciousness, if not an institutionally sanctioned one, that the schools were means of status towards a professional and social goal. It is ambiguous whether parents fully understood the values and codes that a public school education would imbue in their sons, but they must have seen or experienced the consequences. There was an expectation that a public school education would prime a boy for success.

Features of a Christian Gentleman

There was by no means a specific model of a man that the schools collectively attempted to produce, but there were certainly similarities between public schoolboys that implied their education to each other and to those outside their community. Accent was their most obvious external distinction, supplemented by their dress, sense of propriety, and mannerisms. Every school was unique in its uniform and particular traditions, but the

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[194] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, Vol. I, 40.

shared experience of a public school education united old schoolboys in the greater world. The particular features of school traditions produced a *esprit de corps* that promoted the sense of community and pride in an Old Boy's *alma mater*.[195] Ogilvie explains:

> The school songs which became another essential piece of equipment voiced a romantic attachment to the "old place", a filial affection that often lasted throughout life. Old Boy's societies were formed as a matter of course and their members wore the Old School Tie as a means of recognizing one another. There is nothing in most other countries comparable to this devoted loyalty, this yearning to perpetuate schooldays.[196]

Though every school varied in its customs, Old Boys were able to recognize others of with a public school education and there were general understandings of etiquette and standards that crossed college lines. At school these rules dictated the incorrectness of such seemingly inconsequential behavior as walking alone to Chapel, but once in greater society judgments could range from being unsportsmanlike to being disloyal. These more aesthetic judgments formed the basis of the phrases "bad form," "bad taste," and "not done,"[197] and they bonded together both boys in school and men who had left school with a collected understanding of what was 'proper.' To further bond Old Boys once they had left school was their political party. Students of public schools tended towards a conservative political outlook and Anglican religion—remnants of the aristocratic stronghold in the schools. By 1909, the public school boy had been somewhat standardized: "The public schools generally produce a race of well-bodied, well-mannered, well-meaning boys, keen at games, devoted to their schools, ignorant of life, contemptuous of all outside the pale of their own caste, uninterested in work, neither desiring nor revering knowledge."[198] The most important separation between those who had attended a Great Endowed School and those who had not was the cultivation the character of a "Christian Gentleman," an ideal bred in the halls of Rugby and disseminated throughout the public schools. This character type supplied boys with a moral key, which dictated their ideas and their actions once they left school.

By the second half of the 19th century the ideal of 'manliness' could no longer be constrained to the 'gentlemen' of the aristocracy. Although aristocratic families were still

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[195] Ogilvie, 182.

[196] *Ibid.*, 182.

[197] Rupert Wilkinson, *The Prefects* (London, Oxford University Press: 1964), 39.

[198] Ogilvie, 189.

very much in power in government, the bourgeois and *nouveaux riches* had been able to move up in English society, and their influence affected both the idea of 'manliness' and the public school clientele. The masters and headmasters, nearly all of whom were the sons of the middle class,[199] cemented the influence of the non-aristocrats on the ideals of education in public schools. 'Manliness' was an idea that had been brought up from the middle class, which placed more emphasis on being pious and self-reliant, while 'gentlemanliness' was a birthright of the landed elite, which emphasized politeness and aesthetics.[200] To add to these conceptions was the Evangelical religiosity and concern for others, which had been "secularized as respectability" in the beginning of the century.[201] The fusion of these ideas of manly virtues came together in Dr. Arnold's idea of a "Christian gentleman" at Rugby, where boys were taught to 'build character' through the piety of chapel, the rigor of studies, the humility of fagging, the responsibility of being a prefect, the teamwork and gentlemanly leisure of sport and loyalty to their school. Members of the aristocracy welcomed this new type of manliness. For instance Lord Ashley, who had taken his son to visit Rugby in 1844, understood the necessity for a new type of gentleman:

> I fear Eton…makes admirable gentlemen and finished scholars—fits a man, beyond all competition, for the dining room, the Club, St. James's Street, and all the mysteries of social elegance; but it does not make the man required for the coming generation. We must have nobler, deeper, and sterner stuff; less of refinement and more of truth; more of the inward, not so much of the outward, gentleman.[202]

As the British landed elite realized that they were in competition with those middle-class families who were becoming financially wealthy they must have realized, as Lord Ashley did, that their sons must not only have the outward affectations of a gentleman, but should understand the internal virtues and motivations of gentlemanly behavior.

It was this more internal idea of a gentleman, Rupert Wilkinson[203] argues, that the public schools fostered, and which subsequently made most pupils adept for civil service.

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[199] The great Arnold of Rugby himself had come from a long line of fishermen.

[200] John Tosh, "Gentlemanly Politeness and Manly Simplicity in Victorian England" *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, (Vol. 12, 2002), 458.

[201] Young, 25.

[202] Lord Ashley, diary for 21 Nov. 1844. Cited Edwin Hodder, *The Life and Work of the Seventh Earl of Shaftesbury* (2 Vols., 1886), II, 77.

[203] Wilkinson, 13.

The ideal was built of three components.[204] The first was what Joseph Schumpeter labeled 'magic,'[205] which referred to the air of distinction surrounding those leaders who were "respected for what they are rather than what they do."[206] According to Wilkinson, public schools tried to foster this magical quality in their students because it was included in their idea of a good leader, and leadership qualities were necessary to build good character. Public schoolboys absorbed a dignified aura as part of their education, and so were generally better groomed to take part in leadership.[207] The second component was a gentlemanly attachment to leisure, which signified that a man had time for pursuits that were not remunerative.[208] Within schools these pursuits were constrained to sport and studies, but in the larger social arena the demonstration often went into the realm of politics, where a gentleman could take a post as a magistrate or unpaid M.P. The third was that a privileged gentleman should feel obliged to fulfill duties to his community, ranging from performing well on the sports field to going on missions to poor areas, so imbuing a "spirit of public service"[209] in the boys. The combination of these aspects resulted in the morally superior 'Christian Gentleman,' which was the goal of the 'character-building' exercises carried out during school days.

School Life

The public schools broke the reliance of boys on their parents—sometimes very harshly. Too much correspondence between a student and his family was a sure sign of weakness. Sir Lionel Earle, who attended Marlborough College in the 1870s, recalled such an incident: "Young Burne-Jones, the son of Sir Edward Burne-Jones, the painter, was so heckled for writing home daily to his mother that he ran away and was found after

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[204] *Ibid.*, 13.

[205] Joseph Schumpeter, "Capitalism, Socialism and Democracy," 298. Cited Wilkinson, 13.

[206] Wilkinson, 13.

[207] This line of argument could also be used to help explain why public schoolboys came off as 'haughty' to most of the outside community.

[208] Wilkinson, 14-15.

[209] *Ibid.*, 16.

three days in a starved condition in Savernake Forest."[210] Such extraordinary instances were rare, but considering the rough environment of the schools, it would not be hard to imagine that quite a few boys daydreamed about following in young Burne-Jones' footsteps. The majority of boys who did make it through were taught self-reliance, loyalty to community, responsibility, manliness, conformity, submission to hierarchy, and a broad enough range of subjects that they were able to pass University, Civil Service and Military examinations.

Many boys arrived at school with preconceived romantic notions about how their experience was going to unfold. Books like Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's School Days*, Talbot Baines Reed's *Fifth Form at St. Dominic's*,[211] and Frederic William Farrar's *Eric, or, Little by Little*[212] illustrated to boys who were going to attend a public school what their impending lifestyle would be like.[213] These texts tended to represent the public school experience in a rose-colored light, but they also prepared their readers to submit themselves more fully to the lifestyle. Ogilvie explains the mindset: "The whole idea of life at a Public School was already suffused with romanticism before they got there and so each generation of newcomers was already in love with the whole paraphernalia. No other kind of school has ever had the benefit of such propaganda."[214] For boys who had the chance to read any of the number of novels in the public school genre, their education was infused with the whimsical and a willingness to assimilate before they even packed their trunks.

The daily life at boarding school was jarringly different from the soft environment of home and the romantic schoolrooms of the imagination. Living conditions were sparse, food was meager, and the society was strictly hierarchical. These hardships taught boys to live in harsh circumstances, which conditioned students to endure exotic circumstances later in life. School-day discomforts bred men who were willing to sacrifice luxury and family for civil and colonial service. They were even better prepared for the military lifestyle of ranks, rules and barracks. According to Bernard Darwin, one temporary

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[210] Sir Lionel Earle, *Turn Over the Page* (London, Hutchinson, 1935), 16-17.

[211] Talbot Baines Reed, *The Fifth Form at St. Dominic's* (London: Hamilton, 1971).

[212] Frederic William Farrar, *Eric, or, Little by Little, a Tale of Roslyn School* (London: S.W. Partidge, 1905).

[213] Ogilvie, 183.

[214] *Ibid.*, 183.

officer in the Royal Army Medical Corps produced an able-minded assessment of why public schoolboys were so easily brought into military life:

> [a regular officer, with whom the medic had come into contact,] was a public school boy who had never grown up because he had had no real chance of doing so. Without any interval of freedom, or opportunity for branching out on his own account, he had exchanged one discipline of rigid orthodoxy for another still more so; just at a time when he would, otherwise, have been cultivating old interests more freely or finding new ones, he had been taught that it is a subaltern's business to be seen and not heard; and so there he was, at any age you might like to mention, still with all the qualities and all the defects of the public school boy.[215]

The medic's opinion implied that this regular officer was just one of the multitudes of public school boys, all of whom were inculcated with the same "qualities and defects." What can be deduced from this officer's story is that a public schoolboy was able to seamlessly transition into a man with a respectable career without having to adapt or change any major facets of his character. It must be assumed that the public schools were a perfect preparation for the life of a soldier.

The strict social norms at school certainly prepared boys for the structure of government and military. The hierarchy within the school community was inescapable, and authority was implemented with the use of physical and mental punishment. The most important hierarchy in the student's self-governance was built between 'fags' and 'fag-masters.' 'Fagging' was servitude to an older boy, who had earned this privilege by being a prefect or monitor. The fags did menial housework, cooking and errands. They were responsible for generally harmless, but tedious labor. At Westminster, fags were "obliged to get up at half-past 3 [a.m.] to call [their fag-masters] at 4…and then every half-hour afterwards till 8 o'clock." [216] In sport, their duties were restricted to fetching wayward balls:

> "Is there Cricket fagging at Harrow? –Yes.
>
> "What is Cricket Fagging? Does the boy who is fagging learn the game? —Yes, he does, certainly; because he has to stand behind the wickets and stop the balls, which is a very essential part of the game.
>
> "He never learns batting? —No; you see no boy need fag more than once a week.
>
> "He would be well grounded in fielding? —Yes."[217]

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[215] Darwin, 35.

[216] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, Vol. III, 485.

[217] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* Vol. IV, 231.

Generally, there were more fags than there were masters, and so some boys worked along with another. Though some masters could be wicked to the lower boys, in general the worst that the chores did was interfere in a younger boy's time for himself. What could be dangerous were punishments for disobedience. At Winchester, fags endured "buckhorsing," in which a fag was hit with two-foot long wooden racket,[218] "touching toes," in which younger boys bent over to touch their toes and the older boys caned their backside, and the particularly cruel practice of taking a college cap or paper knife and cutting open a boy's hand.[219] These punishments were harsh, but since no boy would dare question the authority of his superiors in this system, it upheld the school hierarchy impeccably.

Despite the fags' vicious punishments and unhappy chores, the Clarendon Commission avouched that there were plenty of productive teachings of the practice, and underlined that it "creates a connexion which is often an advantage and protection to a young boy, and sometimes leads to lasting friendships…it is not without its use in forming, on the one hand, habits of obedience and the respect for established authority, and, on the other, that of wielding power without abusing it." [220]The fag knew that he would be able to rise to the position of his master, so the practice reaffirmed the *status quo*. Alfred Lyttelton, son of Lord George William Lyttelton, who had been a commissioner under Clarendon, elucidated the change that came over boys as they moved up in Eton's hierarchy:

> I have often visited Eton both in the summer and in the winter, and have observed the extraordinary change which has come over a boy in a good position between July and December. In July he has been timid and frivolous, in December he is resolute, self-reliant, and impressed with a sense of responsibility. What has caused this transformation? My friend has been in a subordinate position in July, but most of the senior boys leave at the end of the month, and in September he will therefore have become one of the leaders of the school, and by December will have exercised the duties of command for three months.[221]

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[218] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, Vol. III, 489.

[219] *Ibid.,* 490.

[220] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners*, Vol. I, 96.

[221] Hon. Alfred Lyttleton, "Eton College," *Great Public Schools* (London: E. Arnold, 1893), 46-47.

By gradually moving boys from the position of dominated fag to dominant fag-master, the fag system taught maturity and manliness, but this character building was couched in the framework of obedience to hierarchy.

While adhering to traditions like fagging, boys were able to self-govern to an extent, though they were ultimately answerable to adults. Vivian Ogilvie writes, “the organization of a school’s corporate life and the maintenance of discipline outside school hours by the older boys, with the minimum of interference from the masters, came to be regarded as an essential and differentiating characteristic of the Public School.”[222] Dr. Arnold had tempered the chaos of early 19th century self-governance in schools by implementing the prefectorial system. Prefects were older boys who had earned the rank through demonstrations of loyalty and hard work, and were given special privileges and put into places of authority over the younger students. They were under the trust of the masters and headmaster, who treated these older boys like semi-adults, and in turn they were to be the leaders of the school. Lionel Ford, when headmaster of Repton, explained: “I don’t want to *teach* my Sixth form boys responsibility: I want to teach those with responsibility how to *use* it.”[223] This system provided boys with an environment that mimicked society, and the schools supplied them an outlet to practice and learn leadership and follower roles.

Often, however, there were boys who relished authority and kept a keen eye out for the younger or weaker. Bullies were not part of the official lessons to build ‘Christian Gentlemen’—in fact, their actions were in direct conflict with the ideals that men like Dr. Arnold espoused—but they were nevertheless consistently present in school halls. The acts in which bullies forced their victims to take part were at times torturous. Boys engaged in everything from cutting chunks of skin off their hands with scissors[224] to being ‘roasted’ in front of fires to being tied to sheets and dropped off balustrades. Some of their bullying was part of the more institutionally sanctioned hazing of younger boys, but often they were overzealous and cruel. These activities scared off the timid and

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[222] Ogilvie, 180-181.

[223] Lionel Ford. Cited J.R. de S. Honey, *Tom Brown’s Universe* (New York: Quadrangle/ The New York Times Book Co.1977), 120.

[224] J.A. Mangan, “Bullies, Beatings, Battles and Bruises: ‘Great Days and Jolly Days’ at One Mid-Victorian Public School” in Mike Huggins, J.A. Mangan, eds., “Disreputable Pleasures” (London: Frank Cass, 2004), 7.

scarred the weak, but they also forced boys to muster strength and self-reliance from their fear.

For those boys who were bullied, and whose parents were concerned with their wellbeing, these instances could result in being taken out of school. A father of such a boy, Philip Lybbe Powys Lybbe, Esq., M.P., testified to the Clarendon Commission that his son, who was thirteen at the time, "was lying sick on his bed with the measles [and] a boy came into the room and hit him on the head."[225] In the case of the young master Powys, Eton had changed his entire countenance:

> There was a peculiar irritability, and he appeared as if his brain power had been exhausted. He could not bear the noise of his little brothers and sisters. Everything seemed to irritate him, and he seemed unable to meet even the little occurrences of the day…His nervous system seemed completely broken down.[226]

And yet, despite the abnormal change in the boy, the interview suggested that the fault was of the bullies, not the school:

> I think we should very seldom find that a boy sent to a public school would get that scowl of countenance which he had. He had a peculiar lowering countenance, which he had not before. I should think the routine of a school would scarcely bring that on…(*Lord Clarendon):*…Did he dislike to return to Eton?—No; he wanted to go back, of all things."[227]

In this instance it seems that the bullies played a peculiar role—one that we must assume they were not completely aware of —of 'weeding out' those students who were not able to fit the norms of their particular generation of schoolboys. Although in this case it is impossible to understand what, exactly, drove young Powys's schoolmates to bully him, there is a hint in the letter from his housemaster, Charles Wolley, that it was something innate: "I observed of young Powys's character during his first school-time that he was a likely boy to meet with annoyance from his school-fellows at a public school."[228] The characteristics that differentiated young Powys from the others were not made explicit, but most likely the bullies were judging him in fairly obvious terms, perhaps on size, health or personality. If we take this to be true, then there were certain hardships that such a boy would not be able to take on. Games, which were integral to

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[225] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* vol. III, 308.

[226] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners* vol. III, 309.

[227] *Ibid.,* 309

[228] *Ibid.,* 311

house loyalty and prestige, would have been harder on a boy who was not physically fit or whose health prevented him from participating. The boarding house society was also one in which personality quirks became irritating quite quickly, and to engage in complex politics of adolescence undermined house solidarity. Not in all cases, but surely in some, the bullies' nasty activities helped to stabilize house life by pressuring those boys who did not fit the bullies' criteria into leaving.

The uniformity that emerged from public schools was largely due to weeding out those boys who were different. Lyttelton remarked upon the phenomenon in his essay "Eton College," where he recommended that some boys might be better off attending a good day school than a public school if their character deviated at all from the normal public schoolboy's:

> All public schools, even the greatest, have a tendency to exact from their members too much uniformity. Boys resent the "pain of new ideas" and mistrust an original. Of such a one average school criticism is apt to say, "He is a very rum fellow," or "Oh, he is quite mad." Investigation proves that the objects of these comments has a dash of the poet or the man of letters in him, or perhaps he has not conformed to the strict law of custom in the school, or to the minutiae of its comical fashions. Not having attained a prominent position, he has had the effrontery to wear a "stick-up" collar, or has carried an umbrella furled (unfurled would be permissible) down a main street…if your son has genius, if he has rare tastes, if he is acutely sensitive, if he has the Shelley temperament, you may well think that sufficient experience and contact with his fellows may be gained for him in a good day school, and that until he goes to the University, his 'immortal part' may thrive best amid the associations and under the continuous influence of home life.[229]

School life standardized behavior and squeezed out the aberrations in character through bullying and peer pressure. This is not to say that *all* eccentricities were removed—there were certainly boys who were non-conformists—but they were few and were always documented as ponderous personalities.

Games were a very important part of the school day, and though many critics condemned the cult-like obsession with Bigside[230] and the tendency to vaunt the virtues of the great sportsmen rather than the studious scholars, games were deemed integral to building character:

> The cricket and foot-ball fields…help to form some of the most valuable social qualities and manly virtues, and they hold, like the

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[229] Lyttleton, "Eton College," 38-40.

[230] Traditionally, the pitch on which the majority of games (especially cricket and rugby) are played is called 'Bigside.'

> class-room and the boarding-house, a distinct and important place in public-school education…The importance which the boys themselves attach to games is somewhat greater, perhaps, than might reasonably be desired, but within moderate limits it is highly useful. It is the best corrective of the temptation to over-study which acts upon a clever and ambitious boy, and of the temptation to saunter away time which besets an indolent one.[231]

Though the Report did not dwell on the details of the 'social qualities' and 'manly virtues' that boys learnt from running up and down the muddy pitches, paddling the rivers or leisure swatting their cricket bats, it implied that the usefulness of games was not limited to winning a "jolly good match" against another house. Athletics were the venue where boys displayed their manliness and grew into men. Especially when it came to diligence in practice, masters would appeal to a boy's maturity. Lee Knowles, who attended Rugby in the early 1870s, recalled a conversation between a school friend, who had been a talented but complacent runner, and a master, who was a distinguished long-distance runner:

> A friend…received, at the top of that spiral staircase which Rugbeians know so well, the following laconic reprimand: "H—, I think. H—, you run: so did I. You hold the school-bags, H—: so did I. You don't work, H—: I did. You must. Good morning." That was an appeal to the boy's manliness, and it has never been forgotten."

Games were also used, in a large part, to maintain control over the student body.[232] Cyril Norwood, who wrote about the Marlborough headmaster G.E.L. Cotton, explained the reasoning: "Cotton went to Marlborough…to create a school out of mutineers, and he consciously developed organized games as one of the methods by which the school should be brought into order."[233] Sport was an outlet to vent boys' natural aggression, which allowed for less rebellious interruptions during studies.

Sport incited loyalty to both school and boarding houses. House competitions were far more frequent than matches between schools, and boys either practiced a sport or played in a house match at least 3 times a week.[234] Boys distinguished in games were usually allowed to augment their uniform in some way. For instance at Rugby in the 1870s, there was a complex set of rules for when a boy was allowed to wear a white straw hat. Knowles explained the peculiar formality:

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[231] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners* Vol. I, 41.

[232] J.A. Mangan, *Athleticism in the Victorian and Edwardian Public School* (London: Frank Cass, 1981), 28.

[233] Cyril Norwood, *The English Tradition of Education* (London: J. Murray, 1929), 100.

[234] Philip H. Martineau, "Harrow School: Athletics," *Great Public Schools,* 94.

> For two years after his first term a boy wore a black and white speckled straw-hat with a black ribbon…At the end of his third year a boy could "take" his "white straw," but he was not expected to do this unless he were a "swell." Even a boy in the sixth would not take his white straw, except perhaps as the head of the school, without first distinguishing himself in the games. The word "swell" had an indefinite, but well understood, meaning in the school. A number of the school "twenty," or "fifteen"[235] as it is now, or a member of the eleven, was, for instance, a "swell."[236]

With such particular rules in such a hierarchical and insular society, boys were compelled to do as best they could on the sports field for their own credit as well as their team's. These sorts of rules not only structured a student's experience at school, but also informed his commitment to his *alma mater* once he left. Knowledge of these complex and rigid guidelines inducted students into the realm of Old Boys after they left school, which reaffirmed their loyalty to their educating institution.

Lessons were the more formal theatres of education, and it was there that the curriculum affected the futures of both the students and the country. Rupert Wilkinson used the span of academic pursuits to argue that "the schools bred mental flexibility rather than imaginative foresight. Faced with an urgent need to change, the Old Public Schoolboy was usually resourceful in his adjustment; confronted by crisis, he would 'muddle through'. What he frequently lacked was the interest in new ideas that would have helped him to avoid crisis by looking ahead. If he possessed intelligence, he was also apt to be complacent."[237] Though the curriculum had been expanded, studies were still not pursued with any vigor. Sir Frank Benson recalled that his experience at Winchester in the 1870s were marked with little pedagogical reform or enthusiasm:

> Greek plays were taught in relation to grammar and accidence, not in relation to humanity. The whole time I was at Winchester we never went through a Greek play to the end…few of the staff took much interest in the subjects they were supposed to teach…It was rather pathetic to see a short sighted senior wrangler teaching healthy, rowdy boys their multiplication table. Many of us were wont to walk in at the door and out of the window on to the roof, thence down a rain-pipe on to a wall, and so to the shops or the playing-fields for the rest of the day."[238]

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[235] The "twenty" and "fifteen" refer to members on a team Rugby Football. This 5 person difference accounts for the change in rules, which dictated the size of the team.

[236] Lees Knowles, M.P. "Rugby School: Games," *Great Public Schools,* 172.

[237] Rupert Wilkinson, "Political Leadership and the Late Victorian Public School," *The British Journal of Sociology,* Vol. 13, No.4, 324-325.

[238] Sir Frank Benson. Cited Ogilvie, 185.

Though a broader range of studies were implemented along with the new pedagogical theories from men like Thring, the public schools as a whole generally fell back to their traditional lackluster teaching. At the same time, however, they had made some pedagogical progress, and expanding the curriculum allowed the schools create a seamless passage from school to profession or university.

The expansion of the curriculum was intimately connected with bringing more boys into the army and the civil service. Prior to the Clarendon Commission, the public school curriculum was heavily centered on the study of the Classics, to the detriment of mathematics, modern languages and physical science. Even after schools had incorporated these courses into their daily studies, students were not properly prepared, since the subjects were generally taught in a perfunctory fashion. In order to pass the entrance examinations for university, the army or the civil service, boys would enlist the help of a 'crammer'—a man whose job it was to teach them all of the subjects that they would need to pass their exam. This was a very common practice[239] but did very little to help the public schools' reputation, and essentially divorced the schools from public service.[240] Yet by the second half of the 19th century, there was an attempt to carve crammers out of the system of education. Broadening the curriculum was the first step to cutting out the crammers, but making sure that subjects were taught to a high standard was more effective. Exhibitions were one way in which schools enticed their best students to go straight on to university. Meanwhile, forces outside of the public schools spurred on the effort. The Indian Civil Service offered special privileges to candidates who had gone to Oxford and Cambridge, and the army reserved a number of positions for graduates from these same universities. These enticements gave boys more reason to go on to universities for training rather than to crammers. The standard age of entrance was lowered so that boys were recruited either right out of school or as an undergraduate, and the examinations were opened up to competition. Once the crammers were subtracted from the equation, a student had much less time between his schooldays and his professional life. The quick transition form boarding house to university or office meant that public school values were hardly forgotten in the interim. And if he did start to slip from the grasp of public school mentality, other Old Boys jogged his memory.

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[239] The crammers were so abundant that T.H.S. Escott wrote "the crammer was the recognized and necessary supplement to the schoolmaster." T.H.S. Escott, *England: Its People, Polity, and Pursuits* (London: Chapman and Hall, ltd., 1885), 290.

[240]Escott, 290

The Old Schoolboy

Once a boy had passed into the outer world, he already had a sturdy network in place in the form of Old Boys. These men had all attended public schools, and despite having special ties to their specific *alma mater*, collectively understood a similar view of society and felt a tie of allegiance to their fellow Old Boys. Many were quite willing to defend their education without being called upon. In the case of the Clarendon Commission's enquiry into Eton, John Walter, Esq., M.P., who had attended Eton and whose three sons were at the college at the time of his questioning, stepped up to defend the traditions of house and classroom.[241] His examination exposed his prejudice against any reform that would detract from emphasis on the Classics, a concerted effort to associate Eton *only* with Harrow, and a wholly unfounded belief that "there is no bullying to speak of at Eton."[242] Walter, despite giving his interview five years before the phrase "Old Boy" occurred,[243] demonstrated the allegiance—often a blind allegiance—of an Old Boy to his public school. Partly because of the extremely complex traditions that lived on in each separate college, and partly due to individual vanity, many of those who had left school wanted their institution to stay the same. In Walter's words: "I should not like to see a foreign element introduced into Eton amongst the masters. I should not like to introduce masters who had been brought up at other schools."[244] This attitude led to stagnation in teaching and tradition when they consistently recycled their schoolboys for their masters. This had occurred for a long time in the public schools. For instance, at Eton 74% of the staff was made up of Old Boys between 1801-1862.[245] The stagnation was depicted in the *Edinburgh R*eview in 1830: "Bred in the routine of Eton education, young men are sent to a college, inhabited solely by Etonians, where all, or nearly all, study is voluntary; and, after a few years, return to their old school to teach the things

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[241] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* vol. III, 297.

[242] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* Vol. III, 305.

[243] The first time that the phrase was used was in the *Haileyburian*, Haileybury's school magazine, in 1868. 'Old Boys' derived from 'Old Schoolboys,' a phrase that popped up in the interviews in the Clarendon Commission's Report quite often. Tim Heald, *Old Boy Networks* (New York: Ticknor & Fields, 1984), 14.

[244] *Report of Her Majesty's Commissioners,* Vol. III, 307

[245] T.W. Bamford, *Rise of the Public Schools* (London: Thomas Nelson and Sons Ltd., 1967), 122.

they were themselves taught, in the place and in the manner they had learnt them."[246] Teaching like this kept old traditions in place and ensured that a great deal of continuity in institutional defects continued. The practice of recycling students as faculty members or governors resulted in the same stagnation in the end of the 19th century as it had in the beginning.[247]

Although the traditions at each school differed, there was a shared experience among Old Boys of any public school, and an Old Boy had a number of characteristics that distinguished him from the rest of society. An Old Boy had been brought up as a "Christian Gentleman," and had been put through a fairly harsh environment, where 'building character' often trumped studying. Attending boarding school from an early age produced men who were independent of family, but were generally more comfortable in a rigid hierarchy. They tended to be very attached to their *alma mater*, but also to the system of public school education and their fellow Old Boys.

In the greater society the insular nature of public schools infused professions. In the civil service, for instance, 71% of top civil servants and 69% of newly created peers in 1880 were Old Boys. Between 1886-1916, more than 60% of cabinet ministers holding office had attended public school, and of that, 34% had gone to Eton and 12.99% to Harrow. If men were not already acquainted with each other, there were regular meetings that were held for 'Old Etonians,' 'Old Carthusians,' 'Old Harrovians,' etc. These meetings, in the words of the 'Old Marlburians' were "to keep together Old Marlburians, to promote friendly intercourse among them, and generally to further the interests and prosperity of Marlborough College and its past and present members."[248] It was there that bonds were established or reconnected, and where many men found an outlet for reliving the "good old days" as well as furthering their own careers. Through these sorts of reunions and by sharing a public school experience, Old Boys became a cultural class of their own in British society. Most men of a certain social or professional status were assumed to have gone to a public school. Ogilvie recounts a conversation between "two Englishmen who met in some remote part of the world.

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[246] "Public Schools of England—Eton," *Edinburgh Review* (April 1830), 67.

[247] Ogilvie, 183.

[248] *The Public Schools Yearbook 1890-1891*, 146.

> "What school were you at" one asked the other. "Westminster." "Oh. I was at St. Paul's." Well, as a matter of fact, so was I."[249]

As Britain sent her citizens to the far reaches as civil servants, a public school education proved a man's respectable upbringing and bonded men through a shared experience. At the close of the 19th century, Old Boys formed a large part of the civil service, politics, the Church, military and universities. The public school character, formed playing football on the pitches Rugby, fagging in the boarding houses of Westminster, being bullied at Eton, and learning a broad but shallow curriculum, was as distinctive as it was influential.

Conclusion

The standardization of the public schools created a type of education that produced distinct characteristics in public school students. Old Boys emerged from the public schools with both the stamp of institutional prestige and with an arsenal of experiences bred in a boarding school environment. Public schoolboys were most comfortable in hierarchical situations, independent of family, fiercely loyal to both country and their *alma mater*. The uniformity that the schools produced was partly due to lessons of obedience and conformity, but also because the boys who deviated from the norm were weeded out. The group of Old Boys that emerged from the public schools became a cultural class in British society, and they confronted their professions with "a solidly grounded code of duty and self-restraint."[250]

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[249] Ogilvie, 189. This quotation is actually rather confusing. Ogilvie uses it to exemplify the haughty nature of Old Boys, who looked down on each other's schools if they were not prestigious enough. But it is unclear in Ogilvie's text whether he means Westminster or St. Paul's was the more prestigious institution. In either case, I still use the quotation to prove the far reaches that these typical conversations occurred in.

[250] G.M. Young, *Portrait of an Age*. Cited in Briggs, *Victorian People*, 11.

Conclusion

The Clarendon Commission and its findings fell in line with the general reform of the nation during the Victorian period. Eton College and the schools that were associated with it in status were inquired into as a direct result of the *Edinburgh Review*'s exposé on Eton's financial corruption, but the topic was ushered into Parliament because it was favorable to the Whig party, which was in power at the time. The findings of the Commission were influenced by the commissioners' experiences of European schooling and their understanding that the schools in question were dear to the hearts of many of their peers. Their recommendations were put forward in the same spirit of reform that had marked the Reform Act 1832 and the commissioners were mindful that the purpose of reforming the public schools was to bolster the preparation of the ruling classes for their task of leading the country. Although the Clarendon Commission proposed to change the schools in the areas of governance, finance and curriculum, the Public Schools Acts that followed were more concerned with the former two issues and left the reform of curriculum up to the individual schools. The most resonant aspect of the Commission was that it distinguished only nine schools to inquire into and the Acts only seven.

By separating the most prestigious of schools from the general mass of endowed boarding schools, the Clarendon Commission's Nine and the Public Schools Acts' Seven established a hierarchy within the system of education for England's masses, but also marked those elite schools with the stamp of mismanagement and bad education. Since the definition of a 'public school' was amorphous and the Clarendon schools were supposed to be the archetypes of the public schools, the door was left open for the ranks of public schools to define themselves. They did so through association with one another. The 'second tier' schools sought to include themselves in a group with the Clarendon schools so that they would gain prestige, while the Clarendon schools attempted to wash away their unpalatable past by associating themselves with the 'second tier'. This culminated when the headmaster of a 'second tier' school founded the Headmasters' Conference, which to this day is the defining characteristic of a public school. Within the then-defined boundaries of public schools, pedagogy and curriculum were standardized in a form that took account of wants and traditions of both the Clarendon Schools and the 'second tier,' but the Clarendon Schools continued to uphold a strict hierarchy.

Defining the ranks of public schools and standardizing their curriculum and pedagogy effectively created a unified group of Old Boys who shared a similar experience at school and were inculcated with the same values and characteristics. These men tended towards more hierarchical professions in politics, the military, the Church,

the civil service, and universities and were spread across the world. Because of their uniformity and the social background that a public school education implied, the Old Boys became a cultural class whose education marked them as "gentlemen." Their education and the values they had learned at the public schools left a lasting effect on the country and the empire.

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